

Interpretation of the Image of Lingjiatan Jade Eagle

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Abstract: The jade eagle found in Lingjiatan site is a cultural relic which reflects prehistoric civilization. The shape of the Jade eagle is very special for its main body is like an eagle, wings like pigs and center like the sun. Eagle, pig and star anise all represent different cultural connotations in prehistory and the combination of the three images makes the jade eagle more meaningful. From the perspective of iconology and art, this paper makes a careful analysis of the components of jade eagle, and interprets its function, original religious belief and the philosophy of early mankind.

1. Introduction

A large number of jade artifacts have been unearthed at the Lingjiatan site in Hanshan County, Anhui Province. These jade artifacts are an important basis for people to explore prehistoric civilization, among which the jade eagle is one of the most important jade artifacts found. The jade eagle is composed of three images: eagle, pig and star anise. The overall shape is flake-like, and the positive and negative images are consistent. The eagle head looks sideways, and the wings are replaced with a symmetrical pig head shape, and the pig eyes are semicircular. The eagle eyes, pig eyes and pig nostrils are represented by drilling round holes, and the pig mouth is half open, which is vivid. The groove grain will eagle fan-shaped tail depicting three-dimensional and vivid, the whole chest is a large circle and a small circle depicted by negative line, the middle of the two circles is an star anise pattern, small round inclined above and there is a hollow out irregular round hole. The overall image of the eagle is majestic into a powerful shock. The jade eagle is dominated by eagles, with wings like pigs and a center like the sun. It can be seen from a variety of angles. The cultural significance of the jade eagle has been an important issue discussed by the academic circles.

2. Jade Eagle Image Symbol Origin Test

2.1 Eagle and Its Image Symbols

Eagle also known as falcon, Tujian, character brave and resolute. The beak is short and hooked, the claws are sharp, and the wings are long and good at flying. They are active during the day and

feed on small animals. In addition to eagle, there are phoenix, owls and dove and so on in the jade birds unearthed by prehistoric humans. Jade eagles unearthed in Hongshan culture, Lingjiatan culture and Longshan culture. They can be divided into three-dimensional, flake-shaped and columnar shapes in terms of volume, and can be single or compound in terms of shape.

The custom of bird worship has existed since ancient times in China, and its coverage is very wide. Almost all the eastern coastal areas of China are dominated by bird totem. China's three prehistoric tribes -- Huaxia, Dongyi and Miaoman all had the custom of bird worship. The Xia believed in phoenix and dragon. The division of Wu in the East Yi was "named after birds", and its tribal leaders Di Jun and Di Shun were said to be "The body of people and the head of bird". In the Miao Epic, there are records of goddess Bangmei laying eggs and human ancestor hatching from birds, all of which prove the wide range of bird-worship custom. The rulers of The Shang Dynasty were descendants of the Shaowu tribe, who also took birds and the sun as totems. The legend of "black birds birthing Shang" and the evidence of a large number of bronze birds unearthed in Sanxingdui show that The Shang people also believed in bird totems.

The custom of bird worship is closely related to the custom of sun worship. Prehistoric people worshipped the sun, birds can fly between heaven and earth, and rise and set with the sun. Therefore, people believed that birds could communicate with the sun, birds and the sun was integrated. 'Classic of Mountains and Seas· Great Wild East Classic'said: "There was a Fusang tree in Yanggu...and they were all carried by golden wood.[1]." 'The Spirit of Huainan Zi'said: "There is a three-toed crow in the middle of the sun." In the legend of the Classic of Mountains and Seas, Hou Yi shot the sun. "Hit 9 suns, the birds are all dead", these legends are illustrates the sun and the bird is one . The legend of the unity of birds and the sun not only appears in ancient books and documents, but also on unearthed artifacts. The ivory butterfly ware and bone dagger ware excavated from Hemudu Site are both depicted with sun in the middle and bird on both sides "The golden bird backs the sun[2]" image. It is because of the close relationship with the sun and bird , Experts call the bird the "sun bird". Bird worship is the worship of the sun, and the unity of the bird and the sun is a symbol of extraordinary power, and also reflects the initial religious belief consciousness of prehistoric people.

The bird-worship custom of prehistoric people is also related to the primitive farming methods. It is said that Shun Yu adopted the planting method of " elephants ploughing and birds weeding". Ancient times human beings do not understand climate, agricultural tools are extremely crude. Birds eat insects and grass seeds in the field, these natural life habits inadvertently help harvest the crops, in addition , there are birds that take risks to steal species for human beings from heaven, humans are grateful to the birds that help them get their food. Birds are the survival of prehistoric people rely on, can survive with the sun, can communicate with heaven and earth, is the symbol of super ability, is also the prehistoric people in the religious belief of the god.

It is because of people's reverence for birds, ancient and modern at home and abroad to eagle as the original form as a totem, the symbol of the example of countless: by nine kinds of animal composite dragon image, the shape of its claw is the eagle's claws. The image of the monster "Griffin" in ancient Greek mythology is the Gryphon, the symbol of the army of ancient Rome, as well as the symbol of Egypt, Mexico, South Africa and other countries have also adopted the shape of the eagle. The phoenix is one of the "four spirits" of China. Judging from the jade phoenix unearthed in prehistoric times and the images of phoenix on the Shang bronzes , the phoenix wings are raised and the tail droops, feathers are trisected, it's very similar to the shape of the eagle. Therefore, some experts believe that the eagle is the prototype of the phoenix[3] .

2.2 Image Symbols of Pigs and Pigs

Pigs are domesticated animals of wild boar, they have been domesticated for about 7,000 years, according to the pottery with pig-pattern images unearthed from the prehistoric site of Hemudu in Zhejiang Province. Pig is also known as “Wu Jin”, “Tun”, “Shi”, “Lan Zi” and so on. It is recorded in the ‘Chaoye Qianzhong’ that “some people in Gongzhou get rich by raising pigs, so pigs were called Wu Jin”. Zhengzi Tong in the record: “Tun, small pig, Lan Zi”. In ancient times, the word “home” in the ancient article is above the word “house”, the following is “Shi”, the house has “Shi” for “home”. At present, about 8 pieces of prehistoric jade pigs have been unearthed, among them, six figurative pieces were unearthed in Niuheliang, Liaoning Province and Linjiatan, Anhui Province. Two images were excavated from Fuquan Mountain in Shanghai and Flower Hall in Jiangsu. From the number and distribution of the jade pigs unearthed in prehistoric times as well as the precious jade materials used, we can see that the pig in prehistoric times was not just an ordinary animal for food, but should have more important cultural connotation and significance.

First, dragon head comes from pig head. There has always been controversy about the prototype of dragon head. Some say it comes from the head of a horse, while others say it comes from the head of an ox. Mr. Sun Shoudao believes that the dragon head comes from the head of a pig[4]: First, the Jade Dragon unearthed in Samsung Tara has a long mouth with a prism pattern upturned at the nose end, and a flat nose end with two nostrils, which is consistent with the pig nose. The bristle on the neck is particularly similar to the characteristics of the pig head. The second is a piece of dragon-shaped jade unearthed near Jianping County. The snout is protruding, and there are many wrinkles around the eyes. The ears are generally fat, and the features of the tush exposed in the mouth are very close to the pig's head. It is precisely because of the characteristics of the dragon body and the pig head that the early Jade Dragon was named “Jade Pig Dragon”.

Second, the phenomenon of pig bones burial. According to statistics, there are 656 cases in China, 2686 pieces [5]. From the number of pig bones burial, we can see the importance that prehistoric people attached to pigs. As for the specific meaning of the phenomenon of pig burial, there are many opinions. First, Mr. Tong Zhuchen believes that pigs are private property, and the number of pig bones buried symbolizes the amount of wealth and status[6]. Second, Mr. Wang Renxiang put forward the idea of “exorcism”, believing that pigs are gods, can keep away evil spirits and protect the souls of the dead[7]. In history, there was a legend of the pig head god. In the tomb murals of the Western Han Dynasty in Luoyang, there were portraits of the pig head and the human body. In Duan Chengshi's novel ‘Youyang Zazu’, there is a legend about a monster with a pig's head and only two toes on its hands and feet eating a snake. Third, Luo Yunbing, a scholar, believes that pigs are sacrifices[8]. The first evidence is that pigs are the most common animals in primitive society, so it is reasonable to use pigs as burial objects. Second, the unearthed pig bones are often placed in edible vessels, which are offered as sacrifices. Third, there are records of sacrificial offerings in ancient books: ‘Zhongshan Sutra’ has a “hair with a cock, a round of porpoise...”[9]; ‘Book of Rites·QuLi’ in: “all sacrifices to the Jongmyo ceremony..... “All the data prove that pigs are closely related to people's lives, it is not unusual for pigs to be buried with them.

Third, pigs are totem objects. First, there are many prehistoric tribes with pigs as their totem, in ancient times, the Bai, Yao and Luoba ethnic groups all took the pig as their totem [10]. Secondly, the image of Zhuangxi Emperor, one of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, whether it is unearthed Chu silk on the image, or image of jade, both are gods of a pig carrying three heads and one body, it is said that the pig was the totem of the Shiwei tribe where Zhuangxi Emperor's mother lived. Third, The jade sculpture of the pig's head and the human body unearthed in the later period of Hongshan culture also shows that prehistoric people respected the pig and regarded it as a totem object.

2.3 Star Anise Image Symbol

The image of the star anise has a wide time span. Since its appearance in the middle and late Neolithic Age, there are still decorative patterns of the image of the star anise on the clothing of the minority nationalities in Southwest China. Geographically, the image of the star anise is mainly concentrated in Dongting Lake, Yuan River, Haidai, Tai Lake and Chao Lake regions, the remote Hexi Corridor has also been found with images of the star anise. From the unearthed data, the image of the star anise octagon appears only on jade articles, they are found on pottery, spinning wheel and arches. Among them, the octagonal image of Dongting Lake area mainly appeared on the white pottery, appeared in the Taihu Lake region Spinning wheel, Haidai area appears in the painted pottery, Chaohu area appeared on the jade of Lingjiatan. Western Liaoning area mainly to the Hongshan horn-shaped device, the image of the star octagon in Anyang, Henan Province, appeared on the copper arches. From the shape of the star anise image, there is almost no difference between the shape of each place, are the center or circle or square, surrounded by eight triangles of symmetrical graphics. From the perspective of time, region and shape, the star image should be a unified standard symbol recognized by all. However, there is still no unified understanding of the interpretation of the cultural connotation of the star image. At present, there are two widely accepted theories: the sun theory and the loom part theory.

First, the sun theory. From the shape of the excavated star anise image, the use of round and polygonal radiation is a typical depiction of the sun image, which is the most important reason for the sun theory. The sun is the source of all energy and life in the world. Prehistoric civilizations all over the world have worshiped the sun. Images of sun gods were found in ancient India, ancient Egypt, and the Mayans of South America, as well as in the Taihao and Shaohao tribes of ancient China and their descendants in the Shang Dynasty. 'Records of the Grand Historian·Book of Fury' has recorded the ancient story of Mount Tai Fury of the Twelve Emperors, in which the first sacrifice is the day of sacrifice. The sun is one of the earliest natural gods as a totem object in human history.

Second, the loom part theory. Because the star anise is very similar to the image of the "ShengHua" on the part of the prehistoric bench straightening machine, at the same time due to some prehistoric star anise image is carved on the spinning wheel, for example, the spinning wheel unearthed around Taihu Lake and the spinning wheel unearthed in Linjiatan are engraved with the image of an octagonal star, so Mr Shen congwei has been put forward in the 1980s, star anise image comes from prehistoric loom parts "ShengHua" [11]. "Sheng" is a symbol of ancient textile, later became women's jewelry. The sarcophagus of the filial son of the Northern Wei Dynasty depicts the folklore of Dong Yong and Zhinu, who is depicted holding a "Sheng" in her hand, implying that she was a textile expert. Sheng as jewelry, also known as Huasheng, is also a symbol of auspiciousness, and can only be worn by people of noble status. For example, in the myth of the Classic of Mountains and Seas, there is an image images of the Queen Mother of the West "wearing a bun with a Sheng", on the bricks of Han Tombs in Xindu, Sichuan Province, and Henan, Shandong Province.

In addition to the above explanations for the cultural connotation of the image of the star anise, there are many other explanations, such as tortoise, nine palace, "wu" character, four fish together ethnic emblem, primitive type plate, flower stalk, supernova explosion, etc.

3. Function and Implication of Jade Eagle Image

3.1 Jade Eagle is a Composite Totem

Totem is the god and idol worshiped by clan tribe, and also the symbol of clan tribe. In the

long-term hunting and picking activities, human beings have a reverence for animals and plants as well as some super abilities in nature. Birds, frogs, cows and other animals as well as some plants and even some non-living things were once the totem objects of early human beings. In totem, animal image is the most and appears the earliest, plant and non-biological totem is less and appears later, which is directly related to the life style of primitive people. The original totem was dominated by a single animal image, With the continuous merger and integration of tribes, as well as the improvement of human self-awareness, the image of a single animal totem began to gradually develop towards the direction of animal and animal and animal and character composite, dragon, phoenix and snake body and human head Nu Wa image is the example of this composite. In the later period of the primitive society, with the strength of the royal power, theocracy gradually became the ruling tool of the royal power, The totem worship of animals began to decline, and the composite modeling of animals and characters was gradually separated. The image of Kuafu holding the green snake in his left hand and the yellow snake in his right hand was the representative of this period. From the point of view of the elements of Lingjiatan jade eagle, the combination of eagle, pig and star is a typical composite totem in the middle and late period of primitive society, which implies the following points: First, Lingjiatan jade eagle is a clan totem, rather than a personal totem. In addition to the totem of the clan or tribe that the clan members worship together, there is also a personal totem, most of which is a single animal or plant [12]. This totem is the guardian god of the individual, and some of them are only available to the clan leader and wizard. Personal totems have been found along the coast of Australia and among tribes in Africa, and there are records of such personal totems in ancient China, The Australian coastal and African tribes have found a personal totem, ancient China also has such personal totem records, Shao Hao to the bird of prey as his personal totem, ‘Zuo Zuan· Xuangong three years’ Zheng Mugong took orchids as his personal totem. Lingjiatan jade eagle three composite indicates that it is a clan or tribal totem, but not a personal totem; Two, the star pattern in Lingjiatan jade eagle symbolizes the sun. The first reason is that carving the star octagon on the belly of the jade eagle is consistent with the religious consciousness of the early human “bird and sun are one”. “Shaohao named Zhi, Gu Zhi and Luan Tong” [13]. Zhi is an eagle and Hao is the sun. The Shaohao tribe in Shandong took eagle and the sun as the totems. The similarities between Lingjiatan culture and Dawenkou culture cannot be denied, which can be seen from the comparison of the excavated ladle utensils between the two places: the shape of back-pot unearthed from Lingjiatan site is similar to that of Dawenkou culture site, and there are jade tortoise shells unearthed from both places. Lingjiatan culture influenced by Dawenkou culture, took eagle and the sun as totems, and it is not surprising that the star pattern symbolizes the sun. Third, Lingjiatan jade eagle reflects the exchange and integration of different tribal cultures. Pigs were both sacrificial offerings and totem in prehistoric times. There were many clans that took pigs as totem, and Lingjiatan people worship pigs. The large jade pig from Lingjiatan site also proved this. The image of Lingjiatan jade eagle, which is composed of eagle, pig and star pattern, not only reflects the religious belief of many totem of Lingjiatan people in prehistoric times, but also reflects the communication and integration between Dawenkou culture and Lingjiatan culture. Fourth, Lingjiatan jade eagle is dominated by animal composite totem, which also indicates that the Lingjiatan society at this time is in the middle of the primitive society of god worship, that is, the transition stage of theocracy gradually to the royal power.

3.2 The Jade Eagle is Witch Jade

In the early primitive society, human beings had a low ability to understand and resist nature. Many unexplained phenomena were attributed to various “gods”, and the main form of worship to

gods was sacrifice. Under the auspices of the wizard which has the ability to connect with the gods, the most precious things in the world are sacrificed to the gods to obtain the protection of the gods. Jade is the most suitable gift to be sacrificed to the gods because of its precious material and complicated craft. In the mythology of the Classic of Mountains and Seas has also been mentioned many times. Jade is the main artifact in the religious ceremony of worshiping the mountain god. It is because jade in the early religious activities and witchcraft activities played an extremely important role, Therefore, Mr. Yang Boda called the prehistoric jade culture as witch jade culture, and the prehistoric jade was also called witch jade. From the unearthed situation of jade eagle in Lingjiatan, jade eagle and three jade people are from the same tomb, Mr. Yang Boda thinks jade people are wizard [14], while Mr. Yan Wenming thinks that the jade people are the gods[15]. Whether it is wizard or god has something to do with sacrifice activities. It is undeniable that jade eagle is the sacrificial vessel of god. In addition to the jade eagle, the large number of jade ritual vessels such as slotted rings, walls, dagger and axes unearthed from Lingjiatan site and the large altars excavated in the north also fully prove that sacrificial activities were important events in the life of the prehistoric Lingjiatan people. The jade eagle, like other jade articles, played an important role in the sacrificial ceremony. Jade eagle as witch jade and the totem of Lingjiatan people, is not only an important ritual tool for the worship of gods, but also a reflection of the early development of ritual civilization in religious activities.

4. Early Chinese Thought of “the Unity of Nature and Human” from the Jade Eagle in Lingjiatan

The idea of “the unity of nature and human” is a fundamental philosophical concept in ancient China. It is not only the Chinese people's exploration of the origin of the universe, but also the pursuit of the value and goal of life[16]. The explanation of “nature” can be divided into two kinds, according to the scholar Mr. Chen Bohai, one is “the natural heaven” and the other is “the dominant heaven”. The natural heaven refer to the universe. There are two kinds of “the dominant heaven”. One refers to the master of personality and will such as “Heaven God” and “Heaven Emperor”; the other refers to “the principle of heaven” and “the way of ethics and morality” [17]. The thought of “the unity of nature and human” can be divided into old and new ones. The new thought of “the unity of nature and human” is developed based on the old one. Before the Spring and Autumn Period, it was the old “unity of nature and human”, which originated from witchcraft activities. It mainly meant that the world of man and god became one through the communication of wizard, which was the theological unity of nature and human. Here, “nature” refers to “gods” such as nature god, animal totem god, ancestor god, etc. After the Spring and Autumn Period, it became the new “the unity of nature and human”, which is mainly represented by the philosophical thought of “the unity of nature and human” of Confucianism and Taoism, and belongs to “the unity of nature and human” in the philosophical sense. The “nature” here refers to the “principle of heaven” and “way of heaven” and other ethics and morals. The Jade Eagle period in Lingjiatan is the Neolithic Age, which belongs to the old thought of “the unity of nature and human” and mainly focuses on the worship of animal totem. Then what are the specific manifestations of the thought of “the unity of nature and human” in prehistoric times?

First, witchcraft. In the early primitive society, due to the limited cognitive ability of human beings, they believed that all phenomena in nature were the function of gods, and gods dominated everything. The whole prehistoric society was in the “god flood” stage, and people longed to “communicate with gods” and prayed for the protection of gods. The way of “communicating with the gods” was through the sorcery activity of sacrifice. Under the auspices of the wizard, the officials communicated with the gods by offering sacrifices, performing ritual and ritual instruments,

dancing with the gods, singing the gods' songs and praying. As early as before Zhuanxu Emperor, all clans and tribes could “communicate with god” freely, and the world of man and God achieved “the unity of nature and human “ through witchcraft activities.

Second, animal totems. The concept of gods is the product of human spiritual activities. In different stages of human development, people worshiped the gods are different. Prehistoric deities include nature deities, animal totem deities and ancestor deities, etc. These deities are “heaven”. The natural gods worshiped by early human beings are sun god, mountain god and Vulcan god, etc. The images of these gods are abstract and idealistic. In the middle and late period of primitive society, human beings have a sense of awe towards concrete, realistic animals with special abilities. they think that their ancestors must have come from some animals with extraordinary powers, or a combination of human and the animal, human and animal is related. Each clan, tribe, and even individual has its own totem animal, some clans even have more than two totems. For example, the totem of the ancient Yan Emperor tribe is the ox and tiger, and the totem of the Eastern Yi tribe is the eagle, phoenix and jaw. The ancestors' respect for animal totem god is actually respect for their ancestors, that is to say, the respect of God. The animal totem itself contains the thought of “the unity of nature and human”. The jade eagle of Lingjiatan is composed of eagle, pig and star anise. Star anise pattern symbolizing the sun, in the sky.pig is a sacrifice and raised by human, on the ground. Eagle is the emissary between heaven and earth . He flies to the sun and the sky with pig . This kind of composite image itself also implies the idea of “the unity of nature and human”.

Third, The worship of ancestor spirits and wizard. Many statues of prehistoric ancestors have been found, all of them are the shapes of the combination of man and beast and man and bird. Yan Emperor, also known as Shen Nongshi, has a human body in the statue of Shen Nongshi, and the top of his head is both like ox horns and like the shape of a “mountain”. This is because Yan Emperor initiated the agricultural civilization of cattle farming and invented “building wooden square teeth” on the top of the mountain to observe the movement of the sun and guide agricultural production. There are also Nu Wa with snake body and human head, and the “the jade divine badge” shape with human head, animal body and bird claw in Liangzhu culture. Animals with divine power is people's totem god , people first ancestors are also has the extraordinary wisdom and strength of the heroes, they many both tribal leaders, and could be accessed by god's wizard, combining image animals and humans, suggests that the identity of the ancestral spirits are special, they are related to god beast, and the combination of human and beast forms is the highest respect and reverence for the ancestors. In the myths and legends of ancient Greece and Rome, the shapes of many gods are also special images of demigod . The image modeling of the unity of man and beast not only implies the respect for animal totem and human, but also implies the idea of “the unity of gods and man”.

Although wizard is a natural person, but it is a psychic, is the spokesman of heaven and god. Wizards gained respect for their ability to communicate with heaven and earth, eliminate disasters and pray for people. Some wizards even mastered the political power of the clan and became Kings. After the death of many witches, they also became the ancestral gods of the tribes and became the objects of worship. Worship of them also means the worship of God and gods, which reflects the desire of human beings to “communicate with God” and realize “the unity of nature and human”.

5. Conclusion

The ancient Chinese jade wares are greatly influenced by traditional ethics and religion. Many of the works have special allegory and represent certain political significance, ethics and religious thoughts. By eagle, pig, and star anise grain composite Lingjiatan jade eagle, every image with rich cultural connotation and meaning, jade eagle is witch jade, is also a totem object, to a certain extent,

it reflects the status of the early prehistoric ritual civilization, as well as the religious beliefs and concepts of early human beings, it not only reveals to us the idea of “the unity of nature and human” in the theological sense of early human, but also reflects the political significance and ethical thought of early human behind it, which is worthy of our research. Of course, the research on Lingjiatan jade eagle is not comprehensive enough only on the basis of Lingjiatan culture. There were also jade birds unearthed in Hongshan culture and Liangzhu culture in the same period with Lingjiatan jade eagle, by comparing these cultures horizontally, a more comprehensive conclusion will be drawn.

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