

Lunar Year of the Rooster

Rooster is the only bird species among the twelve animals in Chinese Zodiac. As recorded in *Shi Jing* (Classic of Poetry) in early times that, “The wind and rain make it so chilly, the rooster is still crowing loudly; as I have met the gentleman, what else should I be worried about? The wind and rain are so intense, the rooster is still crowing clearly; I have already seen the gentleman, what other illness is left to be treated? The wind and rain make it so dark, the rooster is still crowing constantly; I have already seen the gentleman, what else not to be rejoiced for?” The ancient people acclaim rooster as the moral bird, in *Hanshi Waizhuan* (Old collection with more than three hundred stories and anecdotes with “*Shi Jing*”), Han Ying stated that rooster has “Five virtues”. “It has a crown above the head, thus it has knowledge; it has sharp claws on the legs, thus it has strength; it fights bravely against the enemies, thus it has courage; it shares food with others, thus it has humanity; it stays up through the night with punctuality, thus it is trustworthy.” For the ancient people, rooster is the “Bird with Five Virtues” that is worth relying on. The idiom “Start practicing at the first crow of the cock” is well known for every household, which precisely reflects the image of rooster to the ancient people. With the so-called “It stays up through the night with punctuality, thus it is trustworthy”, it shows the status of rooster in ancient people's mind.

In the Tang and Song Poetry, rooster is not only the moral bird, it also possess other images. For instance, it expresses the feeling of missing the hometown because of travelling. For example, in *Shangshan Zaoxing* (Morning departure in Shangshan) written by the poet Wen Ting Yun in late Tang Dynasty, it says “The voice of rooster is loud and clear, the thatched inn immerses in the afterglow from the moon; with the vague footprints, the wooden bridge is covered by frost from early spring.” Also, in *Qinyuanchun - Guguan Dengqing* written by Su Shi in Song Dynasty, it says “In a remote hostel with dim light, fed up with listening to the rooster crowing, pack the luggage and stop dreaming.” The hardship of travelling away from home for the ancient people can be seen. While “the male roosters fight against each other” has also widely recorded in the poems. In *Shuidiao Getou – Weihao Youfengyan* written by Cengbu in Song Dynasty, it says “Playing ball and having rooster fighting as entertainment, the rangers have long been known about it.” Therefore, it can be seen that rooster carries rich connotation in Chinese traditional culture.

Since the pronunciation of “Rooster” and “Lucky” in Chinese are homophonic, rooster has become the symbol of lucky. Therefore, people apply it in various folk arts. The folk production “Rooster head shoe” is a gift from grandmother to the baby when s/he turns one year old, which carries the meaning of brilliant and lucky. In artistic paper cutting, there is also “Rooster paper cutting” which illustrates auspicious, each pattern displays the characteristics of different places. Various artworks such as rooster satchel, rooster bellyband, rooster pillow, rooster pillow support, rooster apron and rooster waistcoat, they all serve as an unique scenery among the people. In addition, the stamps of Lunar Year of the Rooster from previous years had also reflected the images of rooster, which are lucky, brilliant, mighty and strong.

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