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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HISTORICAL LEGENDS AND CULTURAL HERITAGES: ON INTERPRETATION OF DONGYI CULTURE ON JIANGJUNYA ROCK ART

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ABSTRACT

There are abundant rock art cultural heritages in China. Due to lack of dynamic inheritance and accurate archaeological stratigraphy data, as for most rock art heritages represented by Jiangjunya, the interpretation of rock art images and the exhaustive root investigation of relics connotation are affected. Multiple arguments are enriched by giving full play to materials like historical legends. There are cultural customs, such as early agricultural civilization, Stone Altar (Shi She), sun and bird worships, in Dongyi cultural area where Jiangjunya is located, which have become the critical evidences for interpreting Jiangjunya rock art. The applicability of interpreting rock art heritages by historical legends is also explored through research.

KEYWORDS

Dongyi Culture, Jiangjunya Rock Art, Pre-Qin Literature, Applicability of Interpretation

Jiangjunya rock art is a "national cultural heritage", located at Mount Jinping, Taohua Village, Jinping Town, Haizhou District, Lianyungang City, Jiangsu Province in the eastern coastal area of China, which is the intersection of Shandong hills and South China plain, facing the Yellow Sea to the east, with geographical coordinates of 33°59'~35°07'N, 118°24'~119°48'E. Jiangjunya rock art heritage is mainly composed of rock paintings depicting human faces, and also includes five images, namely "He Miao" (禾苗), cupules, grid pattern, sun pattern and chessboard pattern. Its production can be traced back to the early Holocene period, which is 10000 years ago, that is, the beginning of the Neolithic Age. Its main image dates back approximately 3500 to 8000 years ago. Jiangjunya rock art is a top-scale agricultural sacrificial site in ancient societies along the southeastern coast of China. "In very ancient times, who preached truth? Before formation of the universe, how did people investigate it? Since the world remained in chaos, who could thoroughly explore into the truth? When the universe was born, there was intangible "Qi" without specific images. How did people understand it?" (遂古之初, 谁传道之? 上下未形, 何由考之? 冥昭瞢闇, 谁能极之? 冯翼惟像, 何以识之?) (Jia, 2015). Because there is no longer the tradition of rock art production in Jiangjunya and its surrounding areas at present and lacks sufficient corresponding archaeological data or accurate correlation with stratigraphy, the interpretation of Jiangjunya rock art site requires more diversified data as support. The abundant legends and scattered text records of Dongyi culture in this area have provided arguments for interpreting Jiangjunya rock art.

"One image speaks more than a thousand words". However, when we are faced with silent but complicated images, we cannot help but sigh with emotions that how we can understand a thousand words faced with an image without words (形而不语, 千言何解). How we can accurately and comprehensively interpret the connotations behind an image and understand the formal languages of an image and the connotations

they express have become the prior issue of image research. In China, especially before Song Dynasty, images were deemed that "the core rule of mastering the state power is the fundamental program for governing chaotic times and stabilizing the world" ("有国之鸿宝, 理乱之纪纲"). Zheng Qiao (郑樵) said, "Reading texts only without looking at related illustrations (pictures) is like hearing sounds but not seeing the actual form. Looking at related illustrations without reading texts is like looking at others' appearance but not listening to their speeches. The scholars of later generations either read texts only without looking at related illustrations, or only pursue for speeches and idle talks. And thus, it is difficult for scholars to master knowledge and for knowledge to be put into practice." ("见书不见图, 闻其声不见其形; 见图不见书, 见其人不闻其语。后之学者, 离图即书, 尚辞务说, 故人亦难为学, 学亦难为功。") (Qiao, 2007). "No matter how fancy the article wording is, it is as temporarily eye-catching as morning and evening rosy clouds and lacks substantive connotations. No matter how profound the reasoning is, it is like chasing echoes that can never find the destination without empirical support. Both are just word games, not truly empirical knowledge. Due to the loss of image study, all research that should have been empirical has become detached from reality" ("辞章虽富, 如朝霞晚照, 徒耀人耳目; 义理虽深, 如空谷寻声, 靡所底止。二者殊途而同归, 是皆从事于语言之末, 而非为实学也。以图谱之学不传, 则实学尽化为虚文矣。") (Qiao, 2007). All such records have demonstrated the significance of images. As recorded in *Orthodox Theory in Chinese Historiography* (《中国史学上之正统论》) by Rao Zongyi, "The solid orthodox tradition of historiography in our country is destined to make it difficult for Zheng's *Atlas* (《图谱》) to exert much influence on future generations. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century when Western historiography, especially archaeology, brought about impacts, that people realized the significance of his idea of mutual attestation between images and texts, such as Wang Guowei's "dual attestation", which requires to attest the historical literature with the cultural relics



Figure 1 The Typical Image in Jiangjunya Rock Art, “Human Face and Rice Seedling”

excavated underground to reveal the truth of history.” (Yi and Michae, 2007). Afterwards, Huang Xianfan (黄现璠) added “oral materials” and ethnology field investigations to expand it into “triple attestation”, providing more multi-dimensional approaches to interpret images and relics.

Rock art mainly originated in prehistoric or ancient times. Due to lack of texts and archaeological data, it is usually difficult to comprehensively sketch the full picture of prehistoric culture, “Though archaeological data can provide us with information about religious beliefs, the conclusion that these beliefs represent all the beliefs of prehistoric humans is wrong. It is impossible to outline the structural forms of ancient myths, theology, and rituals depending solely on archaeological discoveries” (Ke, et al. 2004). The culture represented by material remains is a product of historical stages, so it is especially necessary to understand context to acquire the true understanding of its connotations (Sheng, 2025). There are abundant mythical resources, oral history, and pre-Qin literature in China and how such data should be applied to interpreting rock art and enriching and deepening our understanding of rock art heritages is a precious topic worth exploring.

1. THE INTERPRETATION SCOPE OF MYTHICAL LEGENDS ON CULTURAL HERITAGES

Though mythical legends are kind of assumptive, their sources are rooted in social life. Speaking of mythology and authentic and trustworthy historical records, it is impossible to completely deny the reference value and referenceable significance of mythology, and it is required to investigate and apply the key elements, such as types and structures in myths, combined with literature, unearthed cultural relics, archaeological sites, and socio-economic and cultural types adhering to the principle of bold assumptions and careful attestation. For instance, Heinrich Schilemann, a German archaeologist in the 19th century, discovered the existence of ancient civilizations like Troy and Mycenae based on the text records in Homer’s epic poems, *Iliad and Odyssey*.

In China, at the beginning of the 20th century, Gu Jiegang, Yang Kuan et al. proposed the accumulative historical view and the ethnic legend historical view, and carried out meticulous research and analysis on mythological figures and events in Chinese literature and classics, forming the Ancient Mythology Critique School. Liang Qichao said, “When we study the ancient people’s values on universe and life and the ancient society, we definitely cannot believe in those bizarre records in *Zuo Zhuan* (《左传》). However, the social psychology in the Spring and Autumn Period was generally like this.” (Note 1). Though legends cannot prove the authenticity of history as authentic and trustworthy historical records, they are true expressions of ancient people’s understanding of the world. Since the 20th century, with the discovery of bone and tortoise shell inscriptions, the genealogy of Shang Dynasty emperors in *Historical Records* (《史记》) has been verified in bone and tortoise shell inscriptions. For instance, Wang Guowei drew the conclusion that Emperor Ku (帝嚳) in *Historical Records · Annals of the Five Emperors* (《史记·五帝本纪》) indeed existed through investigation in *Study on Ancestors and Shang Emperors Based on Inscriptions of Shang Dynasty*

(《殷卜辞所见先公先王考》), and proposed that the Shang Dynasty inheritance recorded in *Historical Records* is trustworthy. Mr. Qian Mu pointed out therefrom that Sima Qian’s records on Shang Dynasty are authentic, the genealogy of Xia Dynasty may also be true (Jie, 1936). For another example, it is recorded in *ZhuShu Annals* (《竹书纪年》) that “in the first year of King Yi’s reign, there was an anomalous vision of ‘the sky brightens again’ in Zheng’s territory” (“懿王元年天再旦于郑”). According to the investigation, “Zheng” is geographically located in Hua County or Fengxiang near the capital city of the Western Zhou Dynasty (which is Xi’an now). In recent years, the experts in Xia Shang Zhou Chronology Project have described the geographical area of the phenomenon of ‘the sky brightens again’ caused by solar eclipse at sunrise, and comprehensively calculated the solar eclipses between 1000 BCE and 840 BCE, through which they have drawn the conclusion that the solar eclipse on April 21, 899 BCE might have caused the phenomenon of ‘the sky brightens again’ in the Zheng’s territory of the Western Zhou Dynasty (Note 2). All of these indicate that myths and legends have a certain degree of authenticity.

Wang Minke said, after the “history” of centralized and powerful ethnic groups became narrative protagonist, the “history” claimed by marginalized and disadvantaged ethnic groups were deemed as myths and legends being passed down orally. And therefore, myths and legends are remnants of ancient historical dispositions and memories (Min, 2009). According to the viewpoints of Fu Sinian, Dongyi once possessed strong economic and military power, occupying an advantageous position in competition with other groups in the upper and middle reaches of the Yellow River. This confrontation stretched out the early Chinese history and lasted until Zhou Dynasty took control of the eastern region. When historians and philosophers in the Eastern Zhou, Qin and Han dynasties attempted to systematically expound on the Chinese history with text records, the structure of this confrontation had become an established fact and their preconceived ideas. In their cultural and geographical concepts, the three dynasties, namely Xia, Shang and Zhou, built in the middle reaches of the Yellow River constitute the trustworthy orthodox historical tradition of Chinese civilization, while the regions outside the Central Plains were ruled by ‘Man Yi’ (non-Han ethnic groups) including Dongyi. The history written in this way is inevitably a hereditary regime under the concept of ‘only the winner becomes emperor’. The events and history of other early cultural groups, including Dongyi, are not deemed as parts of “trustworthy history”, but are massively included into the scope of legends and myths (Note 3). From this perspective, the myths and legends of Dongyi are of high credibility.

And thus, in the study of prehistoric art, especially in the study of rock art, there is a lack of literature and archaeological evidence, and it is difficult to fully outline the economic and cultural life of prehistoric society. And consequently, there is no alternative but to use ethnographic materials, myths and legends, remnants of folk customs and other materials in research to explore the possible connotations in rock art. And therefore, the myths and legends that have been passed down in early times shall not be denied due to their vague, contradictory, or overlapping contents. It is feasible to carry out detailed analysis on myths referring to structuralism methods and infer the meanings of their structures combined with symbolism.

“Hou Yi Shooting Suns”, “Chang E Running to the Moon” (“嫦娥奔月”), Myth of Fu Xi in Dahao Clan (大皞伏羲氏神话), the Bird Kingdom of Shaohao Clan (少皞的鸟王国), the Battle in Zhuolu between Chi You and Emperor Huang (蚩尤与黄帝的涿鹿之战) and other myths and legends are related with Dongyi ethnic groups. Tracing the documentary records and research of Dongyi, no special statements were made by Sima Qian in *Historical Records*, and it was not until the South Song Dynasty that Fan Ye edited *Biography of Dongyi* (《东夷传》) in *Book of Later Han Dynasty* (《后汉书》). Its main information was sourced from the lost ancient manuscript, *ZhuShu Annals*, and some scattered texts in pre-Qin ancient literature. Speaking of main research on Dongyi ethnic groups and Dongyi culture in modern and contemporary times, Meng Wentong (蒙文通) named Dongyi as Haidai ethnic groups in *Gu Shi Zhen Wei Kan* (Investigation of Details and Dilemmas in Ancient History) (《古史甄微坎》) and believed that it was one of the three major clans in ancient China. Fu Sinian successively published *Interpretation on Remote and Near Eastern Areas* (《大东小东说》) and *Theory of East-West Pattern*

of Yi (Non-Han Ethnic Groups) and Xia (《夷夏东西说》), raising the historical achievements of Dongyi to a height equivalent to the history of Huaxia (Chinese). In Xu Xusheng's *The Legendary Era of Ancient Chinese History* (《中国古史的传说时代》), the formation, development, and evolution of each tribal group in Dongyi as well as their correlation with Huaxia and Miao ethnic groups were expounded. In addition, Li Baifeng, Zhang Lizhi, Wang Xiantang and Luan Fengshi also conducted case studies on the history and folk customs of Dongyi. Meanwhile, with the continuous advancement of archaeological excavations in recent years, the construction of Dongyi ethnic groups and Dongyi culture is becoming increasingly perfect. According to archaeological discoveries, legend of giving birth to Qi (契), the first ancestor of Shang, after swallowing the egg of a swallow (鸟生传说), bird-shaped pattern, bird worship, bone-carved pattern, perforated stone axe, tripod pottery, tooth extraction custom, sun worship and farming and brewing were being spread in the living areas of Dongyi ethnic groups. The research starts from the relationship between Jiangjunya rock art and Dongyi ethnic groups' spatiotemporal location and further explains and proves the connotations of Jiangjunya rock art according to Dongyi ethnic groups' Stone Altar Sacrifice, sun worship, bird worship and other customs.

2. SPATIOTEMPORAL LOCATION OF DONGYI CULTURE AND JIANGJUNYA ROCK ART

As written by Sima Qian in *Historical Records*, "Emperor Yao dispatched Xi Zhong to defend Dongyi area named Yanggu" ("分命羲仲，居郁夷，曰暘谷"). It is recorded in *Shang Shu · Biography of Emperor Yao* (《尚书·尧典》) that Lianyungang belonged to Xuzhou (徐州) in Xia and Shang Dynasties, which was named as Dongyi. In view of the spatiotemporal definitions of Dongyi, there are mainly three viewpoints in the history circle:

The first viewpoint is the viewpoint that Dongyi included Huaiyi (淮夷) (non-Han ethnic groups in Huai River Basin) and Daoyi (岛夷) (non-Han ethnic groups in Shandong (山东) Peninsula) with Guo Moruo as the representative. Guo Moruo believed, "Shifang (尸方) refers to Dongyi. On way to conquer Shifang, there were areas in Huai River Basin. Shifang in Shang Dynasty refers to the combination of Daoyi and Huaiyi in Shandong." ("尸方当即东夷也。征尸方所至之地有在淮河流域者，则殷代之尸方乃合山东之岛夷与淮夷而言。") (Mo, 1975). In other words, the area from the lower reaches of the Yellow River to the Jianghuai River Basin was the activity area of Dongyi and Huaiyi, which included nine parts and were collectively named as Jiuyi (九夷).

The second viewpoint is that the non-Han ethnic groups ruled by Shao Hao (少昊) (Emperor Bai) lived together with other ethnic groups with Fan Wenlan as the representative. Fan Wenlan believed, "Emperor Huang's (黄帝) descendants might live in the Central Plains, or live in non-central areas. Shao Hao's tribe might be a branch of Emperor Huang's tribe that developed eastward. After living together with non-Han ethnic groups, they accepted the culture of Tai Hao's (太昊) tribe and were thus named as Shao Hao, becoming the heirs of non-Han ethnic groups' cultures" (Wen, 1978). In other words, provided that Emperor Huang has been confirmed as the first ancestor of Chinese, it is believed that Dongyi and its related cultures generated and developed under the impact of Emperor Huang's tribe.

The third viewpoint is that Dongyi was formed by several local tribes in Shandong with Li Baifeng as the representative. On the basis of criticizing Fan Wenlan's view point, he believed, "Some clans lived dispersedly in the lower reaches of the Yellow River Basin and they were driven away to the east by Qiang ethnic group (羌族). The clans that retreated to Shandong area were many different tribes. However, Dongyi should not include Huaiyi." (Bai, 1981).

Regardless of the aforesaid definitions of Dongyi ethnic groups, Jiangjunya rock art located in Huang – Huai River Delta is included. And thus, it is undoubtedly that Lianyungang area was where Dongyi ethnic groups lived and reproduced. Specifically speaking of archaeological types, Yan Wenming believed, "Qingliangang culture, Dawenkou culture and the later Longshan (龙山) culture located in Shandong and north Jiangsu should be cultures of non-Han ethnic groups in ancient times."

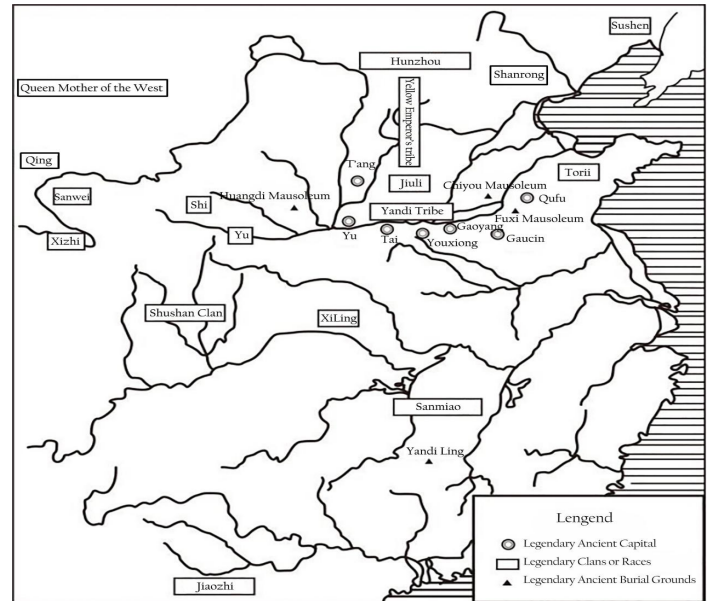


Figure 2 Ancient Clans and Tribes in Legends (Jie, 2015)

(Wen, 1980). And he further expounded that, "In ancient historical legends, Dongyi's ancestors included two groups, namely Tai Hao and Shao Hao, and might also include Chi You and Jiu Li (九黎) groups. Shao Hao group and its descendants spread to all areas, such as Wensi (汶泗), Yishu (沂沭), Weizi (潍淄) Basins." (Wen, 1989). Tang Lan also believed that the relics of Dawenkou culture was consistent with Shao Hao's activity area in literature (Lan, 1979), that is, Wensi River Basin (汶泗流域) area from Tai'an to Xuzhou. To be even more specific, Dawenkou culture, as a part of Tai Hao and Shao Hao cultures, belongs to Dongyi culture. Both are closely genetically related. The Dawenkou culture in Henan and Anhui areas may be the remains of Tai Hao tribe, and the Dawenkou culture in south Shandong and north Jiangsu areas may be the remains of Shao Hao tribe. In other words, Lianyungang area where Jiangjunya rock art is located should be more closely related with Shao Hao tribe. Additionally, to investigate from the perspective of unearthed materials, in Xuzhou and Lianyungang areas in north Jiangsu area, Lanzhou-Lianyungang Railway runs east-west, and Si River (泗水), Yi River (沂水) and Shu River (沫河) run south-north. In the unearthed cultural remains of Shang Dynasty, the cultural factors of non-Han ethnic groups are more prominent. Given that Dongyi culture gradually integrated into pre-Shang civilization, to interpret Jiangjunya rock art, in view of choice of literature and historical materials, besides *Classic of Mountains and Rivers* (《山海经》), *Huai Nan Zi* (《淮南子》) and *Yu Gong* (《禹贡》) that are directly related with Dongyi, contents related to religious customs of Shang and Zhou dynasties in *Book of Poems* (《诗经》) and *Book of Rites* (《礼记》) are also selected for inferring the past (overview of Dongyi culture) based on the later information (relics of Shang and Zhou dynasties).

3. "USING STONES TO BUILD ALTARS" OF DONGYI CULTURE AND "STONE ALTAR" OF JIANGJUNYA ROCK ART

It is mentioned in *Huai Nan Zi · On Qi's Customs* (《淮南子·齐俗论》) that "in rituals of people in Shang Dynasty, stones were used to build the statues of God of Land" ("殷人之礼，其社用石。"). In *Rites of Zhou · Chunguan System · Xiao Zong Bo (an official title)* (《周礼·春官·小宗伯》), "the statues of Land of God are usually made of stones" ("社之主，盖用石为之。"). Using stones to build altars is a tradition of Dongyi ethnic groups and was passed down to Shang Dynasty. The Stone Altar ruins in Xuzhou Qiuwan (徐州丘湾) relics and Zhengzhou Shangcheng (郑州商城) relics are examples of this custom. In *Zuo's Commentary* (《左传》), "in summer, Emperor of Song commanded Emperor of Zhu to kill Emperor of Zeng and used him as the human sacrifice at the Altar of God of Land near Sui River, attempting to force Dongyi ethnic groups to surrender to Song" ("夏，宋公使邾文公用郈子于睢之社，欲以属



Figure 3 Stone Altar in Jiangjunya Rock Art

东夷。”) and “in July of an autumn, Ji Pingzi led the army to attack Ju and occupied the territory of Gui. During the post-war prisoner offering ceremony, prisoners of war were used as human sacrifices for the first time in Bo Altar.” (“秋七月，平子伐莒，取郟。献俘，始用人於亳社。”) The conventional customs of killing humans as sacrifices for altar rituals and using dogs as sacrifices were particularly popular among the Dongyi people in ancient times, especially in the northern Jiangsu and southern Shandong regions. There are phenomena of human and dog sacrifices at the Xuzhou Qiwan site, suggesting that Dongyi people kept this tradition in late Shang Dynasty. The use of human sacrifices in altar rituals in Zhou Dynasty may be inherited from offsprings of Shang Dynasty (Bo Altar) and Dongyi’s Stone Altar. It was especially popular in the northern Jiangsu and southern Shandong regions, and lasted to the Spring and Autumn period.

On the top of Jiangjunya rock art site, there are four stones, including one larger one and three smaller ones, with cupules on their tops and checkered pattern on their bottoms, which were called by locals as “Stone Altar” or “Shi Zu” (“石祖”). According to the records in *Haizhou Historical Records* (《海州文献录》), “in the village of Lipingyan, a large stone emerged near the local altar. It was over ten feet long and stood on three smaller stones as its base, resembling legs.” (“襄平延里社生大石，长丈余，下有三小石为足。”) (Note 4), exactly referring to this site. “On the basis that primitives’ reproduction worship and land worship had developed to a certain degree, under the influence of mutual infiltration and induction, both worships combined and eventually developed into a new entity of worship, that is, altar. Altar worship is the product of primitive worships that had developed to a higher stage.” (Zhen, 1988). We can tell from Dongyi legends and records in pre-Qin literature that there was the tradition of “using stones to build altars” in this area. This set of stones in Jiangjunya rock art site also indicates that there were early “altar sacrifice” activities in this area and rock art is one of the products of “altar sacrifice”.

4. SUN, ASTROLOGY, TIME SYSTEM AND JIANGJUNYA ROCK ART’S AGRICULTURAL WORSHIP AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP

“Below lies the Tang Valley, growing the Fusang Tree where the ten suns bathe, located north of Heichi Kingdom. The Tree stands in water and is very huge. The nine suns rest on the lower branches while the other sun rests on the upper branch.” (“下有汤谷。汤谷上有扶桑，十日所浴，在黑齿北。居水中，有大木，九日居下枝，一日居上枝”) (Tao, 2015).

Classic of Mountains and Rivers · Records of Eastern Areas (《山海经·海外东经》)

Tang Valley, also known as Yang Valley, is the place where the sun rises in myths and legends, which is opposite to Yu Abyss (the place where the sun sets in legends). According to the records in *Shang Shu · Biography of Emperor Yao*, Tang Valley (Yang Valley) where Xihe (羲和) bathes the suns is located in a place named Yuyi (嵎夷). “Emperor Yao then commanded Xihe to reverently observe the celestial laws and

the movements of the sun, moon and stars so as to make a calendar to guide agricultural activities. He also appointed Xizhong (羲仲) to reside in a place in Yuyi, which is named Yang Valley.” (“乃命羲和，钦若昊天，历象日月星辰，敬授人时。分命羲仲，宅嵎夷，曰旸谷”) (Shi and Cui, 2015). It is generally believed that Tang Valley is located in the eastern coastal area of Shandong Province where Xihe’s ethnic group worshipped the Sun God in ancient times.

As recorded in *Classic of Mountains and Rivers · Records of Southern Areas*, (《山海经·大荒南经》), “Beyond the southeastern sea and between Gan River, there is a country named Xihe. There was a woman named Xihe bathing the suns in the Gan Abyss. Xihe is the wife of Dijun (帝俊) and gave birth to ten suns.” (“东南海之外，甘水之间，有羲和之国，有女子名曰羲和，方日浴于甘渊。羲和者，帝俊之妻，生十日。”) “Emperor Yao also appointed Xizhong to reside in a place in Yuyi, which is named Yang Valley, to ceremonially greet the sunrise and regulate the spring farming activities. He also appointed Hezhong (和仲) to reside in the west, named Mei Valley (昧谷), to ceremonially farewell the sunset and regulate the autumn harvesting activities” (“分命羲仲，宅嵎夷，曰旸谷，寅宾出日，平秩东作。分命和仲，宅西，曰昧谷，寅饗纳日，平秩西成。”). Though these are legends describing that ancient emperors in the primitive society appointed commissioners to reside in Yuyi and Mei Valley to welcome and farewell the sun for calendar making, the discoveries of oracular inscriptions on tortoise shells and bones have strongly proved that there was indeed the custom of welcoming and farewell the sun in ancient times, especially in Shang Dynasty (Meng, 1956). As recorded in *Collection of Selected Inscriptions on Tortoise Shells and Bones · Investigation and Interpretation* (《殷契粹编·考释》). “People in Shang Dynasty performed rituals at both sunrise and sunset...These rituals are the morning and evening worships of God of Sun” (“殷人于日之出入均有祭.....盖朝夕神拜之。”) “The sun, moon and stars are what people gaze upon in reverence.” (“天之三辰，民所瞻仰也”) (*Discourses of Countries · Discourses of the Country of Lu* (Guo Yu · Lu Yu) 《国语·鲁语》).

There are many records about “sun welcome”, “sunrise” and “sunset” in the inscriptions on tortoise shells and bones unearthed from Shang ruins in China, reflecting that people in Shang Dynasty bowed in worship at both sunrise and sunset. There are also records of “welcoming the sun” in the east and “farewelling the sun” in the east in *Shang Shu · Biography of Emperor Yao*.

In Shang Dynasty, holding Yu Ji (post-burial sacrificial rites) for ancestral emperors not only had the significance of escorting ancestral emperors to heaven, but could also help them meet God of Sun, that is, “helping ancestral emperors be guests of God of Sun” (“宾于帝”). The oracle inscriptions about “helping ancestral emperors be guests of God of Sun” on tortoise shells and bones are related to Yu Ji to some extent. In Shang Dynasty, people believed that the sun could cut off the connection between heaven and earth, so it could become the media of the three realms. It could help souls enter the heaven and serve as the communication media between offsprings and ancestors. The worship of the sun in Shang Dynasty included the belief in the rebirth of the dead. The ancestors in Shang Dynasty believed that humans would ascend to heaven by the sun when the morning sun rose after they passed away and were buried. Several ancient myths talked about riding the sun to enter the heaven or travel around. In the meantime, since ancient times, the ceremonies of sending, pacifying, and sacrificing souls were held during the morning glow. For example, it is recorded in *Zhong Fu (Tomb Rhapsody)* (《冢赋》) by Zhang Heng in Han Dynasty, “The tombs, serene and fair, where souls rest in peace, is blessed with fortune and bathed in harmony. Like flowers in spring, they thrive with grace; like the rising sun, they shine with endless glory.” (“幽墓既美，鬼神既宁，降之以福，于之以平。如春之卉，如日之升。”) (Heng and Zhen, 1986).

In the development of process of ancient history, sun worship further combined with ancestor worship with time as connection. It is believed in *Research on Inscriptions on Tortoise Shells and Bones · Interpretation of Stem-Branch System* (《甲骨文字研究·释干支》) by Guo Moruo that “the legend of the ten suns was undoubtedly created by people in Shang Dynasty and attributed to their ancestors.” (Mo, 2002). And thus, the correlation between sun worship and ancestor worship in Shang Dynasty is mainly manifested in the correlation between celestial stem of the day and royal ancestor worship ceremony. Chen Mengjia also

pointed out based on the oracle inscriptions that what people in Shang Dynasty offered sacrifices to were “the sun, sunrise, sunset, sunrise and sunset, sunrise and so on. The sacrificial approaches included welcome, regulation, repeated observation, new year celebration and so on, which were also sacrificial approaches for ancestor worship.” In the ancestral temple ceremonies in Shang Dynasty, sun worship and ancestor worship were united, in other words, the heavenly stem of ancestral emperors’ temple title was used as the sacrifice date. However, suburban sacrifice was separated from ancestral temples later and both became two parallel ritual systems. It can be seen that there is a close connection between ancestor worship and time system. The ancestor worship inscriptions on bronzes in Shang and Zhou Dynasties are one of its main contents, such as “the sacrificial vessel cast by someone for their ancestors (such as Father A, Father C, etc.)” (“某谁作父甲（甲、丙……）宝彝”). In Zhou Dynasties, inscriptions in this format were still popular. Reflecting on the inscriptions in Shang and Zhou Dynasties, regardless of their complexity, there always included this part, suggesting that ancestor worship is always the only key point of inscription writing (Jing, 2013). It has also verified the connotation of ancestor worship of Jiangujunya rock art site, especially the stone altar and human-face images, which were created based on this social cultural context, suggesting the ancestor worship complex and the simple values of praying for the protection of ancestors in the agricultural society.

Dongyi ethnic groups have been considered to have relatively developed early calendars, which is related to their coastal and mountainous terrain and developed agriculture. For instance, the carved symbols on ceramic ritual vessels unearthed from Lingyanghe ruins (陵阳河遗址) in Ju County are usually considered as the symbol of Shantou Calendar (an astronomical calendar system based on mountain observations). Meanwhile, according to the determination of micro corrosion dating and cross dating, the age of the sun symbol in pottery texts in Ju County is basically consistent with that of the sun image in Jiangujunya rock art, which were supposed to generate under the context of Dongyi culture.

The Jiangujunya rock art painting as shown by Figure 4 is believed to depict the “Milky Way” consisting of striped cupules in varying sizes and “Meridian” that is a long manually ground groove whose direction has an error of only 3°55’88” from the current meridian, surrounded by crescent, cupules, concentric circles, sun and other images. The astronomical system regarding the sun and stars and the corresponding

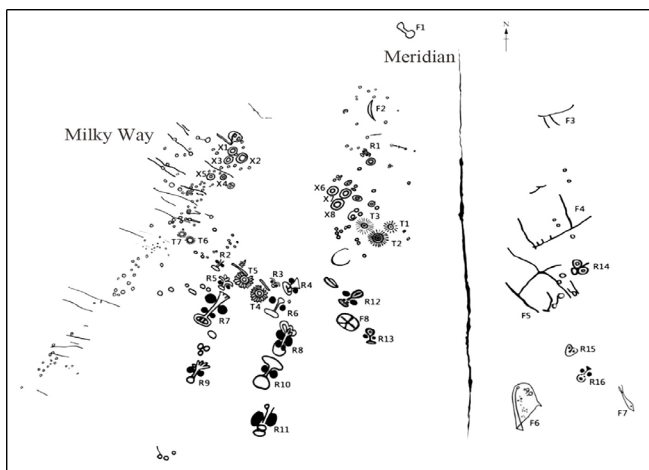


Figure 4 Human-Face Images, Sun Graphs and Constellations in Jiangujunya Rock Art (Line Sketch)

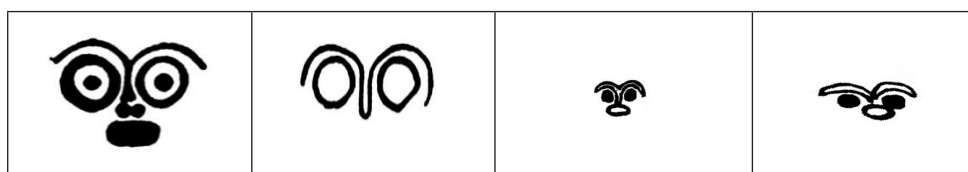


Figure 5 Human-Face Images with Bird Features in Jiangujunya Rock Art

phenological system for agricultural production developed early in Lianyungang on the coast of the East China Sea. For example, in *Book of Rites · Moon-related Temporal Laws* (《礼记·月令》), the relationship between seasons and production life like farming in ancient times is recorded in details, indicating that the phenological system had already taken shape and the development of astronomical observation and the progress of agricultural cultivation are mutually causal. Furthermore, astronomical observation (concept of time) is not only related with agricultural civilization, but is also tightly combined with ancestor worship, which explains why the constellation rock painting and the human-face image with connotation of ancestor worship in Jiangujunya rock art are in the same painting.

5. EXPLORING INTO CONNOTATIONS OF HUMAN-FACE IMAGE IN JIANGJUNYA ROCK ART FROM BIRD WORSHIP OF DONGYI ETHNIC GROUPS

In Jiangujunya rock art, there is a typical type of human-face images, which are mainly featured by absence of external contour and the most prominent sketching of eyebrows and eyes. The eyebrows are connected, resembling the shape of M, and the eyes are usually large circles with one circular dot in each circle or concentric circles. The human-face rock paintings in this style have not only been found in Jiangujunya in Lianyungang, but have also been discovered in Mount Helan, Mount Yin, Siberia and the West Coast of North America. Because this type of human-face images resembles the hawk face and legends of bird worship existed in multiple areas with human-face images, they are usually interpreted as hawk face and are believed to express bird totem and bird worship. The more abstract an image is, the greater the space for its interpretation is. And therefore, it is possible to define this type of images as hawk face or bird face, but it still requires more supporting evidences.

In ancient Chinese literature, there are relatively abundant records on bird worship and legend of giving birth to Qi, the first ancestor of Shang, after swallowing the egg of a swallow. For example, they are mentioned in *Zuo Zhuan, Historical Records, Classic of Mountains and Rivers, Annals of Wu and Yue* (《吴越春秋》) and other works. As recorded in *Classic of Mountains and Rivers · Records of Eastern Areas*, “the Deity of the East, Gou Mang, is depicted as a bird-bodied and human-faced figure” (“东方句芒,鸟身、人面”) (Tao, 2015). As recorded in *Book of Rites · Moon-related Temporal Laws*, “In mid-spring, the swallows come. On the day of their arrival, a grand sacrifice of Tai Lao (a bull, sheep, and pig) is offered at the Gao Mei altar.” (“仲春,玄鸟至,至之日,以太牢祠于高禘。”) (Jin, 2016). In *Integrated Collection of Investigation and Interpretation* (《通纂考释》) by Guo Moruo, it was believed that the Phoenix, also known as the God of Wind, is an old myth and legend from Shang Dynasty.

There were numerous bird legends in various places, but there were the most bird legends in eastern coastal areas. Tao Gui (陶鬲) (a ceramic vessel for cooking) is the “standard fossil” of Dawenkou culture and Longshan culture. Tao Gui generally looks like a bird in shape and varies in styling in different periods. Tao Gui in early period of Dawenkou culture is featured by a long neck, handles, a flat body and solid legs, and two of its handles raise high with flat and horizontal tails, resembling spreading wings. Tao Gui in middle and late periods is more similar in shapes with an elongated neck in the shape of beak and three bag-shaped legs connected to the body, including the front two bags in shape of round drums and the rear bag drooping like a drooping bird tail. In ancient times, Tao Gui was a relatively valuable special cooking vessel and only popular in the upper-class circle. The exquisite Tao Gui is not



Figure 6 Tao Gui in Periods of Dawenkou Culture and Longshan Culture



Figure 7 Bird-Shaped Artifacts Unearthed From Surrounding Areas of Lianyungang

just a cooking vessel, but is more inclined to be an important vessel for ancestor sacrifices representing the image of swallow and phoenix, which had long been fascinating to Dongyi ethnic groups. The photos in Figure 6 were taken by the author in the museums in various in this area. Figure 6 (a) shows the Tao Gui of Dawenkou culture unearthed from Lingyanghe site in Ju County while Figure 6 (b) and 6 (c) show the Tao Gui in the period of Longshan culture. A variety of Tao Gui have been unearthed from this area. It was not until the middle and late periods of Longshan culture that black pottery fully replaced their status and became popular in North Jiangsu and South Shandong areas. However, some tripods, disc-shaped cauldrons, and pottery cauldrons still retained the shape of bird heads on their legs (e.g. Figure 6 (a)).

Apart from Tao Gui, bird-shaped vessels were also commonly-seen in North Jiangsu and South Shandong areas influenced by Dongyi culture. For example, in Figure 7, Figure 7 (a) shows a bird-shaped leg of Longshan culture period. Figure 7 (b) shows a bird-head-shaped vessel cover made of clay unearthed from the tombs of Han Dynasty in Haiqu, which was the only fragment since the whole vessel was broken while being unearthed. Figure 7 (c) shows a pottery tripod in Han Dynasty unearthed from Xidushu Village (西独树村), Jiehu Town (界湖镇), Shandong Province.

As for the connotations of bird patterns, Zhang Guangzhi believed that the patterns (e.g. birds and animals) on the bronze artifacts of Shang and Zhou Dynasties, and the elf graphs (or images) related to primitive religious sacrificial rituals were a tool for primitive wizards to communicate between humans and gods. "In the art of the Eastern Zhou and Han Dynasties, there were often birds perching on the top of the divine tree. If the trunk is the wizard's passage to the heaven, the hovering bird perching on the top of the tree can be seen as an extension

of the ladder to the heaven. The importance of birds in Shang culture can be inferred from the diversity and complexity of bird images in jade vessels...The bird images were not just for decoration. At least some of them played roles in the divine communication rituals of people in Shang Dynasty." (Guang, 2013). The divine communication features of birds are based on birds' attributes of flying and their close relationship with agricultural culture. "The orioles chirp in the mid spring." ("仲春之月，仓庚鸣。") The author believes that legend of giving birth to Qi, the first ancestor of Shang, after swallowing the egg of a swallow, bird worship and the derivative bird-shaped vessels are all rooted in the close relationship between birds and agriculture. Based on the mastery of phenological knowledge, ancestors gradually connected habitat patterns of birds with agricultural production, which can also be known from records in *Zuo Zhuan* · 525 BCE (《左传·昭十七年》), in which a bird official in charge of affairs related to phenology and agriculture was recorded and a rigorous agricultural knowledge system was formed. This judgment has also been proved by the bird-shaped Tao Gui unearthed from Erjian site (二涧遗址), Dacun site (大村遗址) and Chaoyang site (朝阳遗址). "It is getting warmer in spring, and the orioles begin to chirp." ("春曰载阳，有鸣仓庚。") The images combining birds and the sun were also commonly seen in patterns on pottery sculpture and colored pottery, indicating the relatively close relationships between birds, the sun and agriculture in terms of cultural relation. Afterwards, with the influence of culture of later generations, they had gradually become the symbols of the sun, divinity, power, and status.

What is the relationship between human-face images in Jiangjunya rock art and birds? Are such human-face images bird faces? According to the analysis above, a majority of the spatiotemporal framework of Jiangjunya belongs to Dongyi culture. Based on the bird worship tradition, Tao Gui shapes and connotations, relationship between rice-

planting agriculture and birds, relationship between sun worship and birds, there may be elements of bird worship culture in human-face images. Nevertheless, the author believes that the current materials are not sufficient for confirming that such human-face images are bird faces. In standard iconology research, the connotations of visual images are discussed by comparing the orderly inherited and directly related literature materials. But as for research on prehistoric art, such literature materials are absent. The judging results based on unreliable materials are not trustworthy. For example, hundreds of divine animals are depicted in Classic of Mountains and Rivers, and their similarities correspond to unearthed artifacts or artworks, based on which their artistic images are named. And thus, the naming becomes an isolated conclusion and unprovable hypothesis without specific historical significance (Hong, 2005). Similarly, in Dongyi areas from Beixin culture, Qingliangang culture, Dawenkou culture to Longshan culture, Yueshi culture, there was the tradition of using pigs as burial companions and symbols of wealth. If they can be interpreted as bird faces in this logic, pig faces and animal faces can also be interpreted in this logic, which is apparently not rigorous and lacks sufficient logical chain and empirical support. And consequently, the author believes that the features of human-faced images in Jiangjunya rock art may be affected by the culture of bird worship and such images have the abstract connotations of bird worship. However, confirming them as bird faces or hawk faces remains to be supplemented by more archaeological and ethnological materials in future.

"History never presents itself. The process of reproducing the facts that had disappeared in the long river of time as history undoubtedly requires interpretation." (Zi, 2019). In the iconology research involving prehistoric art, the main issue is to find the basis for linking prehistoric art and legendary materials in history. In other words, the whole research process must focus on revealing the historic linking between the two. The premise for this research is that the art and literature (including oral literature) created by people in a specific period and culture should be parallel in certain aspects, and both reflect the special perspectives and concepts of how people observed, understood and expressed the world at that time. The connotations expressed by a type of art of literature refer to individuals' basic observations, understanding and expressions of the world in the culture. Based on such understanding, the key to research on prehistoric art relies on searching for parallel concepts or combinations in art and legends rather than naming some single image (Hong, 2005). Based on the overlap in spatial and temporal locations of Dongyi ethnic groups and Jiangjunya rock art, as well as the correlation between Dongyi myths and legends and Jiangjunya rock art, the stone altars, sun worship and astronomical astrology of Jiangjunya rock art are further proved and it is further confirmed that Jiangjunya rock art is the remnant of agricultural civilization by analyzing the stone altars, sun worship, astronomy and agriculture, and bird worship of Dongyi ethnic groups.

CONCLUSION

Though rock art is a widespread prehistoric relic, most rock art relics in China lack dynamic inheritance and reference to archaeological stratigraphy, trapping the interpretation of rock art into a dilemma where it is hard to achieve positivism and inclined to guess the connotations merely by looking at the images. The North Jiangsu and South Shandong area where Jiangjunya rock art is located is where Dongyi culture existed. According to the diversified pre-Qin materials and Dongyi legends, there was developed agriculture, rice planting, the tradition of "using stones to build altars", sun and bird worships in Dongyi culture. By analyzing the features of Dongyi culture, the social and cultural environments of rock art creation in ancient times are depicted, which is the important context for interpreting the creation purposes, social functions and symbolic connotations of Jiangjunya rock art. It also aims at interpreting the prehistoric art like rock art, exploring the possibility of cultural interpretation, and giving full play to diversified historical legends and relevant historical materials in China to infer the connotations of prehistoric arts.

Among the methodologies of rock art research, it is required to critically interpret the myths and legends based on historical materials,

archaeology, ethnography and so on. Especially in the countries with profuse myths and legends, such as China and India, we must not confine ourselves to a positivist framework or treat myths and legends as one possible approach to interpreting rock art. Furthermore, we should also avoid relying solely on myths and legends to interpreting rock art, or indulging in excessive speculation and overinterpretation.

Myths and legends are an approach to enrich our rock art research and investigate into prehistorical civilizations. Taking Dongyi culture in Lianyun gang as an example, the rich Dongyi myths in this area are the precious historical materials preserved by ancient inhabitants in this area and reflect the social psychological structure and cognition modes towards the world. In the absence of archaeological stratigraphy and living ethnographic inheritance of rock art, such historical materials are even of more vital importance.

Myths and legends can build the bridge between rock art and archaeological materials and ethnography. For example, the sun symbols on unearthed pottery and the sun symbols in Jiangjunya rock art can be more richly interpreted through sun worship in Dongyi myths, from which we can deduce the connotations represented by rock art as well as the approximate creation period and spatiotemporal context.

Myths and legends are of significant values for interpreting rock art, especially for those countries with written records of myths. Although the ancient creators of rock art have long passed into history, the myths and legends still can reveal their cultural concepts and belief systems to us. Though positivism can provide us with exact data, it severely restricts our possibility to interpret rock art. In rock art research, empirical analysis and interpretation are complementary rather than oppositional. Both are approaches for researchers to understand rock art, as well as channels for researchers and creators to communicate.

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ANNOTATION

Note 1: Qi, C, L. (1994). *History of Mythology, Religions and Others, Selected Papers on Chinese Mythology, 1*, (ed.). China Radio and Television Press, Beijing, 93-94. This article is selected from a section in Chapter 4, namely Cultural History and Its Practices of Chinese History Research Approaches (Supplement) written by Liang Qichao's. Liang Qichao lectured on Chinese History Research Approaches in Nankai University in 1921 and his lecture transcript was published in the following year. He lectured on the Supplement of the book in Institute of Chinese Studies of Tsinghua University in 1925. The publishing was made according to the notes of Zhou Chuanru and Yao Mingda in 1926.

Note 2: The expert group of Xia Shang Zhou Chronology Project. (2000). *Simplified Report on Achievements from 1996 to 2000 of Xia Shang Zhou Chronology Project*. Beijing Branch of World Publishing Company, Beijing.

Note 3: Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica. (1935). *Collection of Essays in Celebration of Mr. Cai Yuanpei's 65th Birthday*. Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica, Nanjing, 1093-1134. quoted from Hong, W., 2005. *Fine Arts in Etiquette*. SDX Joint Publishing Company, Beijing, 11.

Note 4: *Haizhou's Historical Records* is provided by Lianyun gang Key Cultural Site Protection Institute.

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