

On the Sea and The Belief of Sea God in Han Dynasty Society

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Abstract: "Sea" has multi-dimensional meaning, geographical connotation is its original meaning, and it also has political, economic and cultural special significance. The sea God extended from the sea, and then appeared the social sea god belief, they are a new interpretation of Marine culture. The belief in sea God in Han Dynasty was characterized by personalization, secularization and socialization, which was in line with the development of the whole Han Dynasty society. So far, the belief in sea God had been integrated into the Han society, and the influence of Marine culture accompanied the social life of the Han Dynasty.

Keywords: Han Dynasty, The sea, Belief in sea god, Ocean awareness, Culture of the sea.

1. Introduction

The development of "sea" has gone through different stages. The original "sea" refers to the sea in the specific sense, while the current meaning of "sea" refers to the large area of salt water connected with the ocean, namely the subsidiary part of the ocean edge, which is a kind of material existence. "Shuo Wen Jie Zi" said: "The sea, Tianchi also, to receive hundreds of rivers, from the water, every sound. The sea here refers to the place where hundreds of rivers meet, which is not completely the same as the sea in the modern sense. The sea in ancient society refers to the inland lake. However, some historical records show that the sea is actually the sea. For example, it is written in the Biography of Liu Bi, King of Wu in the Han Dynasty that mountains make money and seas become salt. The kingdom of Wu in the Western Han Dynasty was close to the sea, and the sea here was the meaning of the sea. From the sea produced the sea god belief, and then evolved into a kind of social consciousness.

2. The Sea in The Social Consciousness of Han Dynasty

In ancient China, the sea had a wide range of meanings, including the geographical location concept of the sea itself, as well as the sea in political, economic and cultural meanings. The sea in the physical sense was endowed with more virtual and even symbolic meanings, which enriched the connotation of the sea continuously. In the Han Dynasty society, the significance of the sea is multi-level and multi-dimensional.

The sea in the geographical sense is also called azimuthal Sea, which is the original meaning or simple extension of the sea. "The Great Master of Zhuangzi" said, "The god of Beihai, named Yu Qiang, is made by the Spirit Turtle." The Classic of Mountains and Seas has a total of 18 volumes, including eight volumes of the Sea Classic, four volumes of the Wilderness Classic and one volume of the Sea Classic. There are four directions of the sea in the Classic of Mountains and Seas. The essential concept of the sea here is relatively vague, but its geographical orientation is clear and detailed description is given. The Classic of Mountains and Seas was an influential geographic myth book in the Han Dynasty, and its positioning of the sea would inevitably affect people's social

consciousness. According to the Records of the Grand Historian, Xiang Yu's Original Record, "King Xiang has decided to come to the East China Sea to the west and join the Han army to fight against the broad military forces." In a conversation between Xiao He and Liu Bang, recorded in the Annals of the Grand Historian, The Original Records of Emperor Gaozu, Xiao He said, "The Son of Heaven is home everywhere. He is not magnificent, and he has not allowed the later generations to add to it." The two "seas" recorded in "Records of the Grand Historian" have special meaning, but they are more about geographical orientation.

The Qin Dynasty realized great unification, and until the Han Dynasty, the centralized system was strengthened and the unified multi-ethnic state was further consolidated. At this time, the understanding of "sea" was more focused on the political aspect, which was also to meet the need of great unification. In Mozi, there is a statement that "the sum of the whole world is within the four seas", which is a typical political view of "the sea". In the Han Dynasty, the sea concept of the world was developed. Jia Yi wrote in his Treatise on the Qin Dynasty that "lash the world and shock the four seas" and "You are the son of heaven and rich in the four seas". "Su Zong Xiaozhang Emperor Ji" in the "Gong Liguang in the world, benevolence in thousands of years." And so on. These accounts are based on the unified concept of the "sea" political elaboration, "sea", "four seas" and "the world" together, reflecting the social political view of the Han Dynasty.

The economic significance of "sea" was also embodied and existed in the Han society, which was mainly manifested in the exploitation and utilization of the sea, which was different from the political possession and control. "Records of the Grand Historian" recorded, "in Fuqi, there are Langxie and Jimo Rao in the east, Tai Mountain in the south, Turbihe River in the west, and Bohai in the north. The place is two thousand li, holding a halberd is one million, and the counties are thousands of miles away, and Qi has twelve Yan." Because the state of Qi was adjacent to the sea, it had "trade and industry, which benefited from fish and salt, and most of the people came to Qi, which was a big country." Prince Liu Bi of Wu founded an army and revolted, because Wu had a relatively rich economic foundation, with the convenience of "wealth from mountains and seas" and "Wealth from

mountains and seas". In *The Book of Salt and Iron*, it was written that "those who use mountains and seas are the treasure roads that make use of wealth". In the Han Dynasty, people kept acquiring wealth from the sea. According to archaeological excavations, the remains of sea creatures were found in the Yangling Tomb of Emperor Jingdi of the Han Dynasty, such as clams, flat jade snails and white bamboo snails, etc. These should have been edible seafood at that time, indicating that the development of Marine resources had begun in the Han Dynasty.

3. The belief of sea God in Han Dynasty

In the Han Dynasty, belief in God of the sea already existed in social life, and the content of belief was richer and the forms of belief tended to be diversified. Han Dynasty sacrificial sea has been incorporated into the national sacrificial system, Emperor Wudi Jianyuan first year (140 years before) in May said: "The river and sea run thousands of miles, the temple officials repair the temple of mountains and rivers, for the year, music plus ceremony." Yuan seal five years, Wudi "north to Lang evil, and the sea, the ritual of the mountain Dachuan", summer and April "will be the sea gas, together with Taishan", Zheng said: "meet the sea god of the gas, and offering". Emperor Wudi also offered sacrifices to the god of the sea as he did to mountains and rivers, which shows how much he paid attention to the god of the sea. In order to seek immortals, Emperor Wudi also needed to send people to find the God of the sea. "The Book of Han · Suburban Si Zhi" said: "On the east Coast, I patrol the sea and worship the eight gods. Qi people on the strange side of Shuyan God to tens of thousands of people, but increased the ship, so that thousands of people in the sea of sacred mountain begging Penglai God." Penglai for the legend of the sea God living islands, there are other islands in the Han Dynasty, Dongfang Shuo in the "Ten islands record" recorded, "the emperor of the Han Dynasty both heard the queen mother said eight great sea, ten continents, Yingzhou, Xuanzhou, Yan Chau, long Chau, Yuan Chau, flow Chau, Sheng Chau, Feng Lin Chau, Jugrottezhou, there are ten continents, is a rare place, these island legends live with the sea god. Emperor Xuandi of the Han Dynasty also had an editededeto worship the God of the sea, said: "Fu Jianghai, the greatest of all rivers, this que how no temple, the temple officials to the ceremony for the year, to four times the temple Jianghailuo water, pray for the world Fengnian Yan."

In Han Dynasty, the worship of sea God was fixed in the form of imperial edict, which showed the tendency of official belief in sea God. At the same time, the belief in sea gods also showed a downward trend in the Han Dynasty. The content of folk belief in sea gods also changed greatly, and the form was adjusted to some extent. The folk gave some sea gods new names, and each sea god was matched with a wife, with a strong humanistic color. As recorded in Volume VI of *Weishu Integration*, "The king of Donghai was named Feng Qing and his wife Zhu Yin 'e; The South China Sea Jun surname red name, wife surname Yi name Yixiang; Xihai Jun's name is Qiu Bai, his wife's name is Jane; The surname of King Beihai is Yu Mengli, and his wife's surname is Forsythia." The belief in the God of the sea moved down from the government to the people, and had an important impact on the people to participate in the belief in the god of the sea, which further demonstrated the universality of the folk belief.

4. Characteristics of belief in Sea God in Han Dynasty

The sea God is inseparable from the Marine culture, and its image changed significantly from the pre-Qin Dynasty to the Qin and Han Dynasties. The image of the sea God in the Han Dynasty gradually changed on the basis of inheriting the prototype of the pre-Qin Dynasty, and its natural nature as a god itself was weakening, and the trend of personalization was more obvious. With the strengthening of the social function of the sea God, in a sense, the belief in the sea God of the Han Dynasty showed the characteristics of personalization, secularization and sociality.

In the Han Dynasty, the belief in sea God developed towards the trend of personification. In the pre-Qin period, the image of sea God was basically "human face and bird body, R and two snakes, base and two snakes", which was similar to the mixture of human and animal, and to some extent retained the traces of primitive totem worship. However, in the Qin Dynasty, the image of the sea God had been partially changed, and in the Han Dynasty, the image of the sea God had gradually realized the personification. According to the *Book of Gods and Abnormity*, "there were prodigies in the West Sea, who rode on white horses, and the world was full of water". The "child prodigy" here refers to the sea gods, who have been completely personified in image, having been liberated from the totem of animal and man, and have become personified gods.

The belief in God of the sea also showed the characteristics of secularization in Han Dynasty. In the Qin and Han dynasties, the secularization tendency of gods was obvious, and the secularization degree was getting higher and higher. Many gods were given wives just like the laity. The God of the sea is also like the laity in the society is endowed with the custom of marriage. From the materials, it seems that the married woman does not agree with the marriage, and her behavior and actions have been separated from the sacred sense of the god of the sea, but the performance of more secular. By analyzing the reasons for the secularization of sea gods in the Han Dynasty, we can know that although the belief in gods was still flourishing in that period, with the improvement of people's ideological and rational level, they learned to build some humanized gods according to their own will according to their needs, and then replaced the worship of natural objects themselves, which gradually degraded the mystery of gods. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the secularization of the belief in God of the sea during the Qin and Han Dynasties.

Sociality was another prominent feature of the belief in sea God in Han Dynasty. In Han Dynasty, the image of sea God changed to some extent, the trend of personalization was obvious, and the worship of sea God also developed from the nature god to the human god. All these changes were related to the social orthodoxy of Han Dynasty. As a part of the folk belief, the belief in Neptune naturally cannot get rid of the influence of the whole social environment, which makes the belief in Neptune become more and more social and practical. In the agrarian societies of Qin and Han dynasties, rain seemed to be particularly important, and the gods such as water god and sea God were in charge of them. The records of offering sacrifices to them to pray for favorable weather were everywhere in the books of Qin and Han Dynasties. In the Han Dynasty, the image of sea God was gradually associated with the legendary dragon, and the appearance of

making dragons to pray for rain just shows that the belief in sea God in the Han Dynasty developed towards a more practical trend.

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