

# The Secret of Guangxi Zhuang's Timbal

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**ABSTRACT.** *The interpretation of the sun and the frog grain symbol on the timbal of Zhuang nationality in Guangxi, combined with the comparison of the sunbird of Jinsha site in Sichuan province and the image of gold crow in central China, analyzes the similarities between Guangxi area and the two regions, and explore the similarities and differences between the early ethnic groups in religious belief.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Timbal; Sun Frog; Sunbirds*

## 1. Introduction

Timbal is used by ethnic minorities in Sichuan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and other areas in southwest China, especially among the Zhuang nationality, from the spring and autumn period and the warring states period to the Ming and Qing dynasties. According to archaeological typology, it can be divided into eight types: Wanjia Dam type, Shizhai Mountain type, Cold-water rushing type, Zunyi type, Majiang type, Beiliu type, Lingshan type and Ximeng type[1]. Drum culture originated very early in our country, from the pottery drum unearthed in Majiayao in the Yellow River basin in the neolithic age to the waist drum produced by kiln industry in the late Tang and Song dynasties, which was introduced to the Yangtze river basin in Jiangxi Ganzhou Qili town and Jingdezhen Leping city, Shanghai Baihe town ancient sites, and Guangxi region[2]. Drum culture has always been inseparable from religion, sacrifice and music.

In terms of use, timbal is a kind of percussion instrument used by Zhuang and other ethnic minorities and has a history of more than 2,700 years. It has the largest number, and is the most widely distributed in Guangxi according to the current archaeological discoveries and the handed down. At first, the timbal was evolved from the chow-vessel copper kettle by Pu people in Yunnan province. It was first used as a drinking vessel, similar to the copper kettle used by the Han people in central China, and then evolved into a percussion instrument. In terms of vessel type, according to the Records of Guangzhou written by Yuan Pei in Jin dynasty and Ling Biao Yi Lu by Xun Liu in Tang dynasty and other literatures it is recorded that: some of the Zhuang people's timbal "surface wider than ten feet "[3], some are only 0.002 foot thick or more, some are covered with insects, fish, flowers, and grass [4]. We can see that it's extremely delicate, which is big, small or thin, and the timbal casting technology is particularly exquisite from the warring states period to the later

period, perhaps influenced by the copper casting technology in central China. This can be seen in the early spring and autumn and warring states period and Qin and Han dynasty on the timbal decoration and other crafts. The frogs on the timbal are even numbers of 4, 6, and 8 with large back and small or large frog and small frog, counterclockwise on the surface. From the warring states period to the Wei and Jin dynasties, the direction of the frog's head was basically the same, with little change and symmetrical with the central solar pattern. The solar stripes are distributed in even Numbers of 10 and 12 and correspond to frog stripes. It was not until the Sui and Tang dynasties that the frog decoration gradually disappeared and showed that the frog decoration of southwest minorities gradually weakened in the use of sacrificial ceremony. This kind of timbal culture, with frog and sun patterns as the main patterns, is mainly an important response to the sowing time of sun and frog in nature. Through the changes of the patterns on the timbal, we can see the understanding and sublimation of various natural phenomena of ethnic minorities in southwest China, which is also an important basis for us to recognize the changes of ethnic minorities in the development of ideology and ethnic groups. Through the changes of the patterns on the drum, we can see the understanding and sublimation of various natural phenomena in ethnic minorities in southwest China, which is also an important basis for us to recognize the changes of ethnic minorities in the development of ideology and ethnic groups.

## 2. Sichuan and Guangxi area

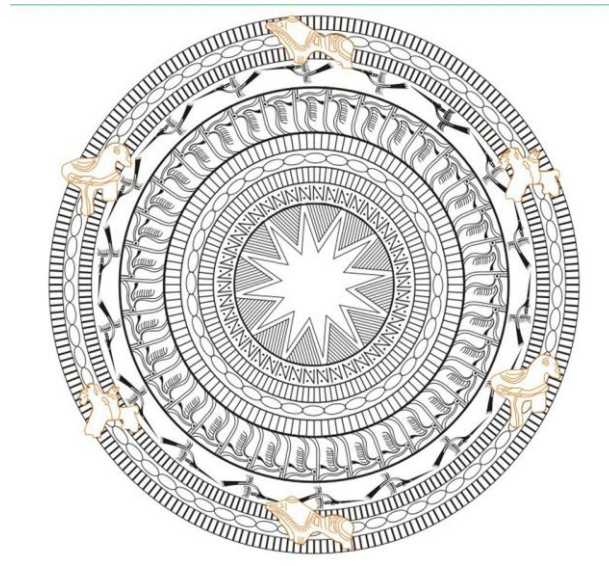
The sunbird unearthed from Jinsha site in Sichuan is a sacrifice of the ancient Shu people, which is extremely similar to the solar symbols in the timbal centers in Guangxi and Yunnan (FIG. 1, FIG. 2 and FIG. 3). Firstly, it is coherent in time. Jinsha site is the ancient Shu culture in southwest China from the end of the Shang dynasty to the Zhou dynasty. The Shizhai Mountain culture in Jining represented by the timbal culture is also the minority culture from the eastern Zhou dynasty, which is closely related to the ancient Shu culture. Secondly, they belong to neighboring regions geographically. Sichuan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and other areas all belonged to the ancient southwest Yi nationality in southwest China in the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Thirdly, their nationalities are also similar. Guangxi people are mainly the Zhuang ethnic group, while Sichuan people are the ancient Shu ethnic group of southwest Yi, and the early Zhuang ethnic group is also belong to southwest Yi ethnic group. The most important thing is that they are strikingly similar in layout and structure. First, the vortex in the sunbird has 12 lines, and the solar rays in the center of the timbal were basically 12 lines during the Warring states and Han dynasties. Second, in the overall composition layout, both the surface of the sunbird and the timbal are planar layout of prototype space, with a central point that is to take the sun as the center, and birds and frogs are distributed and surrounded by the sun. Third, there are four anti-clockwise flying birds around the sun in the sunbird, and the four frogs around the sun in the timbal, which are also anti-clockwise and evenly distributed around the sun. Though frog numbers have changed in different periods, Basically, from the early stage to the Qin and Han dynasties, four frogs were distributed, and in the later stage, six frogs alternated with

or substituted for other animals such as horses and cattle, all with even numbers. According to the comprehensive analysis, it shows that the sunbird and the timbal frog pattern have a high degree of similarity and correlation.

The heads of the four birds and four frogs face the same way, counterclockwise and to the left, while left, with a special meaning in the Han culture, symbolizes the male, dominant and dominant male centralization male symbol. In the Southwest nationality, the male was the chief of the whole tribal group, which reflected the male-dominated status.



*Figure. 1 Timbal Surface of the Eastern Han dynasty (Taken by the Author)*



*Figure. 2 Line Drawing of Timbal in the Eastern Han dynasty (From the Internet)*



*Figure. 3 Gold Foil of Jinsha Site "Sunbird" (From the Internet)*

### **3. The Epilogue**

Finally, through the interpretation of the combined decoration of the sun and frog on the timbal surface used by the Zhuang people in Guangxi region, the correlation between the timbal used in the Zhuang people and the two is found by comparing the sunbird of Jinsha site in early Sichuan region with the images of gold crow in the Central plains in the same period and later period. Through comparative study of the sun, frogs and other symbols in the southwest and the central plains area by modern archaeological scholars, we can interpret the religious symbols wrapped in these ethnic groups, reveal their true colors and display to the public, so that the public can know and understand the cultural heritage handed down by these ancient ancestors, understand the mystery in museums and related reading, and sublimate their experience.

### **4. Reference**

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