

Research on the Visual Culture of *Guai* in China's Dynasties

Sijing Chen^{1, a, *}

¹Department of Information Art & Design, Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

^achens008@163.com

Keywords: Traditional imagery, Chinese imagination, Symbolisation.

Abstract. *Guai* imagery has played a significant role in the definition and development of traditional Chinese visual culture. Throughout history, *guai* visual products reflected national values, aesthetic appreciation and philosophical aspirations. This research examines the dynastic *guai* imagery formally and symbolically in the Chinese aesthetic and cultural context. It provides a contribution to the understanding of the inherent values of *guai* and how the reinterpretation of *guai* imagery that reflects political, social and cultural values in Chinese visual art.

Introduction

Guai (怪) in Chinese means literally strange or odd and it is also used to describe monsters or demons. In the early Chinese classical literature, *guai* referred to unusual or strange phenomena and things [1]. As noted by Li Jianguo, in his research on *guai* in literature before the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), the meaning of *guai* had gradually changed since the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE). Li refers to plant, animal or inanimate *guai*, with visible and fixed images [2]. Japanese scholar Miyoko Nakano, who specialises in Chinese classical literature and Chinese mythology, also confirms that Chinese *guai* have specific images beyond realistic forms [3]. Here, *guai* is used to define visual beings originally transformed from images of animals, plants or inorganic objects, rather than from human beings.

Since the fourth century BCE, from the earliest existence of the compilation of early Chinese myth and geography, *Shanhai jing* (The Classic of Mountains and Seas) [4], *guai* culture has permeated throughout traditional Chinese visual culture and has become an accepted part of people's lives. People projected their own feelings, images and experiences on to *guai* imageries. *Guai* took on various symbolic meanings, which are different from the concepts of 'evil', 'demon' or 'monster' usually understood as things to be feared in the West. *Guai* imagery has its own history and its evolution and mechanism is linked to, and has exchanged with, many other cultures. The imagery of *guai* has been one of the most significant motifs in Chinese visual culture; China's religious beliefs and customs, literature and art, in particular, have unbreakable and constant ties with *guai*. Similarly, studying Chinese visual culture cannot avoid the presence and impact of the imagery of *guai* [5]. Chinese people have created various *guai* imageries for thousands of years. They have their own particular images and stories. *Guai* are hybrid in visual presentation. Their presence provides an insight into the Chinese way of 'visual thinking'.

Chinese Dynastic *Guai*

Here, it does not mean that it will offer a comprehensive encyclopaedia of *guai*, instead, it will illustrate traditional *guai* through some examples, including imperial *guai*, *guai* in folk beliefs, *guai* from literature, disturbing *guai* and the most popular *guai*.

Imperial *Guai*

Dynastic China attached great political significance to *guai* culture. Some particular symbols of *guai* represented imperial power and religious theocracy, which were used only in special decorations and costumes by imperial families and officials. Through the monopoly of particular motifs and media, the ruling classes employed *guai* motifs in various forms, to represent their military power and

wealth. The rulers of the Shang (1600-1046 BCE) and Zhou (1046-771 BCE) dynasties used *taotie* (饕餮) motifs to represent mysterious majesty, expressing their possession of political power, status and wealth [6]. The motif is usually depicted as a zoomorphic mask with symmetrical raised eyes, sharp teeth and horns (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 *Taotie* pattern in the middle Shang dynasty



Fig. 2 *Zhenmu shou*, Tang Dynasty, Luoyang, Henan Province, pottery. Located in the Luoyang Museum, Luoyang.

***Guai* in Folk Beliefs**

In folk society, *guai* visual culture permeated people's life. Combined with Chinese popular beliefs, and various popular expansions and reinterpretations of traditional myths and legends, *guai* form a large and complex species. A variety of colourful, fantastic, mysterious, even monstrous images of *guai* are the products from people's cognition of the nature of life. Whilst some images of *guai* carry people's passion, hope, awe and desire for life, Chinese people also attach importance to death. *Guai* employed in burial art express fear and respect for death. A variety of fierce mythological *guai*, as tomb guardians, were employed in the burial system, such as *zhenmu shou* (镇墓兽) characterised by horns, hooves and bulging eyes, as seen here (Fig. 2), the squatting beasts that guarded tombs and were believed to hunt evil spirits [7]. One of the most important conjectures of death in China is *diyu*, generally known as Hell, the realm of judgement after death. Ox-head and horse-face are two wardens of *guai* in Hell and dead souls may encounter them firstly upon entering the underworld [8]. For example in this drawing (Fig. 3) the shackled dead souls are ushered through Hell by muscular figures of an ox-head and horse-face.



Fig. 3 *The Ten Kings of Hell Sutra* (a detail), late 9th-early 10th century CE, ink and pigment on paper, height 28 cm. Located in the British Museum, London.

Guai from Literature

Unexplained paranormal phenomena, stretched out from *guai*, have greatly influenced and inspired materials and literature. A variety of outstanding literary works have been adapted and republished in various visual forms, such as illustrations and shadow plays. This not only turned *guai* into popular literary and artistic characters, to entertain children and adults alike, but also strengthened some *guai*'s position as the object of religious worship among the people. In the communion of religion, myth, art and literature, dynastic China generated extremely rich and fantastic imageries of *guai*. Sun Wukong [9] known as the Monkey King is one of the most longstanding and popular characters in Chinese literature. It is usually portrayed as a half-monkey and half-human *guai*, here shown fighting Zhu Bajie [10] with a pig head and a human body (Fig. 4). For centuries, his imagery and stories have continued to be reinterpreted and recreated in various forms, proving the Monkey King as an irreplaceable and attractive *guai*.



Fig. 4 *Journey to the West*, printed on paper. Located in the Anhui Library, Hefei.



Fig. 5 Jiang Yinggao, *Bibi*, Ming Dynasty, printed on paper. Located in the National Library of China, Beijing.

Disturbing Guai

In dynastic China a large number of *guai* were regarded as alien, different from human. In the legend and folk tales, they endanger human life and invade human living space. Ge Hong (283-343 CE) denoted them as demonic forces, "They have no intention of benefiting mortals, but are fully capable of inflicting harm." [11] Those ferocious *guai*, were regarded as a threat to the whole human world and were not influenced or restricted by social, cultural, political, religious and moral concepts. As De Groot points out, "They are all detrimental to the good of the world, destroy the prosperity and peace which are the highest good of man, and as a consequence, all good, beneficial government." [12] Here, that refers only to the disturbing kind of *guai*, not the auspicious. Some *guai* did not take the initiative to harm humans or destroy the rules of human society, but their appearance indicated the occurrence of disasters. For example, in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, a *guai* named *bibi* (獬豸) is characterised by as a fox with a pair of wings (Fig. 5); its appearance would bring a severe drought [13]. These disturbing *guai* were considered as saboteurs of the rules of human world and the balance of the nature, bringing disasters to the country and the people. Thus, their visual products were far less popular than auspicious *guai*'s.

Popular Guai

Because of the involvement of the media, the traditional *guai* culture presented diverse cultural forms. It covered fields of literature, drama, music, painting, illustration, costume, furniture, house ware, sculpture and architecture. The most popular mythological *guai* motifs in visual production, reproduction and dissemination were the dragon, phoenix and *qilin* (麒麟) often regarded as the auspicious. Through thousands of years of transition, many *guai* disappeared, but three kinds

survived the historical turbulence and continued to modern times, expressing their popularity and sustainability. Therefore, although a variety of *guai* existed in dynastic China, this section focuses more closely on the three kinds of most popular *guai*, which were frequently employed in traditional visual arts.

In comparison with the other two *guai*, the dragon played a more significant role in traditional Chinese culture and was employed more frequently in visual products throughout the history. This legendary creature is one of China's oldest mythological *guai* and is the most significant *guai* in Chinese mythology and folklore. The imagery of the dragon is most commonly portrayed as a snake with four legs, combining with animal forms such as turtle, shrimp, fish, deer, tiger, cattle and elephant, as shown in Fig. 6. Chinese dragons traditionally symbolised the auspicious, legitimacy, prosperity and strength, as well as good luck. For thousands of years, their symbolic meanings have been associated with imperial power, religion, folklore and nation.



Fig. 6 *Dragon*, Ming Dynasty, printed on paper. Located in the National Library of China, Beijing.

In terms of imperial symbols, the dragon was usually used to identify the supreme status and powers of emperors in dynastic China. Since Han Dynasty, the dragon has drawn attention from rulers of a country. In the historical text *Shiji* (*The Records of the Grand Historian*), finished around 109 BCE, Liu Bang (256-195 BCE), the founder and first emperor of the Han Dynasty, came from the peasant class. He was not descended from a noble family, but instead, according to the records, was the offspring of a dragon and a mortal woman [14]. Nakano considers that the changing relationship between the dragon and the emperor was to fit into the political and social orders for a new regime [15]. This view is supported by Guo, he states that Liu and his close associates created this mythical story, in order to raise his identity and establish authority [16]. Despite his humble background, as a son of a dragon, Liu would not be undervalued, instead people would respect and fear him as a dragon. Liu Bang as the ruler of the Han Dynasty exploited the dragon's sanctity, which made the dragon gradually combine to become the symbol of imperial power and religious theocracy.

According to the history records of *Shang shu* (*Classic of History*) written during the period of the Warring States (475-221 BCE), the pattern of the dragon was added to the cloth of Shun, a legendary emperor [17]. The official costume worn by the emperor, the Son of Heaven, was esteemed as a strict system and passed from generation to generation, until the end of the Qing Dynasty (1636-1911 CE).

Following the establishment of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE), were 20 years of garment reform and, based on the customs of former dynasties and habits of the Han nationality, the emperor's robe made appropriate adjustments. As a result, patterns, styles and colours were specifically defined and this became known as the 'dragon robe' [18]. By following the provisions of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 CE) [19], the dragon with five claws (Fig. 7) became the emblem of an emperor, according to the order of the first Ming Emperor [20]. Meanwhile, different ranks of the upper classes were prescribed to wear ceremonial dresses decorated with different numbers of claws of the dragon [21]. The dragon robe was a significant vehicle for declaring dynastic authority. The combined motif of five-clawed dragons in gold colour and other imperial patterns was an exclusive emblem, for use

only by the emperor. It appeared on his robe, on the imperial throne (regarded as the dragon throne), the imperial seals and the emperor's banner. Indeed, dragons decorated planks, windows, pillars, stairs, beams and eaves in imperial buildings, such as at the Forbidden City in Beijing. It was a capital felony for others to privately produce or use garments and utensils with that particular dragon motif.



Fig. 7 Example of the dragon robe.

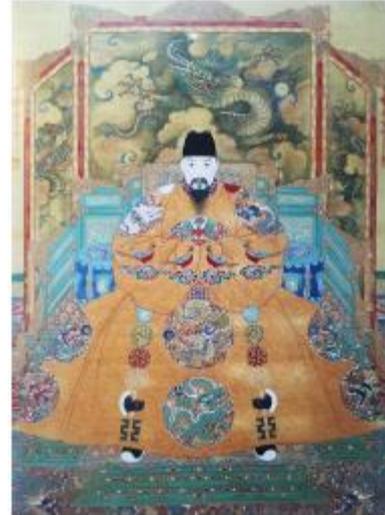


Fig. 8 *Portrait of the Ming Hongzhi Emperor*, 15th century CE, colour on silk, 208 x 154 cm. Located in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

The particular motif of the dragon was used to visualise imperial power claiming rulership over the country. In the painting *A Portrait of the Ming Hongzhi Emperor* (Fig. 8), dragons in different colours and sizes, accompanied with other imperial symbols, appear on the robe, throne, carpet and screen. The figure of the emperor is surrounded by a sea of dragon patterns and seems to blend with the dragon motif, presenting a high degree of symbolic significance.

The dragons, as the most important of all the mythical *guai*, were believed to be generally well-disposed and permeated the people's life in folk society. Dragons feature heavily in Chinese folklore, and are totally unlike the evil fire-breathing creations of European myth. In China, dragons usually refer to positive symbolic meanings. The motif dragon carried people's passion, hope, awe and desire for life.

Even in contemporary times, men still perform a dragon dance at Chinese New Year and other important festivals and ceremonies, in order to bring good luck. On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, people usually hold dragon boat races to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival. Dragon boats are long and narrow, like dragon bodies, and the boat prows are usually decorated with dragon heads (Fig. 9). The Dragon Boat Festival was associated with the ancient rituals of sacrifice to the Dragon King [22]. In the Chinese calendar the dragon is one of twelve Chinese zodiac signs used to designate years [23]. The Azure Dragon as one of the four celestial guardians was associated with the Five Elements [24].



Fig. 9 *Dragon Boat Festival*, 1750-1850 CE, tapestry woven silk, 79 x 90 cm. Located in Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The Chinese dragon is inextricably bound up with water and is the lord of all the waters including seas, rivers, lakes, and rain. Dragon kings were believed to control rainfall and are often depicted among the rain clouds in a year of drought; according to ancient records, people would invoke these dragon kings to revive the earth with rain [25]. During a time of drought or flooding, the offering of sacrifices and the performance of other rituals were considered as effective measures to propitiate dragon kings.

The dragon achieved associated sentiments in many contexts, so that it became powerful, as such, it affected society and state organisation effectively and profoundly.

Depicted together with a dragon, the phoenix was often employed to identify the empress. *Fenghuang* (凤凰), generally known as the phoenix, is a kind of mythological *guai* that rules over all other birds. According to the commentary of Guo Pu (276-324 CE), the phoenix is featured with a rooster head, a swallow jaw, a snake neck, a turtle back, a fishtail, five coloured feathers and six feet tall [26]. But more often, it was depicted visually as a hybrid-being combined with characteristics of several birds, including pheasants, peacocks, mandarin ducks and swallows, as can be seen in Fig. 10.



Fig. 10 *Phoenix Motif*, printed on paper.



Fig.11 Portrait of the Ming Renxiaowen Empress, 15th century CE, ink and colour on silk.

Feng (凤) originally referred to the males and *huang* (凰) for the females [27]. During the Shang and Zhou Dynasties (166-256 BCE), the phoenix motifs had already appeared and been used on decorated bronze wares [28]. Since then, *feng* and *huang* were depicted as separate and varied motifs. Welch finds that, interpretation of phoenixes had the differentiation between genders until the Ming Dynasty [29]. Over the following centuries, the phoenix was used to stand for the ‘female’ — *yin*

(negative) paired with the dragon, representative of the ‘male’ — *yang* (positive). The dragon referred to the emperor, and spontaneously the phoenix came to be the symbol of the empress. Like the dragon, the phoenix motif became the emblem of females from the imperial family, decorating their clothes, shoes, accessories and utensils. Although ceremonial dresses and crowns of empresses also employed the dragon motif, the phoenix was more commonly used. In the Ming Dynasty, the empress’s coronet was called the phoenix coronet which was made of metal meshes, decorated with the phoenix motif and jewelled tassels (Fig. 11) [30]. Like the dragon robe, its usage was specified by regulations, which were sacred and inviolable.

Wu Yerong considers that the symbolic meaning of the dragon and phoenix pair was extended to represent marriage, which, since the Qing Dynasty, was accepted by the public [31]. The dragon and the phoenix were commonly depicted to symbolise a harmonious and happy relationship between husband and wife in marriage, expressing *yin* and *yang* metaphor. For example, in the illustration (Fig. 12) the two *guai* circle each other in a direct reference to the *yin-yang* symbol. Therefore, the combination of the dragon and the phoenix was popularly used to refer to the groom and the bride respectively in a wedding. ‘Dragon-phoenix papers’, ‘dragon-phoenix cakes’ and other utensils decorated with dragon and phoenix motifs were often found in weddings [32]. Nowadays, this combination is still used in Chinese weddings and is regarded as the perfect representative of a happy marriage.



Fig. 12 *The Dragon and Phoenix*, printed on paper.



Fig. 13 *The Scarlet Phoenix Toward the Sun*, Suzhou, woodblock.

The appearance of the phoenix was also said to infer the prosperity of the country [33]. Because of this, phoenix represented good fortune or the bringing of good luck. The combination of the phoenix and sun was called *danfeng chaoyang* (the scarlet phoenix towards the sun). The phoenix was considered as an auspicious bird, combined with the sun which represented light (Fig. 13). Thus, the pattern of *danfeng chaoyang* implied perfection, happiness, propitiousness and bright future [34]. The phoenix was also often depicted with peonies which symbolised wealth and honour. *Feng chun mudan* (a phoenix crossing flower shrubs) symbolised happiness and joy [35].

The *qilin* is another popular mythical *guai* in China. In various ancient records and literary works, the descriptions of the *qilin*'s appearance were slightly different. Most commonly it was depicted as a hybrid creature with a deer's body, a dragon's head, a cow's tail with long hairs, fish scales, hooves and a horn (Fig. 14). It is generally considered as a benevolent and auspicious creature. In the *Shijing* (*Classic of Poetry*) finished in the seventh century BCE, a poem *Lin zhi zhi* (*Qinlin's Toes*) highly praises its nobility and charity [36]. It occupied an important position in Confucianism, representing the Confucian idea of benevolence, often associated with Confucius [37]. In the Confucian tradition,

the *qilin* was one of the Four Divine Animals, along with the dragon, phoenix and turtle [38]. It was an auspicious and prosperous omen, thus, the *qilin* motif was sometimes employed to praise the emperor.



Fig. 14 *Qilin*, Ming Dynasty, printed on paper. Fig. 15 *Qilin presenting sons*, printed on paper.

Qilin is a *guai* usually associated with fertility. In a painting (Fig. 15), a young man dressed in ancient robe rides on a *qilin* over the clouds, which is called *qilin song zi* (*qilin* presenting sons). The youth holds a lotus in his right hand and a *sheng* in the other hand. The lotus in Chinese pronounces *lian* (连), with the meaning of ‘successive’ [39]. *Sheng* (笙) is a Chinese reed pipe wind instrument, sharing the same pronunciation with *sheng* (生) (give birth). *Zi* (子) literally means child or son. Over thousands of years, to continue the family bloodline is still one of the most important things in Chinese people’s lives. To a large extent, the purpose of marriage in dynastic China was considered to be the means by which to perpetuate families [40]. In tradition, the birth of a son usually brought greater joy than the arrival of a daughter. Commonly sons were the one who could inherit the family name, while daughters adopted their husbands’ surname after marriage. Generally only sons could enter the family ancestral hall and hold ancestral rites, which were considered to be a continuation of family incense [41]. Thus, although these symbols associated with children did not explicitly indicate gender, they usually suggested a son. Thus, together *qilin song zi* infers the wish that people may continue to sire sons one after the other. *Qilin song zi* was an important theme in Chinese New Year prints. Many prints in this theme were sent as blessings to newly married couples and at New Year, posted on doors or the walls in the bedroom [42].

Summary

The dragon, phoenix and *qilin* were inextricably bound up with state organisations in China, but more importantly, they inferred the traditional family ideal for thousands of years. Examples of traditional visual *guai* have survived till today through their continuous ‘self-adjustment’, which shows the degree of their social and cultural value. The significance of *guai* imagery lies in that it is often situated in completely imagined worlds shaped by politics, religion, society, culture and technology. *Guai* imagery reflects the different characteristics and needs of the times; however, the artistic imagination triggered by *guai* is not arbitrary, but is shaped by perception and artistic appreciation passed from one generation to the next. Thus, *guai* imagery is bound to assume the function of cultural and social transmission. Politics, religion, society and culture shaped *guai* production and made it a part of cultural and social life. Social changes also caused the transformation of *guai* imagery. It is significant therefore to evaluate the evolution of *guai* imagery in dynastic China to reconstruct how *guai* might reflect social and cultural values in contemporary visual art.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University and Birmingham City University.

References

- [1] For example, in the second-century Chinese dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* (*Origin of Chinese Characters*), *guai* means “strange” and also stands for “the strange and striking thing to the public” in Lunheng (*Discourse Balance*) written in 80 CE. See Qu Shen, *Origin of Chinese Characters*, (Duan Yucai, Modern Chinese trans.), Hongye Culture, Taipei, 1999, p. 514; Wang Chong, *New Edition of the Discourse Balance: Volume III*, (Xiao Dengfu, Modern Chinese trans.), Taiwan Classics Publishing House, Taipei, 2010, p. 573.
- [2] Li Jianguo, *History of Zhiguai Stories before Tang*, Tianjing Education Press, Tianjing, 2005, pp. 14-15.
- [3] Miyoko Nakano, *Chinese Monsters*, (He B., Chinese trans.), Yellow River Literature and Arts Press, Zhengzhou, 1989, p. 16.
- [4] *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* is a record of ancient Chinese mythology, geography, plants, animals, minerals, witchcraft, religion, medicine and folklore. It records up to 195 different *guai*. See Richard E. Strassberg, *A Chinese Bestiary: Strange Creatures from the Guideways Through Mountains and Seas*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003.
- [5] Liu Zhongyu, *Chinese Monster Culture*, Shanghai People’s Publishing House, Shanghai, 1997, p. 2.
- [6] See Li Song, *Chinese Bronze Ware*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 95-97; Li Zehou, *The Path of Beauty: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, pp. 30-31.
- [7] See Yang Hong, *The secular tradition: Burial art and spirit paths*, in Angela Falco Howard, in: Li Song, Wu Hung, Yang Hong (Eds.), *Chinese Sculpture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2006, pp. 127-128; Zhang Cheng, *Chinese ancient burial tomb guardians*, *Archaeology and Cultural Relics*, 01 (2014) 35-44.
- [8] Wolfram Eberhard, *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967, pp. 46-55.
- [9] As a main character in the Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West*, Monkey King is a stone monkey with supernatural powers. He was rescued by the monk Xuanzang, and then escorts Xuanzang to India to obtain Buddhist scriptures. See Wu Cheng’en, *Journey to the West*, China society Publishing House, Beijing, 1999.
- [10] Zhu Bajie is another character in *Journey to the West*. After defeated by Monkey King, it also accompanies Xuanzang to retrieve Buddhist scriptures. See Wu Cheng’en, *Journey to the West*, China society Publishing House, Beijing, 1999.
- [11] Ge Hong, *Explanation of Inner Chapters of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity*, Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing, 1980, p. 76. English translation cited in Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture*, University of California Press, London, 2004, p. 88.
- [12] J. J. De Groot, *The Religious System of China: Volume IV*, Literature House, Taipei, 1964, p. 467.

- [13] Yuan Ke, *Explanatory Notes of the Classic of Mountains and Seas*, Shanghai Classics Publishing House, Shanghai, 1985, p. 98.
- [14] Sima Qian, *The Records of the Grand Historian*, Jilin People's Publishing House, Changchun, 2008, p.301.
- [15] Nakano, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-9.
- [16] Guo Yuanlin, The folk beliefs and ideologies of early Han Dynasty in the Records of the Grand Historian, *Chinese Folk Culture Studies*, 12 (2005) 194-201.
- [17] Unknown, *Classic of History*, (Qiang Zongrong, Jiang Hao, Modern Chinese trans.), Taiwan Shufang Press, Taipei, 2010, p. 63.
- [18] Zhou Xun, Gao Chunming, *5000 Years of Chinese Costumes*, Commercial Press, Hong Kong, 1984, pp. 146-148.
- [19] The record in the historical text *Yuan shi (History of Yuan Dynasty)* completed in 1370 clearly shows, "prohibiting (commoners) from wearing any cloth decorated with *qilin*, phoenix, white rabbit, *lingzhi* (ganoderma), dragons with five claws and two horns, eight dragons, nine dragons, *wanshou* (living ten thousand years), *fushou* (fortune and longevity) and golden yellow." Cited in Song Lian, *History of Yuan Dynasty: Volume II*, Chinese Dictionary Publishing House, Shanghai, 2004, p. 698.
- [20] Zhou, Gao, *op. cit.*, p. 148.
- [21] Wolfram Eberhard, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London; New York, 1986, p. 85.
- [22] See Rebecca Kingsley, *Chinese Gods and Myths*, Chartwell Books, Edison, 1998, p. 61; Dorothy Perkins, *Encyclopedia of China: History and Culture*, Taylor and Francis, Hoboken, p. 133.
- [23] Suzanne White, *Chinese Astrology: Plain and Simple*, Charles E. Tuttle, Boston, 1998, pp. 133-159.
- [24] K. S. Tom, *Echoes from Old China: Life, Legends, and Lore of the Middle Kingdom*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1989, p. 55.
- [25] Jing Anning enumerates several ancient inscriptions and historical texts that people conducted rituals to pray for the Dragon King to bring rains. See Jing Anning, *The Water God's Temple of the Guangsheng Monastery: Cosmic Function of Art, Ritual and Theater*, Brill, Leiden, 2002, pp. 70-3.
- [26] Guo Pu, *Explanatory Notes of Er ya*, the 3th-4th century CE. Cited in Shi Yue, Phoenix in ancient books of China, *Journal of Ancient Books Collation and Studies*, 04 (1986) 18.
- [27] Elmer G. Suhr, The phoenix, *Folklore*, 87 (1976) 30.
- [28] Duan Yong, *Study of Decorations on Ancient Chinese Bronze Wares*, Shanghai Classics Publishing House, Shanghai, pp. 130-133.
- [29] Patricia Bjaaland Welch, *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*, Tuttle Pub., North Clarendon, 2008, p. 153.
- [30] Yang Shaorong, *Traditional Chinese Clothing: Costumes, Adornments & Culture*, Long River Press, San Francisco, 2004, p. 9.
- [31] Wu Yerong, Interpretation of meanings of phoenix in traditional marriage and love, *Jiangnan Tribune*, 11 (2009) 79.
- [32] Édouard Chavannes, Elaine Spaulding Atwoo, *The Five Happinesses: Symbolism in Chinese Popular Art*, Weatherhill, New York, 1973, p. 100.

- [33] Charles Alfred Speed Williams, *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives: An Alphabetical Compendium of Antique Legends and Beliefs, as Reflected in the Manners and Customs of the Chinese*, Dover Publications, New York, 1976, p. 325.
- [34] Qu Ming'an, Ju Yueshi, *Chinese Symbolic Culture*, Shanghai People's Publishing House, Shanghai, 2011, p. 711.
- [35] Duan Jianhua, *Chinese Auspicious Decoration Design*, China Light Industry Press, Beijing, 1999, p. 45.
- [36] Huang Zhongshen, *Selected Works of Classic of Poetry*, Wu-Nan Book Inc., Taipei, 2002, p. 64.
- [37] Zhang Daoyi, *Study and Investigation on Qilin Presenting Sons*, Shangdong Fine Art Publishing House, Jinan, 2008, pp. 3-11.
- [38] Katherine M. Ball, *Animal Motifs in Asian Art: An Illustrated Guide to Their Meanings and Aesthetics*, Dover Publications, Mineola, N.Y., 2004, p. 33.
- [39] John Lust, *Chinese Popular Prints*, E. J. Brill, Leiden; New York, 1996, p. 275.
- [40] Li Yinhe, *Chinese Marriage and Family, and Their Changes*, Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, Ha'erbin, 1995, pp. 117-121.
- [41] Emily Martin, *Gender and Ideological Differences in Representations of Life and Death*, in: James L. Watson, Evelyn S. Rawski (Eds.), *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990, pp. 175-177.
- [42] Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Living Houses: Folk Beliefs, Symbols, and Household Ornamentation*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1999, p. 131.