

A Study of Shan Hai Jing

Mythological Realms in Transformation and the Representation of Supernatural Beings

ABSTRACT

There are Gods, spirits, ancestors, heroic characters, shamans, monstrous foreigners and fabulous beasts, all kinds of personal or impersonal supernatural creatures portrayed in Shan Hai Jing. Some of these supernatural beings are described repeatedly in Shan Jing 〈山經〉, Hai Jing 〈海經〉 and Huang Jing 〈荒經〉, but have different meanings both between these different Jings and also within every Jing in different contexts. This thesis compares the representation of the supernatural beings in the three mythological realms depicted in the three Jings.

The first part of the thesis analyzes the text of Shan Hai Jing, discovering an inherent logic of the development of the ideas between the three Jings. The second part deals with the mythological ideas, helping us to see how supernatural beings have a certain meaning which is expressed both by their symbols to denote the sacred representation and by their connection to the three Jings. I then describe each supernatural being in Shan Hai Jing, taking into account that Shan Hai Jing is a world that combines Shan Jing—a spiritual mountain world, Hai jing—a mythical geography and Huang Jing—a mythical genealogy. Using this analysis, we also clearly see how ancient Chinese people perceived the whole universe.

Keywords: Shan Hai Jing, Supernatural Beings, the Sacred and the Profane, the Mythical World