

Discussion about Sun Worship from Sanxingdui Bronze Sacred Tree

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Abstract. Based on the relationship between Sanxingdui bronze sacred tree and sun worship, this paper explores the relationship between sun worship and bird worship, and interprets the origin of ancient ancestors' original belief. This paper expounds the author's thoughts and opinions on the significance of archaeology by analyzing the ancient human belief in archaeological discoveries.

Keywords: Sanxingdui, Bronze Sacred Tree, Sun Worship, Original Belief, Ancient Human Belief.

1. Introduction

Sun worship is a primitive belief that has shown some universality all over the world. Renowned religiologist Max Muller believes that the sun myth is the source of all myths based on natural phenomena, which can show the importance of sun worship in the primitive belief system of ancient ancestors. The reason why sun worship occupies an important position in many nations and cultures around the world is closely related to the productivity level and cognitive level of ancient ancestors. Early humans had a relatively low level of productivity and a high degree of dependence on the natural environment, "Nature is at first opposed to man as a wholly alien, infinitely powerful and indomitable force, and man relates to it exactly as animals relate to nature, he is intimidated by it like cattle, and thus this is a purely animal consciousness of nature (natural religion)." ^[1] During this period, human beings regarded natural phenomena that had great influence on their lives as objects of obedience and worship, and natural phenomena such as the sun and moon, wind and rain, and lightning became universal objects of worship for human beings. The rising of sun in the east and setting of sun in the west is a regular natural phenomenon easily observed by ancient ancestors. And the sun not only affects human life but also affects the life state of every things. The light and warmth coming from the sun is a powerful force for the growth of all things in history, which makes the worship of the sun have transcendent significance in the primitive belief system of animism.

The ancient Shu culture represented by Sanxingdui Site in Guanghan, Sichuan is considered to have primitive belief in sun worship, and many cultural relics unearthed at the site have become favorable evidences of the existence of sun worship in ancient Shu culture, among which the bronze tree unearthed in the Number two burial pit is one of the most representative evidences.

2. Bronze sacred tree and sun worship

Six bronze sacred trees were unearthed in Sanxingdui Number two burial pit, including two large bronze sacred trees and four small bronze sacred trees. Two large bronze sacred trees have different degrees of defects. Number one bronze tree is more complete, after restoration of the residual height of 396 cm, missing the top part, there are three branches on the trunk, each layer has three branches, each branch has a bird. After restoration, only about one-third of the base and the lower part of the trunk of Number two bronze tree were restored, and the branch shape was slightly different from that of Number one bronze tree.

Number one and Number two bronze trees do not show direct solar elements. The unearthed bronze sacred tree seems to be the only connection between the bronze sacred tree and sun worship.^[2]

"Outside the East China Sea, between Gan Water and the East China Sea, there is a country called XI Heguo. There was a woman in China. Her name was Xihe. She is bathing the Sun in the abyss. Xihe was Di Jun's wife. She gave birth to ten Suns." [3] "There are buttresses in the Tang Valley. Below the Black Tooth Kingdom is Tang Valley. A hibiscus tree grows in Tang Valley, where ten suns bathe, to the north of the Black Tooth Kingdom. There is a big tree in the water. Nine Suns live on the branches below. The other one lives on the branches above." [4] There are nine birds on the nine branches and leaves of the bronze tree Number one. If we assume that there is still a bird on the top of the Missing tree, there are ten birds on the tree, which has a certain correlation with Fusang. The divine wood that lives for ten days in ancient Chinese mythology, and the Jiongwen halo carved through the trunk and under the flower brackets of the branches [5] can also explain the connection between the bronze divine tree and the sun. The bird on the bronze tree can be seen as a god walking on the sun, and the bronze tree can be seen as a sun god tree named "Fusao" or "Fumu". According to the speculation on the complete form of the bronze sacred tree and the mutual confirmation with the myth and legend, it can be inferred that the bronze sacred tree is probably the sun sacred tree, and the sacrificial activities to the bronze sacred tree are essentially sacrifices to the sun, and the Sanxingdui bronze sacred tree is the expression of sun worship in ancient Shu culture.

3. Sun worship and bird worship

It can be seen from the myths and legends of Jinwudai that the sun worship and bird worship were closely related and penetrated each other in ancient China, and in many cases the symbol image of the sun and the sun god bird were combined. There are roughly two kinds of images that combine the sun and the bird in archaeological discoveries: the image of the bird carrying the sun and the image of the bird in the sun.

3.1 The image of a bird carrying the sun

Among the Dawenkou cultural sites, two gray pottery statues found at Lingyanghe Site in Juxian County, Shandong Province, have "○", half-moon shape and "W" shape symbols [6] (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1

Some scholars interpret the "○" shape symbol as the sun, the half-moon shape symbol as the bird, and the "W" shape symbol at the bottom as the mountain. They believe that the symbols of the three combinations express the meaning of the bird carrying the sun over the mountain on its back, which is a typical image of a bird carrying the sun. This interpretation of symbols is very consistent with the myth in the Book of Three Seas that the sun is carried by a blackbird and moves up and down in the sky with the flight of the blackbird.

From September 1956 to July 1957, two excavations of a large number of painted pottery unearthed at the Miaodigou site in Shaanxi County, Henan Province, included a painted pottery pattern of a Yangwenbird with wings spread and flying in the middle of an oval blank surrounded by black color triangles with curved edges [7] (Fig. 2). Another piece of pottery shows a side-looking flying bird with large dots on the bird's back [8] (Fig. 3). Both of them show the meaning of the bird carrying the sun, and also belong to the image of the bird carrying the sun. Among them, the former has three black lines at the lower end of the bird pattern, indicating three bird feet, which is different

from the two feet of ordinary birds, showing the image of birds with three feet and carrying the sun, which coincides with the image of three-legged gold birds in ancient myths. Because of its three legs, it is different from ordinary crows and is the "bird in the sun".

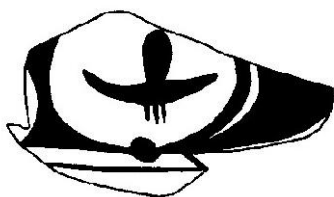


Figure2



Figure 3

The pottery excavated from Qianjiaping site in Guiyang, Hunan Province, where the Gaomiao culture is located, is also found to be associated with bird patterns related to sun worship. A pottery neck is shaped like an image of a winged bird^[9], with hollow sun patterns in the wings on both sides. The other pottery is decorated with a set of bird patterns on the bottom, a sun-shaped pattern on the edge of the bird's body, and a bundle of twigs held tightly by its PAWS^[9]. Compared with the bird patterns found at Lingyanghe Site and Miaodigou site, the two groups of patterns are more complex and exquisite. Different from the patterns at Lingyanghe Site and Miaodigou site, the birds carry the sun by intuitive spatial relationship between the sun and the birds, the relationship between the sun and the birds in Qianjiaping site is two-dimensional. The sun ornament appears directly on the bird's wings and body, but it is still the image of the bird carrying the sun.

3. 2 The image of a bird in the sun

A portrait of three -legged crow was unearthed from the top of the north main chamber of Han Dynasty Tomb of Tanghe Knitting Factory in Henan Province. A round sun was depicted on the right side of the picture with three -legged crow inside^[10]. In the portrait, the crow lived in the sun instead of carrying the sun on its back, which is consistent with the description of "there are crows in the sun" in Huainan Zi, and belongs to the image of a bird in the sun. It is said that the three -legged crow is transformed by the essence of Taiyang, living in the sun, and can be seen as the embodiment of the sun itself.

Both the image of a bird carrying the sun and the image of a bird in the sun show the close relationship between the worship of the sun and the worship of birds in ancient China. Both images are derived from the subjective connection between the phenomenon of the sun rising and setting in the east and the phenomenon of birds flying in the sky. Mythological blackbirds are actually crows, and there are two leading theories as to why ancient people associated the sun with crows: The habits of crows are closely related to the rising and setting of the sun, and the ancestors observed that crows often leave the roosting tree with the rising of the sun and return to the roosting tree with the falling of the sun, and the movement of the sun and the movement of crows take place in the vast and distant sky. Because of the objective limitations of cognition and the internal drive to explain the world, the ancestors added causal explanations between two phenomena that seemed to be "constant connection", so there was a myth that crows carried the sun or crows were the incarnation of the sun. Second, some scholars believe that the ancient ancestors may have found the existence of sunspots in the observation of the sun, the whole body of the raven because of its habit of showing a strong correlation with the sun movement, and the ancestors were considered to be the divine bird living in the sun, the ancestors to explain the black spots they observed in the sun.

In fact, the Chinese nation is not the only nation that combines the worship of the sun and the worship of birds. The ancient Egyptians believed that the rising and setting of the sun was caused by the sun god pulling a boat on the sky day and night, and the image of the sun god was an eagle head human body. The commonality between primitive beliefs reflects the similarities of ancient people in the way of thinking in understanding and explaining the world.

4. Summary

The ancient ancestors' worship of the sun can be regarded as a way to explain the law of the sun's movement, and their original belief was a way to understand and explain the world. The human spirit was separated from nature, and human beings were still trying to understand and understand the reasons behind the powerful natural forces in addition to obediently seeking survival. In essence, primitive belief is the embodiment of ancient human thinking mode, the meta-idea of constructing social structure, cultural tradition, aesthetic orientation and life style, and the unremitting pursuit of "truth" and the pursuit of meaning.

In a sense, archaeology has a certain similarity with it. Archaeology is also a kind of human's pursuit of "truth" and the pursuit of meaning. As Max Weber put it, "We all live on top of a self-woven web of meaning. We are all silk spiders, and we all decide where the thread should be drawn." Faith is a way of constructing chains of meaning, and archaeology is also a way of constructing narratives of meaning. Human beings are social animals and seek the extension of their own meaning through the meaning narrative of social structure. It can be said that a large part of human beings are created by the society in which they live. But at the same time, society is also created by people, and the society has a certain inertia, or the evolution of society has its source, the mother, the process of its evolution is not random, why today's society is such a form, the form of yesterday's society is closely related to the events. Archaeology is to pursue the authenticity of history and the significance of the development of human civilization through the exploration of the extinct human social form and way of life in the past and the exploration of the human race itself. Archaeology is not only the discovery and display of the physical remains related to human beings in the past, nor is it only the mechanical judgment of the age and the classification of artifacts, archaeology should interpret the information of ancient human civilization contained behind the material remains of human beings. A society or an ethnic group has its cultural gene and spirit, and its spiritual culture is reflected in all aspects of human life, and studying all aspects of human life can restore and interpret the spiritual and cultural landscape of human beings, which is the significance of archaeology. Only by understanding how the civilization at this moment has come to this day step by step can we truly understand what it is like to stand here at this moment, and archaeology is the way to help us pursue this answer.

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