



# The Image of Supernatural Beings in Kongtong Wushu

Jieqiong Wang<sup>(✉)</sup>, Ning Cao, and Pan Shi

School of Foreign Languages, Longdong University, Qingyang, Gansu, China  
seraph4393@163.com

**Abstract.** Exploring the mythology before civilization is an important way to study the origins of Chinese traditional culture. Kongtong Wushu, with a profound cultural background and achievement, originated from the Jing Wei River Basin and Kongtong Mountain, which are one of the birthplaces of western Chinese mythology. Focusing on the image of supernatural beings in the ancient mythologies and great influence of Kongtong Wushu is key to spreading the Kongtong Wushu culture, enhancing cultural confidence, and creating cultural symbols of North-western China.

**Keywords:** Kongtong Wushu · The Image of Supernatural beings · Cultural origin · Cultural dissemination

## 1 Introduction

Originating from Kongtong Mountain, Kongtong Wushu is an expression of the cultural connotation of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. It combines the Taoism of emptiness and harmony with the meditation and sincerity of Buddhism. It also includes the connotation of the Confucian way of governing the world. The Jing Wei River Basin is the birthplace of Kongtong Wushu and ancient Chinese western mythology. Myths and folklore, as the earliest literature, serve as references for historical and cultural studies. Literary anthropology believes that mythology provides resources to study the origins of cultural traditions [1]. Thus, to explore the deeper connotation of Kongtong Wushu, it is necessary to involve its unique geographical location and images of immortals and its related myths as direct historical data and images for the formation of Kongtong Wushu in the Jing Wei River Basin.

## 2 The Mythology of Kongtong Wushu

Kongtong Wushu, one of the 129 types of Chinese Wushu, has a long history and diverse content. It is one of the five major Wushu schools in China, along with Shaolin, Kunlun, Wudang, and Emei. The main content of Kongtong Wushu is to form a variety of sports forms such as boxing, weaponry, established series, health maintenance, and partner exercise. It has long-standing historical and cultural implications and focuses on internal and external traditional practices [2].

© The Author(s) 2023

Y. Yau and F. Hage Chehade (Eds.): DESD 2022, ASSEHR 691, pp. 25–29, 2023.

[https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-37-4\\_5](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-37-4_5)

The origins of Kongtong Wushu can be found in various myths and legends dating back to ancient times and historical records. Nüwa 女娲, who refines the stones to replenish the sky, Fuxi 伏羲, who creates the Bagua 八卦 (Eight Trigram) to teach people to fish and hunt, Yellow Emperor 黄帝, who visited Kongtong to seek Taoism, and Houji 后稷, the first ancestor of the Zhou Dynasty, all have a connection with Kongtong and have become important influential figures in the ancient origin of Kongtong Wushu.

## 2.1 Nüwa and Kongtong Wushu

Longcheng, Nüwa's hometown, is now situated at the crossroads of Zhangjiachuan, Qingshui, and Qin'an in the Tianshui area. Longcheng is located on the ancient Silk Road, which has served as a battleground for military strategists throughout history. It has always been an important road and post station where merchants congregate for easy transportation. Furthermore, the Tianshui Dadiwan archaeological site and the wealth of cultural relics discovered by Gansu archaeology fully support the existence of the legendary characters in Longcheng.

After the ancient myths and legends opened the world, the earliest human beings formed the myths and legends was that Nüwa created human beings and refined stones to replenish the sky. Nüwa symbolizes as Earth Mother. Legend has it that Nüwa created human beings out of clay according to her image and then developed human society. As the great disaster had struck human beings, she managed to melt five-coloured stone to repair the Pillar of Heaven and dispelled the evil beasts and raptors to save lives of human beings. Her immortal accomplishments are the ample embodiment of spiritual style of innovation and dedication. Furthermore, the immortal soul manifests that feminine status was recognized and respected and women took great responsibilities for the reproduction of humans in the matriarchal clan society. The myth and the soul of Nüwa enriches the Kongtong Wushu and instructs the Kongtong Women Wushu as well [3].

## 2.2 Fuxi and Kongtong Wushu

Fuxi is the ancestor of the humanities, admired by the Chinese people, and ranks first among the three Sage Kings 三皇 in ancient history. He created the Bagua and the marriage system, made laws, obtained fire, leveled water and soil, made musical instruments, studied the regularity of things in order to properly deal with them, and made observations, all of which laid the groundwork for the development of Chinese Wushu. Various historical and archaeological materials clearly show that the current Longdong Chengji is Fuxi's hometown. The important archaeological relics of the Qin'an Dadiwan site demonstrate Fuxi's close relationship with the Longdong. This represents Longdong, which has a highly productive ethnic group and is the source of human social development and cultural progress [4].

Hunting was one of the primary means of obtaining food in primitive society. When our forefathers were hunting animals and birds, they discovered that their jumping, chasing, and fighting actions were far superior to human activities, so Fuxi taught people to consciously summarize and imitate these actions. On the one hand, it improves people's ability to engage in physical activity. People, on the other hand, summarize and derive various hunting technologies based on the actions of birds and animals, which

significantly improves hunting ability. On this basis, Fuxi constantly guided people to imitate and practice, gradually forming a fixed hunting action in the specific process of production and labor, so that the action could be improved further. These movements are primarily used in hunting activities, but they are gradually appearing in activities to celebrate hunting and sacrificial success, and they are expressed in the form of dance, which is the original form of Kongtong Wushu. Fuxi received important inspiration from the *Guan Niao Shou Zhi Wen* 观鸟兽之文 (articles of observing the signs made by birds and beasts) and used it to create the Bagua, make writing records, net fishing, and develop animal husbandry. All of this reflects the dialectical opposition and unity of thought in Chinese traditional philosophy and enriches the guiding ideology of Kongtong Wushu. At the same time, the word Bagua is associated with witchcraft and sacrifice. It encourages the perfection of sacrifice activities, and the sacrifice dance encourages the development of Kongtong Wushu and has a significant impact on it.

### 2.3 Yellow Emperor and Kongtong Wushu

According to literature, archaeology, and mythology, it is pointed out that the ancient site of Nanzuo in Pengyuan in Longdong should be the hometown of the Yellow Emperor. The Xuanyuan tribe, headed by the Yellow Emperor, is in Qingshui, Gansu. There is a real existence to the Yellow Emperor's Tomb in Zhengning County. The spread of the Huangdi Neijing is also closely related to the Yellow Emperor.

There are many myths and stories related to the Yellow Emperor and Kongtong Wushu in Longdong. Famous ones include the Yellow Emperor's consultation with Guangchengzi, as well as the Yellow Emperor's military achievements and thoughts on military strategy. These have become essential reading for scholars studying Kongtong Wushu.

The Yellow Emperor is almost omnipotent in myths and legends. He is a cultural innovator as well as a ruler. He's also skilled in witchcraft and medicine. During the Yellow Emperor period, primitive tribes began to form fixed areas with various totem worships. The tribes themselves struggled with the surrounding environment and tribes in order to survive and develop. Yellow Emperor took full advantage of Longdong's natural advantages, *Nai Xi Yong Gan Ge* 乃习用干戈 (so as to learn and use weapons of war), which promoted the germination of primitive Kongtong Wushu, and he also became a representative figure of Kongtong Wushu in Longdong's primitive society [3].

The Yellow Emperor's consultation with Guangchengzi in Kongtong also influenced the development of Taoism and Kongtong Wushu. The immortal Guangchengzi, according to legend, arrived on Kongtong Mountain in the form of a black crane. After hearing the name, the Yellow Emperor traveled thousands of miles to Kongtong to study Taoism. Guangchengzi advised him on how to govern the country while remaining healthy. At the same time, as the tribe's leader, the emperor was concerned about the poor living conditions in his country and the spread of disease. Guangchengzi told the Yellow Emperor about the statecraft of *Wu Wei Er Zhi* 无为而治 (literally means ruling by doing nothing, actually means to exercising the rule of benevolence), and also taught *Da Zuo Tu Na* 打坐吐纳 (meditation, exhale and inhale) the methods of self-cultivation and health, which are related to Kongtong Wushu. Zhuangzi 庄子 uses a longer length to describe the content of the dialogue between the Yellow Emperor and Guangchengzi,

which includes topics such as ruling the country and raising the people, heaven and earth, Yinyang, self-cultivation, longevity, and so on. These contents are also reflected in the later Kongtong Wushu concept.

## 2.4 Houji and Kongtong Wushu

Jiang Yuan, the daughter of the Yan Emperor's descendants, gave birth to a child after stepping on giants' footprints. The child was regarded as an ominous thing. After being discarded three times without death, the child was named Qi 弃 (abandon). Since childhood, Qi has had an interest in agronomy. Growing up, he tasted hundreds of herbs and mastered agricultural knowledge, teaching people how to grow crops and spread farming culture. He became a great agronomist in ancient times and was honored as Houji, the ancestor of agriculture.

The myth and legend of Houji recreates the importance of productive labor at that time. He was appointed as a farming expert by Emperor Yao 尧 and allowed him to manage and guide all aspects of agriculture. And as a result of his initiatives, the land east of the Kongtong Mountain was constantly expanding and flourishing. Because of Houji's significant contribution to agricultural progress, future generations will regard him as the Immortal of Agriculture, or the supernatural beings of grain, which fully shows the important role and influence of production labor and provided strong support to the origin of Kongtong Wushu [4].

## 3 Conclusion

The everlasting images of gods and myths in ancient China provided abundant spiritual resources for the development of Kongtong Wushu in the Jing Wei River Basin. Kongtong Wushu, as the representation of traditional Chinese culture, harmonizes with the profound connotations of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. The core ideas in the mythologies such as Nüwa, Fuxi, Huangdi and Houji have had profound cultural connotations from the beginning of their development. From the beginning of Nuwa's dedication to creating humanity and repairing the Pillar of Heaven to the recognition of women's social status, from Fuxi's observation of elephants, view method, observation of birds and beasts to his creation of Bagua, from Yellow Emperor's seeking advice from Guangchengzi to the military strategic theory of Ode to virtue and strengthening forces, all the cultural heritage embodies the essence of Kongtong Wushu of exploring nature, improving productivity, adaptation to society, on-going innovation and development [5]. From those familiar and amiable images of immortals, all of them reflect the existence of the original Wu 武 which is the soul of Kongtong Wushu.

**Acknowledgments.** This research was financially supported by Gansu Sports Scientific Research and Decision Consulting Research Projects (Grant NO. 2021-22).

## References

1. Ye Shuxian, Zhang Mili, Liu Qianye Cultural Semiotics: Big and Small Traditions and New Vision. Shaanxi Normal University Publishing Office Co., Ltd, 2013.
2. Jia Haitao, Liang Yanfei, Tian Huijun, et al., Nature of Kongtong Wushu. *Journal of Sports Adult Education*, 27(2) (2011) 11-13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16419/j.cnki.42-1684/g8.2011.02.007>
3. Yang Zhanming, Liang Yanfei. Some Thought on the Original Form of Kongtong Wushu Morphogenetic. *Journal of PLA Institute of Physical Education*, 23(2) (2013) 80-83. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16419/j.cnki.42-1684/g8.2012.04.015>
4. Liang Yanfei, Yang Runxia, Cheng Kewei, Discussion on the Origin of Outstanding People with Kongtong Wushu Characters in Jing Wei Basin during the Pre-Qin and Qin and Han Dynasties, *Zhejiang Sport Science*, 39(7) (2017) 105-111. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1004-3624.2017.04.020>
5. Liang Yanfei, Liu Chonghui. The Ancient Civilization of the Jing Wei River Basin—On the Ancient Origin of the Wushu of Kongtong, *Journal of Neijiang Normal University*, 30(2) (2015) 101-108. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13603/j.cnki.51-1621/z.2015.02.023>

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

