

Article

A Goddess with Bird's Claws: An Exploration of the Image of Magu

Qiongke Geng  and Yongfeng Huang *

Department of Philosophy, Xiamen University, Xiamen 361005, China; caroline2015@aliyun.com

* Correspondence: yongfeng_huang1976@163.com

Abstract: In China, Magu is a household name for a female Daoist immortal. As a symbol of longevity, people believe that she can prolong their lives and bring them good luck. This paper takes the fact that Magu has hands that look like birds' feet as a clue to sort out the evolution of the image of Magu. In this article, it is argued that the prototype for the image of the Daoist immortal, Magu, is the bird goddess of the Neolithic goddess and that Magu's hands, which look like bird claws, are a symbol of the goddess's divine power. After entering the patriarchal society, the figure of Magu was eroticized and her hands, which represented divine power, became a tool for men to scratch their backs. Daoism, however, inherited the matriarchal society's worship of women and retained the image of Magu with her hands that resembled the feet of a bird. When Daoism incorporated Magu into its system of deities, the image of Magu was remodeled to conform to the teachings of Daoism, thus making Magu a beautiful, kind-hearted immortal with high moral sentiments.

Keywords: Daoist; mythological archaeology; Neolithic goddess; bird goddess; Magu



Citation: Geng, Qiongke, and Yongfeng Huang. 2023. A Goddess with Bird's Claws: An Exploration of the Image of Magu. *Religions* 14: 944. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070944>

Academic Editor: David Freidel

Received: 24 June 2023

Revised: 18 July 2023

Accepted: 20 July 2023

Published: 23 July 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

There are many myths about Magu; for example, it is said that every year on the third day of the third lunar month, which is the birthday of Queen Mother of the West (Xiwang mu 西王母), Magu would go to the Turquoise Pond (Yaochi 瑶池) in the heavenly realm with a longevity peach or Ganoderma lucidum wine in her hand to celebrate the birthday of Xiwang mu (Tao 2016, p. 226). In China, it is common for older women to post a picture of Magu holding wine or a peach on their birthday, it symbolizes the pursuit of high longevity, good fortune, and other good intentions (Yuan 2016, p. 199). Being a household name for a female immortal of longevity, Magu is worshipped in a wide range of temples in Jiangxi 江西, Anhui 安徽, and Sichuan 四川, and there are countless myths and literary works (Wan 2022; Cao and Hu 2000; Xiaoyan Liu 2014; Lin 2015; Wang and Tu 2019) based on her beliefs, demonstrating the wide geographical distribution and influence of her beliefs (Z. Zhang 2003, pp. 185–86). She is a Daoist Yuanjun 元君 (Original Princess) (Ren 2012, p. 334), ranking next to the female immortals, such as Queen Mother of the West, which shows her high status.

The scholarly community currently believes that the image of Magu is related to totem worship and ancient longevity culture. For example, Cao Hongliang 曹紅亮 argues that the prototype of Magu is related to bird worship and points out that the image of the Daoist deity Magu, whose hands resemble the feet of a bird, has its roots in the Daoist idea of ascending to the heavenly sky. Based on the geographical concentration of Magu beliefs in the eastern and western regions of China, he suggests that the prototype of Magu should be a female immortal from ancient China, either in the east or in the south (H. Cao 2006, pp. 121–25). Xu Hualong 徐華龍 points out that the original prototype of Magu was in the form of a bird, a sea goddess (H. Xu 2013, pp. 25–31). Cao Guoqing 曹國慶 and Hu Changchun 胡長春 consider the characteristics of the immortal identity of Magu and argue that traces of female worship and totem cults in ancient societies are preserved in the mythology of

Magu (Cao and Hu 2000, p. 34). It can be seen that the current scholars focus on the image of Magu from a folklore perspective but lack a systematic examination of it, as well as an overview and summary of the evolution of the image of Magu.

In this paper, I will use interdisciplinary methods, such as archaeology, religion, and gender studies, to determine the archetype of the image of Magu and systematically sort out the development of the image of Magu. This paper attempts to answer the following three questions: First, what is the archetype of Magu's image? Second, after entering a patriarchal society, why were Magu's hands, which seemed to be bird claws, transformed into tools used by men to scratch their backs, with an implied eroticization, in the works of some literary scholars and poets? Third, compared with the original image of Magu, how has the figure of Magu, as an immortal, been changed in a Daoist way? Through the study of Magu's image, we can discover the lost mythological tradition of the goddess in Chinese patriarchal civilization, which was preserved and inherited by Daoism.

2. The Prototype for the Image of Magu Is a Neolithic Bird Goddess

The earliest account of Magu and her mythology is found in the tales of Chinese mystery and the supernatural from the Wei 魏 dynasty, *The Legend of the Mystery and the Supernatural* (*Lieyizhuan* 列異傳), has a brief summary of Magu's hands, as follows: "The immortal Magu came to earth from Heaven to the house of Cai Jing 蔡經 in the area of Dongyang 東陽, and her hands are like the feet of a bird's claws with four inches of length" 神仙麻姑降東陽蔡經家, 手爪長四寸 (P. Cao 1988, p. 18). During the Jin 晉 dynasty, Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–363), in his work *The Tales of Immortals* (*Shenxianzhuan* 神仙傳), describes the hands of Magu in a similar way to *Lieyizhuan*: "The hands of Magu look like bird's feet" 麻姑手爪似鳥 (Ge 2017, p. 84). In traditional Chinese aesthetic culture, there are many poems that portray and describe the beauty of a woman's hands, such as "hands like catkins, skin like gelatin" 手如柔荑, 膚如凝脂 (Cheng 1985, p. 104), "ten fingers as sharp as bamboo shoots, wrists like white lotus roots" 十指尖如筍, 腕似白蓮藕 (S. Zhao 1999, p. 472). Many adjectives describe the beauty of a woman's hands, such as white, soft, slender, dexterous, etc. The ideal hands should be white, soft, etc. However, birds' feet are different from humans' fingers after all. The bird's feet are compared to the human hands, highlighting the slender and elongated nature of Magu's hands and their V-shape.

In the early stages of the development of Daoism, immortals generally had wings and were called Feather Man (*Yuren* 羽人). Considering Magu's Daoist identity, many Chinese scholars believe that the prototype of Magu's image was *Yuren* (H. Cao 2006, pp. 121–25). Such an explanation seems reasonable, but it only illustrates the bird-like elements that are present in the image of Magu and does not take into account Magu's female identity. If we trace the image of Magu further back in history, we will find that the prototype of the image of Magu is none other than the bird goddess, one of the many female deities of the Neolithic period. Worship of the bird goddess was part of Neolithic goddess beliefs, and beliefs in the bird goddess were geographically spread across the globe, primarily in Eurasia. In Neolithic goddess beliefs, goddesses were often stylized in combination with animals that did not merely represent the animal itself but appeared as avatars of goddesses with regenerative and resurrection powers (Ye 2018, p. 5). Symbols and patterns on Neolithic pottery, petroglyphs, and jade artifacts unearthed in Eurasia, such as the abstract symbols V, triangle, and circle, as well as those representing animal symbols such as snakes, birds, bears, frogs, and so on, symbolize the source of life or the promotion of life energy.

Archaeological discoveries over the past 40 years have shown that during the Neolithic period in China, there has been a long tradition of worshipping handmade bird images as deities, and owls and hawks are the most common manifestations of bird goddesses (Ye and Zu 2009, pp. 74–81). Like the bird's feet, the bird's wings, beak, head, and the V-shaped abstract symbol are also symbols of the bird goddess. There are many Neolithic bird-shaped jade artifacts, and numerous bird-shaped jade artifacts have been found in the Longshan 龍山 Culture in Shandong 山東 Province, the Liangzhu 良渚 Culture in the lower

reaches of the Yangtze River and the Taihu 太湖 Lake area, and the Shijiahe 石家河 Culture in Hubei 湖北 Province. China's Sanxingdui 三星堆 civilization is the site of ancient Shu 蜀 culture, and one of its excavated bronze ritual objects is composed of a human head, bird body, and bird feet, belonging to the bird goddess statue, which is a continuation of the prehistoric goddess worship (Yang and Ye 2019, p. 102).

Another example is the Hongshan 红山 culture in Inner Mongolia, China, 6000 years ago, which was in the middle of the Neolithic period, a transitional stage from matrilineal to patrilineal communes. The Hongshan culture unearthed a large number of jade artifacts that represented various deities (Tian 2004, p. 233). Because jade is revered in traditional Chinese culture and its production is very scarce, jade products are not used as daily utilities, but rather as sacred objects in rituals and other ceremonial activities (Tian 2004, p. 225). The shapes of jade objects unearthed in the Hongshan Culture are seldom based on natural archetypes but are characterized by exaggeration, abstraction, and deformation, such as "C"-shaped dragons with pig's heads, a bear-headed goddess, a bird-shaped goddess, etc. The gyrating and encircling lines in the jade objects express the goddess's reproductive divinity. And, the addition of images of birds, bears, deer, snakes, etc., to human-shaped jade objects indicates that they are bird goddesses, bear goddesses, deer goddesses, snake goddesses, etc. This kind of modeling belongs to the unidirectional transformation type. The composite transformation type combines multiple animal figures with the human body (L. Zhang 2009, pp. 8–9). There are two types of jade artifacts that are the most common, one type of jade artifact is shaped like a pig's head with a dragon's body, the body of the animal is curved in a rounded ring, and there is an incision in the place where the head is next to the body, but there is no disconnection between the head and the body. Another type of jade is bird-like jade; the birds are mostly owls (Tian 2004, p. 233). In addition to simple bird jade shapes, there are numerous jade objects with human bodies fused with bird shapes. To determine whether a jade vessel represents the bird goddess, we should first look for the presence of female physical features in the jade vessel, such as a slightly elevated abdomen and breasts, and secondly for abstract symbols, like the triangle that symbolizes the female uterus. The bird-goddess jades in the following three pictures are all from the Hongshan culture, and based on the shapes of these jades, we can learn more about the beliefs of people in the Neolithic period in the bird goddess.

In Figure 1, the owl's ears stand in a semicircle on top of her head, her eyes are round and protruding, her beak is pointed, and her wings are extended outward. She has wavy lines in the middle of her body representing her full breasts, and the three lines on her tail represent the female genitalia, all of which indicate that this is an owl goddess statue (L. Zhang 2009, p. 62).

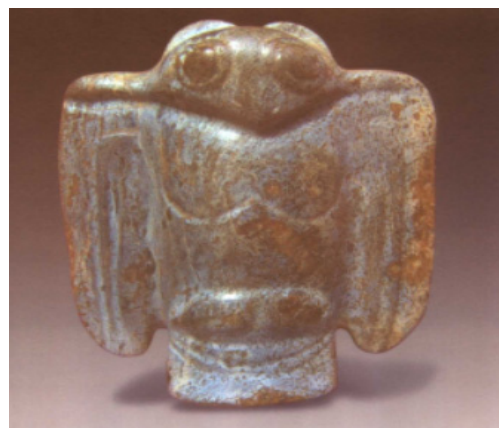


Figure 1. Bird goddess jade (Q. Xu 2005, p. 38), 12.1 × 10.8 cm.

In Figure 2, the bird goddess has rectangular and outwardly protruding eyes, her wings are outwardly extended, there are grid patterns on her shoulders and lower ab-

domen, and she has a triangular head shape. In the excavated jade artifacts of the Hongshan culture, the shapes associated with the goddess include lattices, spirals, triangles, circles, and so on, which are associated with vitality, the womb, and change, as well as symbols of regeneration of life (L. Zhang 2009, p. 67).



Figure 2. Bird goddess jade (Q. Xu 2005, p. 22), 5.4 × 6.8 cm.

The jade object in Figure 3 is in the form of a bird and is deified as a human face. The bird's tail is on top, and its head is facing down. Her wings are round and spreading, with triangular motifs, round and protruding eyes, a trapezoidal nose, and a beak represented by a lower chord, presenting a solemn and angry face. The image of this jade object, a large bird in flight, is also a V-shaped symbol. In primitive cultures, the abstract "V" symbol was a symbolic representation of the goddess, possibly in the form of a bird (Eisler 1988, p. 72). The shape of this jade is like an owl (L. Zhang 2009, p. 40), and due to factors, such as the owl resting during the day, perching higher up in trees at night, and having excellent eyesight to help it hunt better, these factors are able to instill a sense of mystery and awe in people about owls. The ancient Chinese believed that owls were the embodiment of death and the goddess of the underworld, so various burial objects in the shape of owls were also found in people's graves. The owl is both a sign of "death" and a symbol of "rebirth" and contains cultural symbols of fertility worship (L. Zhang 2009, p. 114). In the ancient Chinese conception, pure and true death did not exist; death was a preparation for regeneration or new life. The owl is a symbol of death, but as the goddess of owls, she also means rebirth (Tang and Zhang 2001, p. 222). In Chinese archaeological excavations of Neolithic tombs, a device with bird imagery in the grave is also an embodiment of the image of the goddess representing death and rebirth (Hu 2013, pp. 120–29).



Figure 3. Bird goddess jade (Q. Xu 2004, p. 56), 7.2 × 12.4 cm.

By interpreting the image of the Neolithic bird goddess and its connotations, we can deduce that the prototype of Magu is the Neolithic bird goddess, who has magical energies and represents the infinite death and rebirth of living beings, based on the fact that Magu is a female immortal and possesses a pair of hands that seem to be like the feet of a bird.

3. The Image of Magu in a Patriarchal Society

The original image of Magu was horrific; *Lieyizhuan* 列異傳 recorded that when Cai Jing 蔡經 saw Magu's hands, he thought they were really good hands that could scratch his itchy back if he acquired them. Magu had a divine ability to know what was going on in other people's heads. When Magu realized that Cai Jing intended to use her hands to scratch his itchy back, she was furious, so she secretly cast a spell, and Cai Jing fell to the ground, with blood coming out of both eyes. “此女子实好佳手，愿得以搔背。” 麻姑大怒，忽见经顿地，两目流血 (P. Cao 1988, p. 18).

Although the text does not explicitly state whether Caijing's frivolous thoughts cost him his life, this idea of scratching his back with the hand of Magu is an affront to Magu as an immortal. Blasphemy and insults to the divine are bound to be punished (Hongzhi Wang 2019, pp. 276–78); *The Book of Songs* 詩經 records the owl goddess with the supernatural ability to take lives and destroy houses: “O, owl, owl, since you have taken my children, do not destroy my house again.” 鴟鵂鴞，既取我子，無毀我室 (X. Wang 2006, p. 225). The owl goddess destroys the house because she is desecrated by these people: “Who will dare to bully and insult me now, you mortals?” 今女下民，或敢侮予 (X. Wang 2006, p. 225).

Whether or not Cai Jing 蔡經 learned the lesson of blasphemy, we have no way of knowing, but the fact that Magu's hand resembles a bird's foot and can scratch a man's back has become a historical allusion that has continued to appear in the writings of novelists and poets over the centuries (D. Yu 2017; G. Yu 2019; H. Liu 2013; J. Zheng 2011; Huaiyi Wang 2018; Yin 2007), such as the poem “Orchid ” by the poet Jiu Chao 居巢: “A new kind of Magu resembles the hands of a bird's feet, and using them to scratch the body is very pleasing to the heart.” 新收一種麻姑爪，快意真從癢處搔 (Shi 2007, p. 149). The poem ‘Bergamot’ by Yang Jiyuan 楊霽園 compares the bergamot to the hands of Magu resembling the feet of a bird, associating it with the bergamot becoming the hands of Magu that can be used to scratch his body, which is very pleasurable 可能化作麻姑爪，癢處爬搔一快心 (Ningboshi 2010, p. 834). In China, Magu's hands, which look like bird's feet, are called *Magu Zhao* 麻姑爪, a term that has two meanings: First, it refers to Magu's hands, and second, it means a small bamboo rake that can be used to scratch people's back, Figure 4 is a picture of *Magu Zhao*.

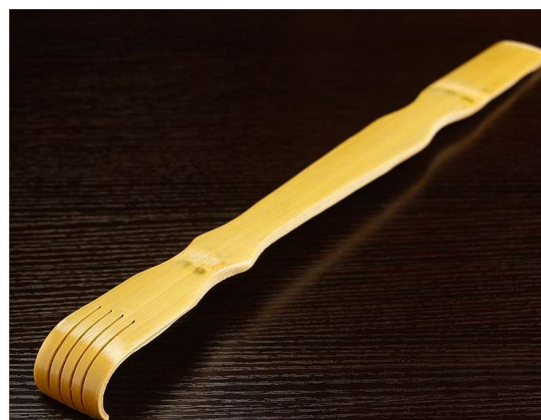


Figure 4. *Magu Zhao*.

Generally speaking, adults are less pliable and scratching requires skin-to-skin contact, and the solution to people's back itch can only be replaced by someone closer to them, apart from parents and children, and for men, it is only their wives. Havelock Ellis noted

the connection between itching and sexual desire, where he stated that the sense of touch was the most primitive channel for feeling ‘sex’ and that the act of stroking or scratching could trigger a heightened sexual desire in certain situations (Ellis 1948, pp. 35–43). Cai Jing 蔡經 imagines scratching his own itch using Magu’s long, thin fingers, and such heterosexual contact implies sexual fantasy, which is also reflected in poetry and novels. For example, in *The Peach Blossoms Fan* 桃花扇, the Qing dynasty novelist Kong Shangren 孔尚任 records, “I am only worried that tonight there is not a Magu with hands like the feet of a bird to scratch my back, who sleeps with me.” (S. Kong 1998, p. 181).

After the Neolithic Age, matrilineal culture was replaced by patrilineal culture, and accordingly, male gods replaced goddesses, and the worship of male reproduction replaced the worship of female reproduction (Hao et al. 2007, pp. 124–25). At the core of the belief in goddesses was the sanctification of female fertility, but with the rise of patriarchal cultures, the sacredness of female fertility was gradually usurped by men, who took over this creative power. McElvaine argues from the perspective of “fertility misconceptions” that if the total fertility of women is considered “fertility misconception I”, then the total fertility of men can be considered “fertility misconception II”. In fertility misconception I, the ability to create new life is the exclusive divine power of women in relation to women, while in fertility misconception II, it dominates almost all of written history (McElvaine 2001, pp. 119–23). Because of the male dispossession of female fertility, with the fertility of a sacred nature vested in the male as the primary giver/sower of seeds, fertility is monopolized by the male. Since the male sperm is sown as a seed in the ground of the woman’s womb, her womb is merely a receptacle or an environment for the sperm to gestate (without seeming to recognize the role of the woman’s ovum), this situation is known as the ‘seed metaphor’, a metaphorical idea that is so widespread that it is used in almost all agricultural and post-agricultural societies (McElvaine 2001, p. 126). Since then, the male god has replaced the goddess, male fertility worship has replaced female fertility worship, and the male body represents the beauty of transcendental spiritual power, while the female body has become an “erotic object” that can be dominated and possessed by the male aesthetic vision (Hao et al. 2007, pp. 124–25).

The goddess Magu has hands that look like bird feet embodying the Neolithic belief in the bird goddess. The bird’s feet, which symbolized the goddess’s life energy, evolved into a tool that could be used by men to scratch their backs, fundamentally because Magu, who represented the image of the goddess, was subjected to objectification and eroticization of her body in a patriarchal society. Throughout the world of goddess worship, there are many images of goddesses who are physically female but have hands that look like bird claws. In medieval Europe, for example, the three goddesses of fate were often depicted as women with hands resembling the feet of a vulture. In Western mythology, the goddess of the underworld, Lilith, has a woman’s body and hands in the shape of a bird’s feet (Ye 2006, p. 172). The owl, one of the avatars of the bird goddess, has also been demonized. As a sacred object worshipped by primitive peoples in prehistoric times, the owl appears in a large number of Neolithic excavations and is worshipped in the Yangshao 仰韶, Hongshan 紅山, Longshan 龍山, and Qijia 齊家 cultures in China. Following the institutional changes in the Yin 殷 and Zhou 周 dynasties, the owl appears as a negative image in all written texts, and by the Warring States period 戰國時期, the owl had become an evil bird (Ye 2018, pp. 43–48). Upon entering a patriarchal society, the oneness of death and rebirth represented by Neolithic goddess beliefs was separated into goddesses who represented death and those who represented resurrection. This is why in ancient China the owl and the phoenix represented separate symbols: The mystical energy of the owl’s rebirth and resurrection was attributed to the so-called bird of immortality, the phoenix, while the owl itself was left alone to represent the call of death (Ye 2018, pp. 53–54).

Masculine culture fragmented the integral connection between man and nature represented by the belief in goddesses during matriarchal societies, and the goddesses’ magical powers became a terrible force that threatened male lives. The images of the goddesses were demonized, eroticized, and stigmatized. These goddesses have human bodies but be-

have like animals with no morals or conscience. The oneness of the goddesses as symbols of life and death has also been divided, and the death and dark side of the goddesses personified as demonesses, such as Siren, is an evolution of the bird goddess with evil powers, who lures sailors astray and onto the rocks with her beautiful songs. In these myths, the goddesses either become female demons or are put to death by male gods or male heroes, and the animal traits carried by their bodies are stigmatized, while the cultural attributes of their animals are rewritten, such as the snake representing fertility and innovation, its vitality not only as a symbol of regeneration but also as a symbol of the goddess' antiquity. In matriarchal societies, snakes are sacred rather than evil and are not destructive.

4. The Daoist Reworking of the Image of Magu

More than a hundred years after the story of Magu was recorded in *The Legend of the Mystery and the Supernatural* (*Lieyizhuan* 列異傳), Ge Hong 葛洪, a famous alchemist and medical practitioner of the Jin 晉 Dynasty, re-created the myth of Magu in his book, *The Tales of Immortals* (*Shenxianzhuan* 神仙傳). He adopted the relevant details from *Lieyizhuan* and made the myth of Magu richer and more detailed in terms of content and descriptions. From then on, the image of Magu basically followed *Shenxianzhuan*. Compared with the abbreviated mythological story of Magu recorded in *The Legend of the Mystery and the Supernatural*, Ge Hong's reimagining of the image of Magu is mainly characterized by the following features:

First, Ge Hong gave a detailed description of Magu's costume. In his book, Ge Hong depicted the story of Wang Yuan and Magu as immortals drinking wine at the house of the mortal Cai Jing, and Magu's appearance was depicted by Ge Hong as follows: "She was a fine woman, about eighteen or nineteen years of age, with her hair in a bun on top, and the rest of her hair hanging loose to her waist. She wore colorful clothes, not of silk, but glorious and unnamable, and there were no such beautiful clothes to be seen in this world." 是好女子，年可十八九許，於頂上作髻，餘發散垂至腰。衣有文彩，又非錦綺，光彩耀目，不可名狀，皆世之所無也 (Ge 2017, p. 82).

Second, as a female immortal, Magu has a very long lifespan. Ge Hong 葛洪 wrote that Magu paid a formal visit to Wang Yuan in Cai Jing's house and told Wang Yuan that she had seen the East China Sea 東海 turn into fields three times since she last met him. Just now she went to Penglai 蓬萊 Island (an island inhabited by immortals) again and saw that the waters of the East China Sea were shallower than before, about half of what she had seen the last time she met Wang Yuan. She said it could be that it would turn into hills and land again! 麻姑自說雲：“接待以來，已見東海三為桑田，向到蓬萊，水又淺於往者，會時略半也，豈將復還為陵陸乎！” (Ge 2017, p. 269). The Chinese used the idiom of “the sea becomes farmland, and farmland turns into the sea” (*Canghai sangtian* 滄海桑田) to describe the great changes in the world, which comes from the story of Magu recorded in *The Tales of Immortals*. We can see that as a goddess Magu lived a long life. Because of the Chinese custom of honoring the elderly and the psychological desire to live longer, Magu was portrayed as the goddess of longevity in Daoism.

Third, Ge Hong rewrote the ferocious character of Magu in *Lieyizhuan* to make her a female immortal with a kind heart and consideration for others. He wrote: "She saw Cai Jing's sister-in-law, who had already given birth to a child that was just ten days old, come to pay her a visit. Magu told her not to come over and asked Cai Jing's family to give her a little rice, which she then sprinkled on the ground and told them that this would rid Cai Jing's sister-in-law of the bad luck brought about by the birth of a baby. Caijing's family members saw the rice that Magu sprinkled on the ground turn into (*dansha* 丹砂)." 麻姑欲見蔡經母及婦等，時經弟婦新產數日，姑見知之，曰：“噫，且立勿前。”即求少許米來，得米擲之墮地，謂以米祛其穢也，視其米皆成丹砂 (Ge 2017, p. 83). It can be seen that the immortal Magu did a good deed by transforming grains of rice into *dansha* by means of magic to remove the bad luck of a woman after giving birth to a child, which was brought about by the production of a child. In Daoist culture, cinnabar is a divine object that can improve people's body immunity, drive away demons, calm one's mind

and spirit, and other effects. Daoists believe that if they eat *dansha* for a long time, they can live forever.

Finally, in response to Caijing's desecration of the sanctity of the image of Magu, Ge Hong replaced Magu as the punisher with the immortal Wang Yuan. It is recorded in *Lieyizhuan* that Magu personally punished Caijing for blaspheming her as an immortal. Ge Hong, however, switched the punishment of Caijing to the immortal Wang Yuan in *The Tales of Immortals*, but the immortal Wang Yuan only whipped Caijing with a whip. Ge Hong wrote: "The hands of Magu looked like the feet of a bird, and when Cai Jing saw them, he thought to himself that it would be the best thing for him to have such bird-like hands on his back when his back was itching. Although Cai Jing did not say these thoughts with his mouth, the immortal Wang Yuan 王遠 already knew what he was thinking, so he had someone whip Cai Jing with a leather whip and told Cai Jing that Magu was an immortal: How could you let her hands scratch for you? The people saw a leather whip whipping Cai Jing but did not see who was holding it. Then, Wang Yuan tells Cai Jing that not everyone is worthy of his whip." 麻姑手爪似鳥，經見之，心中念曰："背大癢時，得此爪以爬背，當佳之。" 遠已知經心中所言，即使人牽經鞭之，謂曰："麻姑神人也，汝何忽謂其爪可爬背耶？" 但見鞭著經背，亦莫見有人持鞭者。遠告經曰："吾鞭不可妄得也。" (Ge 2017, p. 84). Ge Hong does not give us an account of what Cai Jing's injuries really were in the book, but we can infer that he probably only suffered some superficial injuries, far from the magical spell used by Magu to make Cai Jing lie on the ground with blood coming out of his eyes in *Lieyizhuan*.

As a Daoist theorist and practitioner, why did Ge Hong rewrite the image of Magu in this way? What was his purpose in doing so? And, what ideas of Daoism at that time were reflected behind it? The answers to all these questions can be found in the following aspects:

First of all, Daoism inherited the female worship of the ancient matriarchal society, where male gods and goddesses had the same divine character and equal status. Ge Hong's Daoist beliefs dictated that he would absorb Magu, as a mythological figure, into the system of gods and goddesses that he created in the Biography of the Immortals. Daoism venerates Laozi 老子 and his work *Daode jing* 道德經; his ideas are mainly derived from matriarchal societies, and the ideal society he depicts in the *Daode jing* 道德經 is a microcosm of matriarchal societies. The sage with the qualities of inaction and suppleness, humility, and selflessness, as portrayed by Laozi in the *Daode jing*, is also the embodiment of the female chief in a matriarchal society (W. Liu 2012, p. 116). Daoism believes that the Dao is the root and ultimate destination of all existence. Comparing Laozi's Dao with the Great Mother Goddess, Ye Shuxian 葉舒憲 argues that Laozi's value orientation is based on the worship of the Great Mother Goddess, or the goddess of religion and mythological archetype of ancient matriarchal societies that still exist in patriarchal cultures and has not been replaced or tampered with by patriarchy (Ye 2004, p. 169), and he points out that myths about male creators usually focus on male or intersexual reproduction, while myths about female creators focus on the primordial Great Mother Goddess herself as the main creator of all things. This concept of reproduction is a reflection of the idea that in ancient matrilineal societies, people only knew who their mother was and not who their father was. The Great Mother Goddess was the supreme deity worshipped by people before patriarchal societies and was the ultimate prototype of later goddesses or all deities (Ye 2004, p. 172), while Laozi, who was born in a patriarchal society, adhered to the ideological legacy of ancient goddess religions and promoted the idea of a female creator, that all things were the result of the "birth" of the primordial mother goddess and not of the "creation" of a male creator (Ye 2004, p. 182).

In the process of transforming the image of Magu, Ge Hong, in addition to preserving the sacredness of the image of Magu as a divine being, also describes the hands of Magu in detail: "The hands of Magu are like the claws of a bird" (Ge 2017, p. 84). "The phenomenon that the image of the bird's claw of Magu is not only preserved but enhanced in the process of transformation from ancient mythology to Daoist fairy tales; it is a sym-

bol deliberately highlighted in the process of constructing the genealogy of Daoist deities.” (Xiaoyan Liu 2012, p. 398). In contrast to some religions, where the patriarchal culture brought about the deprivation of the creative power of the male gods over the goddesses, and the consequent fragmentation and separation of human beings from nature, China also gradually developed a patriarchal society during its historical development, but in Daoism, Chinese native religion, there has never been a confrontational relationship between male gods and goddesses, as Zhan Shichuan 詹石窗 points out: “Unlike the beliefs of the rest of the world, the male gods of Daoism did not drive away the goddesses, let alone turn them into male gods one by one; on the contrary, the original goddesses not only continued to be worshipped but also kept adding companions, together becoming models for female practitioners to follow. This is a distinctive feature of the Daoist system of thought.” (Zhan 2010, p. 158). That is why Ge Hong depicted male and female immortals with equal numbers in the *Biography of the Immortals*, proving to both men and women through the biographical stories of the immortals that immortals existed and that mortals could become divine through Daoist training.

Secondly, the Daoist idea of “valuing life, yet abhorring death” replaced the belief that “death and rebirth” were one and the same, as represented by the beliefs of the goddesses in primitive times. The specific manifestation is that Ge Hong transformed the divinity of Magu in line with human nature; that is to say, Ge Hong eliminated the ferocity and violence of Magu’s character, which represented the aspect of death and emphasized Magu’s goodness, understanding, and moral nobility, which represented the aspect of life. Daoism created the divine immortal system during the Wei 魏 and Jin 晉 dynasties in order to develop and grow its organization, it absorbed many ancient deities during this period and transformed them to conform to the teachings of Daoism, completing the transformation of these deities from “gods” to “immortals”.

Daoism reworked the myths of such figures as Queen Mother of the West (Xiwang mu 西王母), the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝), and Nuwa (Nüwa 女媧), showing the characteristics of fairy calcification. Zheng Tuyou 鄭土有 points out in this regard: “The fairy-tale transformation of ancient myths during the Wei and Jin dynasties was profound and extensive, and all ancient myths with fairy-tale conditions underwent changes during that period, basically completing the process of evolution of myths into fairy tales.” (T. Zheng 2016, p. 50). The immortality of the gods in mythology is a metaphor for the phenomenon of plants growing in spring and decaying in winter, the moon’s surplus and deficit, and other weekly occurrences, and the immortality of the gods is natural (T. Zheng 2016, pp. 241–42). For example, in the Daoist genealogy of the immortals, the Queen Mother of the West has a supreme position as the leader of the female immortals. According to ancient Chinese myths, *Xiwangmu* is depicted as having a human body, a leopard’s tail, and a tiger’s teeth, and her face is vicious and terrifying. She is not only in charge of plague, disease, and death but also possesses the “medicine of immortality”, which can make people live forever. Queen Mother of the West is the goddess of the moon (Z. Zhao 1999, pp. 32–34), and the moon’s roundness and shortness in each month are like the death and rebirth of life, which is in line with the ancient Chinese concept of the immortality of the life cycle. This is consistent with the ancient Chinese concept of the immortality of the cycle of life. Therefore, Queen Mother of the West can make people die, and the ancestors were very much in awe of her, fearing that she would bring disaster if they annoyed her, but at the same time, Queen Mother of the West can also make people immortal, so she represents the oneness of the goddess’s beliefs in the death and rebirth. The image of *Xiwangmu* has been adapted by Daoism to portray her as a goddess with the appearance of a middle-aged woman, who is kind, beautiful, gentle, and an auspicious deity in possession of the elixir of immortality (Huaiyi Wang 2018, pp. 189–94).

Just as Mother Earth makes everything grow in the spring and kills everything in the autumn, the mystification of the goddess’s fertility gives her the ability to master death and rebirth, with the dual properties of violence and meekness, creation and destruction. It is important to note that the destructive power of the goddess is not the death of life, but

the rebirth of life after death. Daoism, by contrast, is a religion that values the life of all living beings and takes “life” as its beauty, and out of this emphasis on life, its transformation of the ancient image of the goddess was bound to highlight the “life” character of the goddess and discard the “death” nature of the goddess. This mentality of selectively creating a beautiful image of the goddess and highlighting her femininity is in fact the collective unconscious projection of the national aesthetic mentality that women should be soft and gentle, kind and innocent, tolerant and compassionate, which is the embodiment of a beautiful symbol of female humanity. Daoism selectively discards the fierce, violent, and cruel aspects of the image of Magu as a bird goddess representing death, while consciously promoting the aspects of life, such as meekness, grace, and kindness, highlighting the immortal character of Magu as an immortal. This is a manifestation of the Daoist belief in immortality, which is expressed in Daoist fairy tales, such as the biographies of the immortals, where “immortality is the central idea expressed in fairy tales, and it is the desire of human beings for eternal life” (T. Zheng 2016, p. 16). This adaptation of the image of Magu also reflects the difference between gods and immortals: “In Chinese mythology, the forms of gods mostly remain half-human and half-animal, lacking human emotions. Whereas the forms of immortals are no different from those of ordinary people, and their behavior and demeanor are the same as those of ordinary people.” (T. Zheng 2016, p. 31). In this way, the image of Magu has become a specific symbolic image of people’s desire for the eternal continuation of a good life and their resistance to death.

Finally, the good deed of Magu dispelling the bad luck of Cai Jing’s sister-in-law shows that not only are the immortals the personified embodiment of Daoism, but they also have high morals. In Daoism, immortals are usually characterized by immortality and possessing magical and extraordinary powers (Gou 2019, p. 1). The *Dao* 道 is the ultimate power and law that determines the universe, including the natural world, and human society. The attribute of *Dao* to procreate all things is considered by Daoism to be the greatest kindness, whereas evil is death, a deviation from this attribute of *Dao* (L. Kong 2021, p. 6). Immortals are the personified embodiment of *Dao*, and the goodness of *Dao* that gives birth to all things is called “virtue (de 德)”, which is manifested in the immortals, who are the representatives of *Dao*, as having noble moral virtues. In the view of Daoists, immortals are the symbols of ideal personality and perfect humanity.

Ge Hong believed that immortals existed and that people could become immortals through Daoist practices, such as observing the precepts, taking external alchemy (*waidan* 外丹), performing good deeds, and so on. He especially emphasized that performing good deeds could lead to immortality, believing that loyalty, filial piety, harmony, benevolence, and faith were the basic conditions for mortals who wished to become immortals. If a person did not have noble virtues and was keen on magic tricks, it was impossible for him to become immortal (M. Wang 2011, p. 53). These good deeds include loving and being loyal to one’s country, being filial to one’s parents, helping one’s friends, not insulting others, and so on.

Therefore, as a bird goddess originally from the Neolithic period, Daoism transformed Magu into a beautiful, kind-hearted female immortal with noble moral sentiments. Once characterized, the Chinese accepted this image of the female immortal Magu. It is common for people to give a portrait with the image of Magu to the oldest female member of the family on her birthday, as a token of their wish for her longevity. In these portraits, Magu has slender hands like a bird’s feet, holding peaches or wine cups with delicious *Ganoderma lucidum* liquor, and is dressed in elegant costumes, most of which carry gourds, *Ganoderma lucidum*, flowers, and other auspicious objects. Beside Magu, there are many figures such as maids of honor, children, or animals, such as phoenix, deer, cranes, and goats.

Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1524) was a renowned painter, calligrapher, and poet of the Ming dynasty in China with high artistic sophistication. In Figure 5, Tang Yin depicts Magu as a female immortal holding a peach of longevity, with a phoenix representing immortality following her. In this painting, Magu’s face is in the shape of a goose egg, and her fingers are very slender, with long, pointed fingernails. Tang Yin here prominently depicts

Magu's hands, which are as slender as a bird's feet. The author and date of the painting are recorded in the text in the upper left-hand corner of the image, which states that Tang Yin created the painting in the spring of 1506.

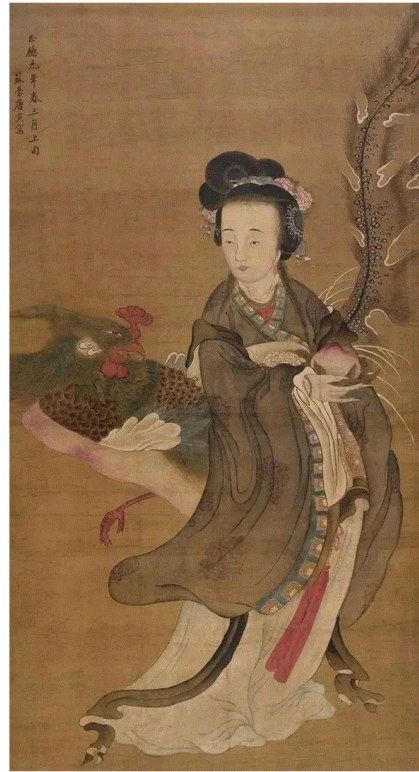


Figure 5. Tang Yin 唐寅, “Magu brings longevity and happiness to the people” (Magu xianshou 麻姑獻壽).¹ 1506. Vertical scroll, colors on silk scroll, 153.5 × 79 cm.

Yu Ji 餘集 (1738–1823) was a Chinese painter of the Qing Dynasty who produced many outstanding paintings in his lifetime. In Figure 6, Yu Ji depicts a youthful and beautiful female immortal, Magu, holding a tray in her right hand with a wine cup filled with Ganoderma lucidum wine; her right hand is slender, which resembles a bird's foot. There is also a gourd hanging from a ribbon around her waist. Behind her is a goat carrying a large fairy peach surrounded by lotus flowers. These plants and animals represent good luck and fortune. The text in the lower right corner of the painting records the author of the painting and the time of its creation, the text's main content says that the painting's author is Yu Ji and that the painting was created in the second month of the summer of 1805.



Figure 6. Yu Ji 餘集, “Magu brings longevity and happiness to the people” (Magu xianshou 麻姑獻壽). 1805. Vertical scroll, colors on paper, 155 × 82 cm (Xingang [Liu 2016](#), p. 298).

5. Conclusions

The figurative symbolism of Magu’s bird claws reflects its association with bird worship, and the gruesome image of Magu, half human and half bird, fierce and violent, is a manifestation of the divine attributes of Magu, whose prototype is the bird goddess, one of the Neolithic goddesses of worship. As a bird goddess of single-sex reproduction, she symbolizes the eternal cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, where there is no mere death, only constant death, and rebirth. She gives life and controls death at the same time, and the two are indistinguishable. The claws of Magu are also a symbol of the power of rebirth. The figure of Magu reveals a belief in the goddess that has long been lost in patriarchal societies.

With the development of a patriarchal society, the fertility that symbolized the sacredness of women was usurped by men, reflected in the transformation of the image of the goddess by male gods, emphasizing the goddess’s control over death and the demonization and stigmatization of the image of the goddess. The bird-like hands of Magu became a scratching tool for men to scratch their backs, and the belief in the goddess and the spirit behind it has been rewritten by a patriarchal culture, and the image of Magu is implicitly eroticized. Daoism, by contrast, inherited the female worship of the matrilineal clans and absorbed Magu into its genealogy of gods and goddesses, retaining the image of Magu’s human body with hands that look like the claws of a bird, but remodeling her image to conform to the teachings of Daoism. It also replaced the primitive goddess belief that “life and death can be transformed” with the idea of “abhorring death and cherishing life,” eliminating the fierce and violent nature of Magu’s divinity, which represented destructive power. Magu eventually became a beautiful, gentle female immortal and possessed noble morals, which is a full manifestation of the true, good, and beautiful immortal nature of Daoist deities.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Q.G.; writing—original draft preparation, Q.G.; writing review and editing, Y.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by National Social Science Fund of China, grant number: 21AZJ005.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Note

¹ This image has been taken from the website <https://auction.artron.net/paimai-art5004000620>, accessed on 16 July 2023.

References

- Cao, Guoqing 曹國慶, and Changchun Hu 胡長春. 2000. The legend of Magu and her related beliefs and folklore (Magu de chuanshuo jiqi xinyang minsu 麻姑的傳說及其信仰民俗). *Jiangxi Social Sciences* 7: 34–37.
- Cao, Hongliang 曹紅亮. 2006. Magu textual research (Magu kaobian 麻姑考辯). *Religious Studies* 1: 121–25.
- Cao, Pi 曹丕. 1988. *The Legend of the Mystery and the Supernatural and five other novels about the supernatural (Lieyizuan Deng Wuzhong 列異傳等五種)*. Beijing: Culture and Arts Publisher (Wenhua Yishu Chubanshe 文化藝術出版社).
- Cheng, Junying 程俊英. 1985. *Translation and Commentary on the Book of Songs (Sijing Yizhu 詩經譯注)*. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House (Shanghai Guji Chubanshe 上海古籍出版社).
- Eisler, Riane. 1988. *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*. New York: Harper One.
- Ellis, Havelock. 1948. *Psychology of Sex*. London: William Heinemann.
- Ge, Hong 葛洪. 2017. *The Tales of Immortals (Shenxian Zhuan 神仙傳)*. Translated and annotated by Qingyun Xie 謝青雲. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局).
- Gou, Bo 苟波. 2019. *A Cultural Study of the Biographies of Daoist Immortals (Daojiao Shenxian Zhuanji De Wenhua Xue Yanjiu 道教神仙傳記的文化學研究)*. Beijing: Religious Culture Press (Zongjiao Wenhua Chubanshe 宗教文化出版社).
- Hao, Weiwei 郝薇薇, Yiqun Li 李軼群, and Yaomin Wang 王耀敏. 2007. Analysis of Women's Culture (Nüxing Wenhua Chuyi 女性文化芻議). *Science Educator* 12: 124–25.
- Hu, Jiansheng 胡建升. 2013. Material Culture and Mythological Images of Liangzhu Divine Emblems (Liangzhu shenhui de wuzhi wenhua he shenhua tuxiang 良渚神徽的物質文化和神話圖像). *Folk Art* 6: 120–29.
- Kong, Linghong 孔令宏. 2021. *Kong Linghong Academic Literature. Volume I, Outline of Daoist Philosophy (Kong Linghong Xueshu Wengong Juanyu, Daojiao Zhexue Gangyao 孔令宏學術文從. 卷一, 道教哲學綱要)*. Chengdu: Bashu Publishing House (Bashu Shushe 巴蜀書社).
- Kong, Shangren 孔尚任. 1998. *The Peach Blossom Fan (Taohua Shan 桃花扇)*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Books Publishing House (Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe 浙江古籍出版社).
- Lin, Xueling 林雪鈴. 2015. The Metaphor of Time and its Literary Narrative in the Story of Xihe and Magu (Xihe Yu Magu Gushi Suo Yinyu Zi Shijianguan Jiqi Wenxue Xuxie 羲和與麻姑故事所隱喻之時間觀及其文學敘寫). *Research on Chinese Folk Culture* 2: 3–12.
- Liu, Huangtian 劉荒田. 2013. *Notes from Two Hills (Liangshan Biji 兩山筆記)*. Guangzhou: Jinan University Press.
- Liu, Weiwei 劉瑋瑋. 2012. *A Study of Chinese Daoist Women's Ethical thought (Zhongguo Daoxue Nüxing Lunli Sixiang Yanjiu 中國道學女性倫理思想研究)*. Changchun: Jilin University Press.
- Liu, Xiaoyan 劉曉豔. 2012. Daoist Magu Beliefs and Chinese Longevity Culture (Daojiao Magu Xinyang Yu Zhonghua Shouwenhua 道教麻姑信仰與中華壽文化). *Journal of Wuhan University of Technology (Social Science Edition)* 26: 398.
- Liu, Xiaoyan 劉曉豔. 2014. The Magu Culture and the Daoist Literary Wonder of the Magu Collection (Magu Wenhua Yu Daojiao Wenxue Qiguan Magu Ji 麻姑文化與道教文學奇觀《麻姑集》). *Religious Studies* 2: 22–25.
- Liu, Xingang 劉新崗. 2016. *Hengshui College Museum of Painting and Calligraphy, Collection of Fine Works, First Volume (Hengshui Xueyuan Shuhua Yishu Bowuguan Guanchang Jingpinji Shangche 衡水學院書畫藝術博物館館藏精品集上冊)*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Fine Arts Publishing House (Hebei Meishu Chubanshe 河北美術出版社).
- McElvaine, Robert S. 2001. *Eve's Seed: Biology, the Sexs, and the Course of History*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ningboshi Yinzhouqu Zhengxie Wenshi Ziliao Weiyuanhui Zhubian 寧波市鄞州區政協文史資料委員會組編 Organized by the Literature and History Information Committee of Ningbo Yinzhou District Political Consultative Conference. 2010. *Yang Jiyuan's Poetry and Writings (Yang Jiyuan Shiwenji 楊霽園詩文集)*. Ningbo: Ningbo Publishing House (Ningbo Chubanshe 寧波出版社).
- Ren, Zhongquan 任宗權. 2012. *Overview of Daoist Rituals (Daojiao Keyi Gailan 道教科儀概覽)*. Beijing: Religious Culture Press (Zongjiao Wenhua Chubanshe 宗教文化出版社).
- Shi, Lijun 石理俊. 2007. *A Complete Collection of Chinese Poems on Ancient and Modern Paintings (Zhongguo Gujin Tihua Shici Quanbi 中國古今題畫詩詞全璧)*. Beijing: Commercial Press International Limited.
- Tang, Huisheng 湯慧生, and Wenhua Zhang 張文華. 2001. *Qinghai Rock Paintings: A Study of Dichotomous Thinking and Its Concepts in Prehistoric Art (Qinghai Yanhua: Shiqian Yishu Zhong Eryuan Duili Siwei Jiqi Guannian De Yanjiu 青海岩畫: 史前藝術中二元對立思維及其觀念的研究)*. Beijing: Science Publishing House (Kexue Chubanshe 科學出版社).
- Tao, Siyan 陶思炎. 2016. *Folklore in Nanjing (Nanjing Minsu 南京民俗)*. Nanjing: Nanjing Publishing House (Nanjing Chubanshe 南京出版社).
- Tian, Guanglin 田廣林. 2004. *The Origins of Civilization in the Western Liaohe Region of Northeastern China (Zhongguo Dongbei Xiliaohe Diqu De Wenming Qiyuan 中國東北西遼河地區的文明起源)*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局).

- Wan, Lijun 萬麗君. 2022. A Comparison of Chinese and Korean Magu Mythology—An Examination Based on the Interpretive Use of Pictures and Texts (Zhonghan Magu Shenhua Bijiao Lun—Jiyu Tuwen Hushi de Kaocha 中韓麻姑神話比較論—基於圖文互釋的考察). *Comparative Literature in China* 2: 101–16.
- Wang, Hongzhi 王宏治. 2019. *Lecture Notes on the History of Chinese Criminal Law: Pre-Qin to Qing Dynasties* (Zhongguo Xingfashi Jiangyi: Xianqin Zhi Qingdai 中國刑法史講義：先秦至清代). Beijing: The Commercial Press (Shangwu Yinshuguan 商務印書館).
- Wang, Huaiyi 王懷義. 2018. *A Study of Chinese Prehistoric Mythological Imagery* (Zhongguo Shiqian Shenhua Yixiang Yanjiu 中國史前神話意象研究). Beijing: Joint Publishing (Sanlian Shudian 三聯書店).
- Wang, Ming 王明. 2011. *Collate and Annotate the Inner Chapters of Baopuzi* (Baopuzi Neipian Jiaoshi 抱樸子內篇校釋). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局).
- Wang, Xiumei 王秀梅. 2006. *Translation and Commentary on the Book of Songs* (Shijing Yizhu 詩經譯注). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局).
- Wang, Zhaoyu 王昭宇, and Yuzhen Tu 塗育珍. 2019. The formation of the legend of Magu bringing longevity to the people and its transmission in literary texts (“Magu Xianshou” Chuanshou de Xingcheng he zai Wenxue Wenben zhong de Chuanbo “麻姑獻壽”傳說的形成和在文學文本中的傳播). *Journal of East China Institute of Technology (Social Science)* 38: 12–16.
- Xu, Hualong 徐華龍. 2013. The textual research of Magu as a sea goddess (Magu Zuowei Haishang Shenhua Kao 麻姑作為海上神仙考). *Journal of Changzhou Institute of Technology (Social Science Edition)* 31: 25–31.
- Xu, Qiang 徐強. 2004. *Jade Essence of Hongshan Culture* (Hongshan Wenhua Guyu Jinghua 紅山文化古玉精華). Beijing: Blue Sky Press (Lantian Chubanshe 藍天出版社).
- Xu, Qiang 徐強. 2005. *Ancient Chinese Jade Collection* (Zhongguo Guyu Zhencang 中國古玉珍藏). Beijing: Blue Sky Press (Lantian Chubanshe 藍天出版社).
- Yang, Li 楊驪, and Shuxian Ye 葉舒憲. 2019. *A study of the fourfold evidence approach* (Sichong Zhengjufa Yanjiu 四重證據法研究). Shanghai: Fudan University Press.
- Ye, Shuxian 葉舒憲. 2004. *Laozhi and Mythology* (Laozhi Yu Shenhua 老子與神話). Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Publishing House (Shaanxi Renmin Chubanshe 陝西人民出版社).
- Ye, Shuxian 葉舒憲. 2006. Fourth Evidence: The Visual Persuasiveness of Comparative Iconography: The Cross-Cultural Interpretation of the Owl Symbol as an Example (Di Sichong Zhengju: Bijiao Tuxiangxue de Sijue Shuofuli: Yi Maotouying Xiangzheng de Kuawenhua Jiedu Weili 第四重證據：比較圖像學的視覺說服力：以貓頭鷹象徵的跨文化解讀為例). *Literary Review* 5: 172.
- Ye, Shuxian 葉舒憲. 2018. *Mythological Imagery* (Shenhua Yixiang 神話意象). Xi'an: Shanxi Normal University Press Co., Ltd. (Shanxi Shifan Daxue Chuban Zhongse Youxian Gongsi 陝西師範大學出版總社有限公司).
- Ye, Shuxian 葉舒憲, and Xiaowei Zu 祖曉偉. 2009. The claim that the Hongshan Culture's “a type of jade that has both a hook and a cloud-shaped pattern in its shape” is an “owl-shaped jade tablet”: A sequel to the iconographic exploration of the owl archetype (Hongshan Wenhua ‘Gouyunxing Yuqi’ Wei ‘Xiaoxing Yupai’ Shuo—Xuanniao Yuanxing De Tuxiangxue Tanyuan Xupian 紅山文化“勾雲形玉器”為“鴞形玉牌”說—玄鳥原型的圖像學探源續篇). *Folk Art* 8: 74–81.
- Yin, Jianling 尹健玲. 2007. *Ke Jiusi* (Ke Jiusi 柯九思). Beijing: Writers Publishing House (Zuojia Chubanshe 作家出版社).
- Yu, Dafu 郁達夫. 2017. *The Collected Poems of Yu Dafu* (Yu Dafu Shiciji 郁達夫詩詞集). Changchun: Jilin Publishing Group Co. (Jilin Chuban Jituan Gufen Youxian Gongsi 吉林出版集團股份有限公司).
- Yu, Guangzhong 餘光中. 2019. *Peripateticism* (Xiaoyao You 逍遙遊). Beijing: China Friendship Publishing Company (Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi 中國友誼出版公司).
- Yuan, Yuan 袁源. 2016. *Ruyi Painting: Traditional Chinese Auspicious Motifs* (Ruyi Hui-Zhongguo Chuantong Jixiang Tuan 如意繪·中國傳統吉祥圖案). Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Books Publishing House (Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe 浙江古籍出版社).
- Zhan, Shichuang 詹石窗. 2010. *Daoism and Women* (Daojiao Yu Nuxing 道教與女性). Beijing: Religious Culture Press (Zongjiao Wenhua Chubanshe 宗教文化出版社).
- Zhang, Lihong 張麗紅. 2009. *The Cultural Interpretation of the Art of Forming Hongshan Jade* (Hongshan Yuqi Zaoxing Yishu De Wenhua Chanshi 紅山玉器造型藝術的文化闡釋). Changchun: Jilin University Press.
- Zhang, Zijian 張志堅. 2003. *Daoist Immortals and Inner Alchemy* (Daojiao Shenhua yu Neidanxue 道教神仙與內丹學). Beijing: Religious Culture Press (Zongjiao Wenhua Chubanshe 宗教文化出版社).
- Zhao, Shangwen 趙尚文. 1999. *Textual Research on the Great Opera of Sanjin* (Shanjin Daxi Kao 三晉大戲考). Beijing: China Drama Press (Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe 中國戲劇出版社).
- Zhao, Zhongfu 趙宗福. 1999. Functions of the Divine Personality of Queen Mother of the West (Xiwang Mu De Shenge Gongneng 西王母的神格功能). *Trace One's Roots* 5: 32–34.
- Zheng, Juru 鄭菊如. 2011. *Poems by Mr. Zheng Juru* (Zheng Juru Xiansheng Shicun 鄭菊如先生詩存). Tianjin: Nankai University Press.
- Zheng, Tuyou 鄭土有. 2016. *A Study of Chinese Mythology and Immortal Beliefs* (Zhongguo Shenhua Yu Xianren Xinyang Yanjiu 中國神話與仙人信仰研究). Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House (Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe 上海人民出版社).

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.