

# Luo Yue Bronze Study - Cultural Communication between Luo Yue and Ba Shu

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**Abstract.** Based on the data of the excavated bronzes in the Luoyue region, this paper will further analyse the cultural connection between the Luoyue region and the Ba-Shu region on the basis of previous studies, and make an in-depth demonstration of the cultural exchanges between the Luoyue region and the Sanxingdui region through the similarity of the excavated bronzes of the Luoyue region and the Sanxingdui region in terms of the decorations and the shapes. At the same time, this paper will analyse the process and path of cultural exchange between the Luoyue region and the Ba Shu region from two perspectives, and finally come up with the most probable cultural exchange routes.

**Keywords:** Luo Yue, Bronze Study, Ba Shu, culture communication, Sanxingdui.

## 1. Introduction

The Luo Yue is one of the clans of the Baiyue, mainly distributed in the vast area from the south of the Hongshui River in Guangxi to the north of Vietnam. Historically, the Luo Yue maintained stable economic and cultural contacts with many regions such as Yunnan, Chu, and the Central Plains, including the relatively remote Ba Shu region. Regarding the connection between Luo Yue and Ba Shu, some scholars have made brilliant analyses from the perspective of jade ritual objects. In fact, not only jade ritual objects, excavated bronzes also have a large number of cultural exchanges reflecting the content of the two regions. I do not pretend to be humble, try to explain this problem, please experts criticism and correction.

## 2. Exploration of the Luo Yue communities

Before exploring the links between civilisations, a brief explanation should be given of the direction of the study of the Luo Yue among the Yue ethnic groups. In terms of geographic location, Mr. Jiang Tingyu believed that the Luoyue's activities were roughly in the Left and Right River Basin, the Yong River and Yu River Basin, Hainan, and the Red River Basin in northern Vietnam, with their centre of activity being in the area from the Zuo River and Yong River Basin in Guangxi, China, to the Red River Delta in Vietnam. As for the study of ethnic origin, Mr Luo Xianglin and others put forward the view that the Zhuang people are the old Yue people. Mr Luo Xianglin once mentioned in his discussion that "the people of Luo Yue are the descendants of Luo Yue, and the Badger people belonging to Taipingfu in Guangxi are also the descendants of Luo Yue, so the language is the same as that of the other people, so the language is the same as that of the other people. To the distribution of Luo Yue in Hainan Island, it is easier to deal with the county, although its descendants that is, today's Li people, in the appearance, still not without a number of characteristics, but in the spirit and the law, it is early in both the composite system of China and Xia carry on", Mr. Xu Songshi further for the Zhuang later migrated to provide the basis for a statement, put forward the Zhuang migrated to the period of the two Guangdong Province, there is a early and late successive points, the Luo Yue is a native of the Zhuang ancestors[1]. The Luo Yue were the ancestors of the indigenous Zhuang people and belonged to the Baiyue system.

According to the evidence from the excavation of related artefacts, Luo Yue and Xi Ou are the clans of the ethnic groups living in the Guangxi area during the Spring and Autumn, Warring States and Qin and Han Dynasties, and Jiang Bingzhao believes that Xi Ou and Luo Yue distributed in the

two Guangdong areas are different clans of the Baiyue ethnic group, and that the Xi Ou and Luo Yue ethnic groups themselves should be mainly formed by the development of indigenous people in the area.

### **3. Discussion on the Faith and Worship and Affinity Relationship between Luo Yue and Ancient Sichuan**

#### **3.1. Affinity**

In the process of civilisation development, communication and exchange with other civilisations is an important part of development. For Luo Yue and ancient Shu, historical records and excavated artefacts of the relevant period are part of the strong evidence of civilisation exchange. The Water Scripture quoted in "Jiaoshu Outer Regions Records", said: "Jiaotong County in the past, when there was no county, the land has Luo (i.e., "Luo") field, its field from the tide up and down. The people were reclaiming and eating their fields, and the people were called Luo Min. The King of Luo and the Marquis of Luo were set up to lead the counties. The counties were mostly generals of the Luo, and the generals of the Luo had bronze seals and green ribbons. Later, the prince of Shu sent 30,000 soldiers to attack the King of Luo and the Marquis of Luo, and served all the Luo generals, and the prince of Shu was called the King of Anyang." Before the establishment of counties by the Qin, the Luo Yue region had already developed some association with Shu[2]. The early development of Luo Yue civilisation is also described in the "Complete Records of the History of the Da Yue", "Di Ming, the third grandson of the Shen Nong clan of the Yan Emperor, went on a southward tour to the Wuling Mountains", "gave birth to a king, set up a king of Jingyang, ruled in the south, and was called the country of the Red Ghosts", "married a woman from Dongting" and "gave birth to Luo Longjun"[3]. Compared with the specific name, "a woman from Dongting" is closer to the description of women in Hunan, and the fact that King Jingyang "married a Dongting female" clearly reflects the close connection between the Luo Yue region and the current Hunan region. The son of Luo Longjun, King Xiong, "built a country called Wenlang Kingdom", and the description of the area of Wenlang Kingdom in the "The Complete Records of the Historical Records of Da Yue" is "the South China Sea in the east, Bashu in the west, and Dongting Lake in the north", in which it can be seen that the ancient Luoyue had a kinship relationship with Hunan, Bashu, and other places.

Similar records can also be found in the Taiping Huan Yu Ji. The Taiping Huan Yu Ji records the war between the Jiaozhi area and the ancient Shu, "The Prince of Shu would send his troops to take it (Jiaozhi), take this opportunity to elect the King of Anyang, who ruled Jiaozhi", which is basically the same as the description in the "Records of the Outer Regions of Jiaozhi" and the "Complete Records of the History of the Da Yue". In "The Complete Records of the Historical Records of Dai Viet", Wen Lang State was "divided into fifteen parts", and Jiaozhi was one of them. Combining the specific descriptions in the two books, it can be roughly surmised that the communication status and exchanges between the two places were good.

The accounts of the conquest of Luo Yue by the Prince of Shu are generally consistent and should come from the same historical source. Compared with the other historical books, the Complete Historical Records of "Complete Records of the History of the Da Yue" is richer in content, and it gives a brief introduction to the origin of the Luo Yue ancestors conquered by the Prince of Shu. Although these accounts with divine colours cannot be used as practical and credible historical materials for reference, they reflect the local people's historical memory of the cultural evolution process of the Luo Yue region, and also have certain reference value.

#### **3.2. Study of Patterns**

##### **3.2.1. Faith Affiliation**

The kinship between the two places is expressed not only in the political and military fields, but also in beliefs. The bird-shaped sun and the sun god were important objects of worship in a

considerable range of ancient Chinese cultures. In the myths related to the sun god Dijun, the son of Dijun, the sun has the image of a bird, or the sun is carried by Yangwu, or there is a Yangwu in the sun, or the sun is transformed into a Yangwu, and it can be assumed that the sun god himself is also a bird image. During the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, the myths in the Central Plains were mostly related to bird worship, and similar myths and legends also appeared in the Baiyue region and ancient Shu. In the Book of Searching for Gods, it was mentioned that "there is a bird in the deep mountains of Yue, as big as a dock, green in colour, and its name is "Rule Bird", and the Yue people said that this bird is the ancestor of Yue Zhu", and the Yue people regarded the bird as their ancestor, and further derived the bird worship on this basis. The history of Wuyue once mentioned, "There is a bird named Lo-Ping, who is the master of the Yue people's misfortune and good fortune. Honouring this bird brings good fortune, and disdaining it brings misfortune"[4]. So the folk all draw its shape to pray for it", which is actually similar to the ancient Shu State for the worship of birds.

In the early myths and legends of ancient Shu, the ancient Shu dynasty lineage of "Cangcong", "Baiguan", "Yufu", "Pu Bei", "Kai Ming" five dynasties, in addition to Cancong, Baiguan, Yufu, Pu Bei are named after the bird, Kai Ming can also be associated with the sun bird. This kind of worship was further refined during the development process, and gradually transitioned to a more abstract way of worship. The largest deity excavated from the Sanxingdui artefact pits is a bird with a human head, the recognisable shape of deities beyond humans and animals is that of a bird with a human head, there are birds on every branch of the bronze tree[5], and the shape of clergymen such as sorcerers is also clearly dressed up in bird attire (the bird-crowned statue of a standing man, the bird-footed statue of a man with a bird's foot on the ground, the bird-make-up statue of a man in the middle layer of the "Bronze Altar of the Gods", and so on), and the ruling class also used the name of the sun in their rituals. The ruling class also dressed themselves as birds during rituals to please the bird-like deities.

### 3.2.2. Pattern connection

In the archaeological process of the two regions, bird-shaped patterns of different sizes and styles can be found on ritual objects and altars, and the materials of the objects include jade, bone, bronze and so on. The Luoyue culture entered the Bronze Age during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, and was influenced by cultural exchanges with ancient Shu and Dian in the development of its own regional cultural characteristics. Among the unearthed artefacts in the Luoyue region, the characteristic bird-patterned utensils include the butterfly vessel with double-bird pattern, the three-dimensional bird-shaped dagger, and the bone dagger with double-bird pattern, etc. Among them, the bone dagger with double-bird pattern was made in the Spring and Autumn period. Among them, the bone dagger with double-bird pattern has the same two sets of patterns engraved on the front and back, each set has a pair of conjoined birds with the same head and body, and the head, beak and claws of the birds are exaggerated, highlighting the unique position of the bird image in the minds of the Yue people. The remaining five three-dimensional bird-shaped daggers have smaller bodies and larger tails, with the body as the dagger handle, the bird's tail as the dagger body, the two sides of the body and the back with a short line to indicate the wings and back feathers, and the front section of the bird's head and the same pattern as the two-bird bone dagger, with a protruding beak and a slightly downward tilted head. This kind of bird-shaped artefacts mainly exaggerate the image of birds by means of exaggeration and imagination, highlighting the claws, beaks and eyes, reflecting the special status of the bird people in the minds of the Yue people in an abstract way.

In addition to clothing and rituals, Luo Yue's worship of birds is also reflected in another more direct way in the shape of artefacts. The Bird's Head Chi is made in the shape of a bird's head, with an exaggerated and enlarged beak, which expresses the image of the bird in the hearts of the Luo Yue people. Similar images are also found in the body decoration or head carvings of gold or bronze scepters. Considering the role of the scepter mentioned earlier, the bird-shaped decoration here is also used to emphasise the special status or power of the user, reflecting the Luo Yue people's love and worship of birds.

Throughout the overall state of bronze artefacts unearthed in Luoyue, there are relatively more weapons such as Yue, gorges and spears, and fewer containers, and the weapons can be classified into the categories of music and dance for entertaining the gods, the category of production and life, and the category of faith and worship. The following are some examples to further illustrate how the beliefs and worships of the Luo Yue regions are reflected in the bronze decorations[6].

The Yue in the shape of a feathered man beating a drum in the shape of a wind character is a very characteristic instrument for entertaining the gods with music and dance. At the centre of the painting are two figures wearing feathered crowns and feathered garments, beating drums with feathered mallets on their staffs. The feathers on the figures and the drumsticks are also indicative of the Luo Yue people's worship of birds as a means of expressing their traditional knowledge of heaven, earth, and man. When worshipping ancestors and gods, the Luo Yue people tended to choose decorations with feathers or close to birds to show their wish to let their ancestors or gods hear what they were worshipping, and the same kind of decorations can also be seen on the Feiren Song and Dance Boot-shaped Yue and the Feiren Song and Dance Flying Bird Bronze Yue. In his interpretation of the Nine Songs, Wang Yi's *Chu Rhetoric Chapter and Verse of the Han Dynasty* mentions that the feather-crowned man served as a symbol of the unity of divine power and political power in the time of the wizard, and accordingly, the rituals presided over by the feather-crowned man were symbols of the consolidation of power and status. By extension, the way the feathered crowns were decorated and the gods and ancestors were worshipped was a manifestation of the Luo and Yue people's worship of birds.

Generally speaking, the bronzes unearthed in Luoyue area are mainly divided into two types of decorations: directly depicting the image of birds and showing the worship of birds with the help of sacrificial ceremonies or crowds. Whether it is to show people's worship from the side or directly depicting the image of birds concretely or abstractly, all of them are capable of reflecting the special position of birds in the minds of the Luoyue people during this period, and they can be the strong evidence of the bird worship of the people of Luoyue.

The same kind of cultural relics in Sanxingdui have been unearthed. In 1986 in Sichuan Guanghan Sanxingdui ritual pit one unearthed a gold staff, 143 cm long, 2.3 cm in diameter, weighing 463 grams. It was made of gold bars pounded into a gold skin about 7.2 cm wide and then wrapped and rolled. Both sides of the thin, slightly thicker in the middle, the inner side of the gold skin staff is still wood carbide, it is estimated that the original is a wooden core gold skin staff. At the top of the staff there is a 46 cm long decorative pattern. The staff body made of precious gold, long staff form in archaeology is rarely found, therefore, Sanxingdui gold staff discovery caused widespread concern.

However, academics believe that there is more than one staff unearthed at the Sanxingdui site. In addition to the gold staff, Sanxingdui one ritual pit unearthed a copper dragon pillar, Sanxingdui two ritual pits also unearthed for the shape of the bird and chicken bronze[7]. The chicken and bird of the two bronze vessels are standing on a pedestal with prominent tail feathers and carved images. On the nature of Sanxingdui gold scepter problem, the academic community's views are inconsistent. Some scholars believe that it is a scepter, some scholars believe that it is used for ritual objects some scholars believe that it is a staff for sorcery, but on the whole, this scepter carved with bird motifs and images symbolises power is the consensus of most scholars.

In the ancient Shu belief system, birds also occupy an important position. In the Sanxingdui excavated artifacts, bird ornaments occupy a considerable portion of the proportion of ornaments, such as the gold scepter carved on the bird pattern, the altar wearing a feathered beast headdress of the sorcerer, the bronze tree branches standing on the symbol of the sun of the bird, the head of the bird-bodied idols and so on. This matches the legends of the lineage of the ancient Shu dynasty described earlier, and can further argue that the ancient Shu people worshipped birds. This kind of decoration is more emphasis on the sacrificial process and worship than the single decoration, such as the human-headed bird-bodied idol or altar generally focuses on the statement of the sacrificial process and the worship of the object of the decoration and the related artifacts are more. It is worth noting that the ancient Shu State in the inheritance of the bird worship, but also this worship and sun

worship combined. Sanxingdui artifacts unearthed in the pit of the sun is divided into two ways of expression: one is the natural form of the sun, that is, round or with awn archetypes, and some will also be the sun's rays of the performance of the vortex (such as the second pit of the wheel-shaped copper ornaments may symbolise the sun wheel); the other is to symbolize the sun with special birds, such as in the copper tree may be the Fusang or Ruomu, the branches used to express the sun is the image of the bird.

Taken together, the bird-shaped artefacts and decorations excavated at Sanxingdui also meet the conditions of both direct and indirect depictions. In contrast, bird worship at Sanxingdui is mostly associated with the sun, while bird worship at Luoyue tends to appear independently. The combination of the worship methods and related artefacts of the two regions shows that although the worship methods between the two regions are rooted in the local cultures, there are some commonalities in the cultural integration, and there are also some similarities in the way the artefacts are depicted and the mode of worship.

#### **4. Speculation on the exchange between Luoyue and ancient Shu**

Regarding the interaction between Luo Yue and Ancient Shu civilisation, there are two possibilities of direct and indirect exchanges.

##### **4.1. Direct exchange**

Recalling the records of "Complete Records of the History of the Da Yue" and The Water Scripture, the event of "the Prince of Shu sending his troops to conquer Luoyue" was mentioned to varying degrees, and the large-scale emigration of Bashu forefathers to Luoyang accompanied the crusade of the ancient Shu army against Luoyue, which gave rise to the corresponding cultural exchanges on the basis of this event. This view can be explored as one of the possibilities of cultural exchanges between the Ba Shu region and the Luoyue region, but in the actual archaeological excavations, the Luoyue civilisation, which can be associated with the ancient Shu civilisation, mostly appeared in the middle and late periods, and was rarely seen in the early Luoyue artefacts, which is inconsistent with the characteristics of the civilisational exchanges that the copper wares of the two places are obviously associated with each other at an early stage, and the later copper wares are more of the local styles. In the early Luoyue civilisation sites and related documentary records, there is also little reliable evidence to prove the existence of ancient Shu migrants, so the possibility of such direct exchanges is relatively small, and the related accounts are probably an extension of historical memory for ancient legends.

##### **4.2. Indirect communication**

According to the above inference, indirect communication is more credible for the cultural communication between the two places. Based on the geographic location of the two places and the shape of the excavated artefacts, there are two possible ways of cultural exchanges: one is the cultural exchange between the two places through the Hunan region, and the other is the exchange between the two places through the Yunnan region.

In the first way, Hunan region in this period existed in the Wu Yue culture and Luo Yue culture belongs to the Hundred Yue culture branch, so there may be a certain degree of contact with the Luo Yue region. At the same time, according to the "Complete Records of the History of the Da Yue", the myths and legends of the founding of Luo Yue are closely related to the Dongting Lake region, so there is the possibility of a connection. Sun worship is one of the important religious beliefs in the Wu-Yue region during this period, with strong continuity. The fact that the Wu-Yue region and the Ba-Shu region belong to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, and that there is a strong consistency in the expression of beliefs, proves that there may have been a relatively close exchange between the two regions[8]. From this, it is surmised that the most likely communication situation was through Wu-Yue, i.e., the Hunan region, where a certain cultural association between ancient

Shu and the Luo Yue region took place. This pathway can be supported by the fact that the bronze vessels unearthed in the Wu-Yue region share the common characteristics of the Bai Yue civilisation and the belief system similar to that of the ancient Shu state, and the corresponding historical data are more sufficient.

In the second way, the connection between the ancient Shu and the Luo Yue region was realised through the Yunnan region. Before discussing the specific path, the development of the Southern Silk Road should be analysed in more detail. In the late Shang Dynasty, through the Southern Silk Road, the ancient Shu civilisation of Sanxingdui developed links with Southeast Asia and South Asia, and even Central Asia, and the Dianchi region was one of the necessary passages of the Southern Silk Road. The culture of Dianchi during the Warring States period obviously retained the civilisational influences of Sanxingdui Ancient Shu Civilisation during the Shang and Zhou periods. When comparing Dianchi and Sanxingdui civilisations, the cultural factors that are obvious include the custom of using staffs, casting figures and animal statues in bronze, and willow-leaf shaped bronze swords. Meanwhile, from the viewpoint of the alloy composition of the bronzes, the bronzes unearthed from the burial sites of Jinning Shizai Mountain and Jiangchuan Lijiashan in the Dian culture are very close to the bronzes unearthed in Sanxingdui, with similar alloy composition ratios, and the fact that the Yunnan region was an important source of bronze materials (e.g., copper, tin, etc.) for the Sanxingdui Ancient Shu State is enough to show that the two places had a close connection with each other. The custom of using staffs and bronze statues are the cultural influence of ancient Shu on Yunnan, and the willow leaf-shaped bronze sword is the military influence, and there are also exchanges of raw materials between the two places.

By comparing the excavated artefacts, we can also analyse the connection between Yunnan and the Luoyue Kingdom. Take the Luo Yue bronze drums as an example, as one of the unique symbols of the Luo Yue culture, they were influenced by the Yunnan culture to a certain extent. Some scholars believe that the Wanjiaba bronze drums, as the oldest bronze drums, originated from Chuxiong in the western part of Yunnan Dianchi, while some scholars believe that the northern part of Vietnam, i.e., Luo Yue region, is the origin of the bronze drums, which were then spread to the Yunnan region[9]. Archaeological discoveries show that Yunnan, China is the origin of the Wanjiaba type and Shizaishan type of copper drums, after the emergence of the two is mainly to the southeast of the Luo Yue region, and has a sustained influence, and the copper drum culture in the Luo Yue region continues to develop and become the main cultural characteristics of the local ethnic groups, so the "copper drums" has become the Luo Yue people's The "bronze drum" has become the synonym of the Luo Yue people[10].

From a comprehensive point of view, the two hypotheses that the Luo Yue Kingdom and the Sanxingdui Ancient Shu Kingdom carried out cultural exchanges through the Hunan area or the Yunnan area are both credible, and they can be further studied in the future research with the relevant historical materials.

## 5. Conclusion

The Luoyue civilisation has a unique development lineage and is an indispensable part of the history of Baiyue civilisation. By combing the excavated artifacts, related documents and legends of Luo Yue civilisation, we can roughly sort out the beliefs and worships of the Luo Yue Kingdom, as well as the civilisation exchange phenomenon related to it. Generally speaking, the Luoyue community, while retaining its own unique regional civilisation, drew on the characteristics of the Sanxingdui Ancient Shu, Dian and Baiyue civilisations, and gradually evolved a cult of faith and bronze culture that was both interoperable with and distinctive of other civilisations. Through the analysis of various historical materials, it is obvious that the bronze culture between the Luo Yue Kingdom and the Sanxingdui Ancient Shu Kingdom echoed each other, and we have a deeper understanding of the specific path of cultural dissemination.

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