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# 中国瑞兽祥禽

## Auspicious Animals and Birds in Chinese Culture

秦芮◎编著



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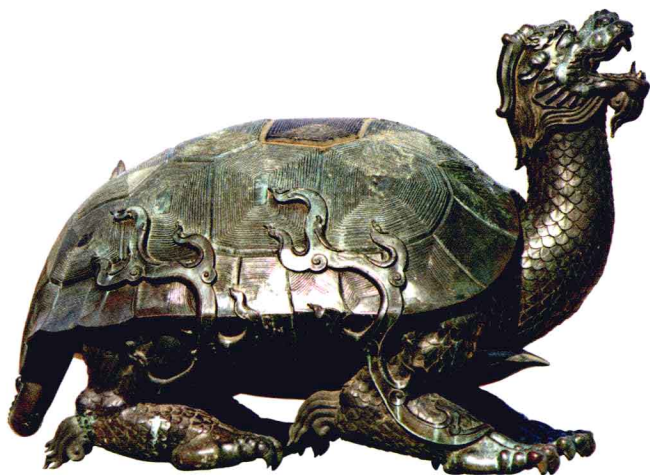
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瑞兽祥禽指的是中国传统文化中具有吉祥寓意的动物。这些动物承载着浓郁的历史文化内涵，蕴涵着丰富的审美心理与民俗观念，是人们祭奠祖先与神灵，祈盼生殖繁衍，驱灾禳祸的吉祥物。人们通过对这些动物赋予不同的寓意，表达了对美好事物和幸福生活的向往与追求。

Auspicious animals and birds refer to creatures symbolize propitiousness in traditional Chinese culture. These animals have profound historical and cultural connotations, representing ancient Chinese's aesthetic criteria and folk customs. They have been used in ritual ceremonies for ancestors and gods, as well as praying for procreation and expelling calamity.







本书讲述了瑞兽祥禽的文化内涵在各个历史时期的发展进程，着重介绍了这些动物所具有的吉祥含义，并且配以精美的插图，希望能够让读者对中国的瑞兽祥禽这一吉祥文化有所了解，并由此进一步了解中国传统文化。

Although each animal embodies different meanings, they all have expressed people's pursuit of good things and happiness in life.

Accompanied by exquisite pictures, this book introduces how auspicious animals and birds have developed in major historical periods and what they symbolize. We hope this book will help our readers to gain a further understanding of the propitious connotations of these animals and traditional Chinese culture.



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## 瑞兽祥禽的源流

## Origin of Auspicious Animals and Birds

中国古代有“天人感应”、“万物有灵”之说。古人认为上天是有感情的，时刻关注着世间的万物，即“天人感应”；而世间万物是有灵性的，动物和植物都具有某种与上天和人类沟通的能力，即“万物有灵”。如果做了好事，上天会通过祥瑞动物来表示奖励；如果世间出现了灾难，上天也会通过它们来驱灾禳祸。于是，中国的传统文化中就出现了瑞兽祥禽这一文化现象。人们将这些祥瑞动物应用于建筑、服装、书画、器具的装饰上面，希望以此来保佑自己平安、吉祥、幸福。

Ancient Chinese believed in interaction between heaven and man that the universe emotionally connects with and watches attentively all natural things; they also believed in animism that all things such as plants and animals have spirits and can communicate with the universe and human beings. When righteous things have been done, the universe will show its approval with auspicious animals. When disasters appear, these auspicious animals will help dispel misfortune. Therefore, auspicious animals and birds play an important role in traditional Chinese culture. Pictures and symbols of these animals can be found on decoration of buildings, clothes, books, paintings, vessels, and utensils as a blessing for safety, luck and happiness.





## > 原始图腾崇拜

上古时代的先民们虽然饱受着凶禽猛兽的威胁与侵害，但却又从它们身上获得较多益处，因而对待它们怀着既畏惧又渴望的矛盾心态，并将它们视为具有某种超自然力量的灵物加以崇拜。这可能就是各种动物传统及信仰产生的来源。

处于氏族社会的原始人，往往认为自己的祖先来源于某种动物或植

## > Primitive Totemism

In ancient times, people suffered from the threat and encroachment of fierce animals and birds, but they benefited from them as well. Therefore, they had ambivalent feelings towards them and worshiped them as supernatural beings. Perhaps, this is the reason why legends and beliefs about mysterious creatures were born.

Primitive people believed that their ancestors were from certain animal or



### • 人面鱼纹彩陶盆（新石器时代）

出土于陕西半坡遗址，盆内壁以黑彩绘出两组对称的人面鱼纹。古代半坡人在许多陶盆上都画有鱼纹和网纹图案，象征着人们期盼富足的美好愿望。

Colored Pottery Basin with Face and Fish Patterns (The Neolithic Age, approx. 8000 years ago)

This basin was unearthed from relics of Banpo Culture in Shaanxi Province. Its inside was painted with two sets of symmetrical face and fish patterns. Most basins from the Banpo Culture have fish and net patterns, which symbolize Banpo people's hope for affluence.



• 蛇形纹双耳陶壶（新石器时代）  
Pottery Ewer with Snake Patterns (The Neolithic Age, approx. 8000 years ago)

物，或是与某种动物或植物发生过亲缘关系，于是便其奉为本氏族的祖先，当作本氏族的标志或名号，这就是图腾崇拜。在中国的原始图腾崇拜中，对动物的崇拜占有绝对的优势。在原始社会的东南沿海一带，有许多部落以鸟为图腾；而在中原一带的部族，多以两栖动物或鱼类为图腾；到了西北高原，则多以野兽为图腾。从发展过程来看，图腾经过了一个从单一向综合的演化过程。最早的图腾形象往往是蛇、鹤、熊等单一动物，后来逐渐被神化成为一种综合了多种动物特点的幻想中的神兽，例如龙是兼

plant or they were close relatives of these animals or plants. Thus, they regarded them as ancestors as well or used them as symbols or names for their tribes, starting the primitive totem worship. Animals were more likely to be used as totems. For example, primitive societies along the southeast coast of China made birds as their totems; in central China, however, most totems were amphibians or fish, whereas in northwest plateau, beasts were the major type of totems. Totem worship has gone through an evolutionary development process, starting from real animal worship, like snake, crane, or bear, to integrated supernatural beings that combine the characteristics of a variety of animals, such as dragon having the shapes of snake, beast and fish,



• 龙纹玉璜（西周）  
Semi-annular Jade Huang with the Dragon Pattern (Western Zhou Dynasty, 1046 B.C.-771 B.C.)





• 鸟形玉雕（商）

Bird-shaped Jade Carving (Shang Dynasty, 1600 B.C.-1046 B.C.)



• 青玉虎形佩（春秋）

Tiger-shaped Green Jade Pendant (Spring and Autumn Period, 770 B.C.-476 B.C.)

有蛇、兽、鱼等多种动物的形态，凤是兼有鹰、孔雀等多种鸟的特征等。

先秦（前221年以前）诗歌总集《诗经》中有“天命玄鸟，降而生商”的诗句。传说商代（前1600—前1046）的始祖契，是由他母亲简狄吞下鸟卵而生，因此，商王朝对鸟的崇祀十分盛行。

and phoenix owning features of eagle, peacock and other birds.

According to the verse “A mysterious bird gives birth to Shang” in *The Book of Songs* written in the Pre-Qin Period (before 221 B.C.), Qi, the ancestor of the Shang Dynasty (1600 B.C.-1046 B.C.) was born after his mother Jiandi swallowed a bird egg. Therefore, bird worship was popular during the Shang Dynasty (1600 B.C.-1046 B.C.).



## > 讖纬思想与祥瑞

两汉时期，瑞兽祥禽崇拜盛行。这种现象一方面是古代图腾崇拜的遗绪，另一方面和汉代讖纬之学以及求仙思想的盛行密不可分。

“讖纬”是“讖”与“纬”的合称。“讖”就是预言预兆；



## > Divination and Auspice

During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), auspicious animals and birds prevailed. This reflects the remaining influence of primitive totem worship, and people's interests in *Chen Wei* (divination and mystical Confucianism belief) studies and becoming immortals.

*Chen Wei* is combined by *Chen* and *Wei*. *Chen* means omen and prophecy, and *Wei* refers to *Chen* compiled by Confucian scholars to fit in with

### • 董仲舒像

董仲舒（前179—前104）是西汉著名的儒家学者，曾提出“罢黜百家，独尊儒术”的主张，被汉武帝采纳，开启了中国历代王朝以儒家学说为正宗的局面，影响极为深远。

#### Portrait of Dong Zhongshu

Dong Zhongshu (179 B.C.-104 B.C.) was a renowned Confucian scholar in the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-25 A.D.). His proposal "Banning other schools of thoughts, but paying supreme tribute to Confucianism" was adopted by Emperor Wu, which opened the era of Confucianism as the orthodox school for all coming dynasties, producing profound influence in China.



• 董仲舒《春秋繁露》书影（明刻本）

《春秋繁露》是董仲舒最重要的著作之一，阐述了他以“天人感应”为核心的哲学理论。

A Block-printed Page from Dong Zhongshu's Work *Chun Qiu Fan Lu* (Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644)

*Chun Qiu Fan Lu* is Dong Zhongshu's most important work that illustrated his core philosophical belief in the Interaction between Heaven and Humans.

“纬”是儒生方士将“讖”编辑起来附会儒家经典的各种著作。一般认为讖纬之说出现于秦而盛于汉代。西汉武帝时期（前140—前87），儒家学者董仲舒向汉武帝提出了“天人感应”、“大一统”学

Confucian classics. *Chen Wei* studies might begin in the Qin Dynasty (221 B.C.-206 B.C.) and prevailed in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). It was during the reign of Emperor Wu (140 B.C.-87 B.C.) in the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-25 A.D.) that Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu presented his belief in Interaction between Heaven and Humans, Great Unification and proposal of “Banning other schools of thoughts, but paying supreme tribute to Confucianism”. According to him, when an emperor behaved himself, his country would embrace prosperity and auspicious omens would appear. However, if the emperor did not rule his country properly, his country would suffer from natural disasters when it was on the verge of falling. Dong's ideas became an instant hit in the Han Dynasty. To further promote *Chen Wei* studies, Emperor Zhang of the Eastern Han Dynasty recruited Confucian scholars to compile a book, named of *Bai Hu Tong Yi*. According to this book, when righteous policy was pursued, the phoenix would dance, and the kylin, white deer, and nine-tailed fox would show their presence. In addition, there would be drizzles and breezes and sweet springs would spout from the ground.



说和“罢黜百家，独尊儒术”的主张。他认为，帝王有道，国家兴盛，必会出现祥瑞的预兆；而帝王无道，天下将亡时，也必先出现天灾异象。董仲舒的学说在两汉时期十分兴盛。东汉时期，汉章帝召集博士儒生写成《白虎通义》，更进一步地把谶纬之说发扬光大。书中说，政治清明，凤凰鸾鸟就会翩翩起舞，麒麟、白鹿、九尾狐也会显灵，天降和风细雨，地下涌出甘泉。就这样，祥瑞动物被赋予了浓郁的政治色彩，昭示着王朝的兴衰、天下的乱治。

在谶纬之说和道家方术的影响下，汉代羽化升仙的迷信思想也非

Therefore, auspicious creatures were vested in politics, which marked for the ebb and flow of the dynasty and peace or chaos of the country.

Influenced by the belief of *Chen Wei* and secret recipes of Taoists, the superstitious idea that humans could become immortals was rather popular in the Han Dynasty. Most aristocrats believed in this destiny and was longing for immortality. They lived in luxurious lifestyle with great affluence, and they hoped to keep this privilege in heaven. On the basis of ancient mythology, magical creatures in immortal stories were further elaborated as powerful carriers between earth and heaven. On the stone relievo carved in the Han Dynasty, there are many images of auspicious animals, including dragon, deer, tiger, bird and fish.

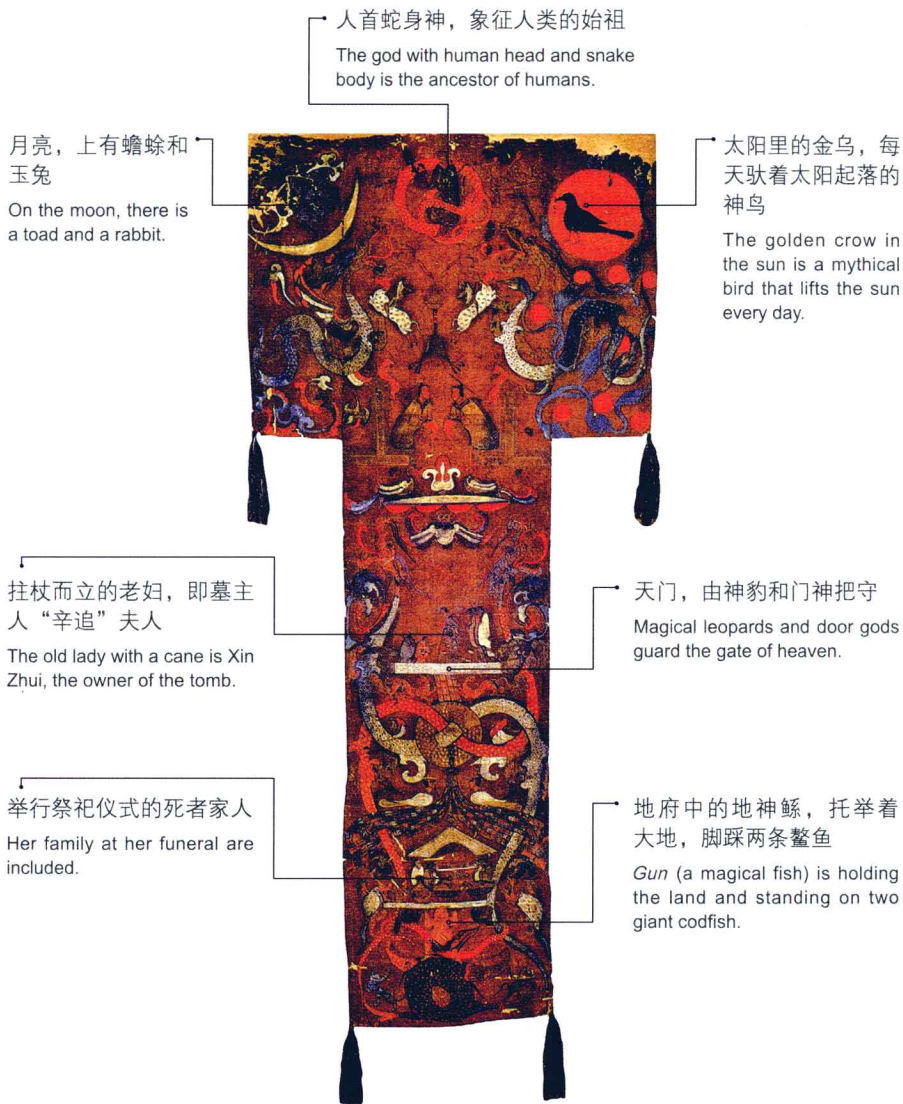
The most ancient extant auspicious patterns was the *Five Auspicious Painting* on the precipice that is located in Fengquan Gorge of Chengxian County in Gansu Province, which was created in the



• 白玉仙人奔马（汉）

Jade Carving of the Immortal Riding a Horse (Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.-220 A.D.)





#### • 湖南马王堆汉墓出土的T形帛画（西汉）

这幅帛画的内容分为上、中、下三部分，分别描绘了天界、人间和地狱景象。整个画面构图复杂，内容繁复，刻画细腻，色彩绚丽，天地融成一片，人神相安共处。

**T-shaped Silk Painting Unearthed from Ma Wang Dui Tomb of the Han Dynasty in Hunan Province (Western Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.-25 A.D.)**

The painting includes three sections that reveal how Heaven, Earth, and Hell look like respectively. The picture has complicated composition, including complex content, refined lines, and marvelous colors, expressing how harmoniously and peacefully the humans and gods could coexist.