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Decipherment of Bronze Objects from Sanxingdui

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Abstract:

On the basis of analyzing the discoveries from the Sanxingdui site in Sichuan Province, the article argues that the ritual objects represented by a group of unique bronze human masks and figurines exhibit strong shamanistic attributes. According to the re-explanation of the design of a bronze plate, the authors suggest that the function of these bronze figurines is to be used by witches in dancing to communicate with and invoke gods. The article further argues that the social organization of Shangxingdui might have been a theocratic chiefdom. In contrast, the consciousness of kingship represented by ritual bronze of the Shang might have symbolized the rule of a secular polity, indicating that the Shang was more complex than Shanxingdui in social development.

Key words:

Sanxingdui; bronze objects; ideology; chiefdom

1. Overview

In 1986 a considerable number of bronze masks, figurines, vessels and jade objects were unearthed from the Sanxingdui (三星堆) site in Sichuan Province. The bronze masks and the standing figurines are of particular interest. Discussions among Chinese scholars fall roughly into four main parts: research of objects focusing on casting technology or motifs of the bronzes; inquiries about the history of ancient Shu; probing historical documents or mythological records; discussions on the Sanxingdui Culture, its religious patterns, ritual practice and its relationship with other cultures in and outside China.

Methodologically the three investigative perspectives include: independent analysis of archaeological data; comparative study in terms of ethnographic analogy which seems unsatisfactory but still remains useful for providing insights; and textual research of historical documents and early mythologies such as *The Record of Rites* (《礼记》), *Book of Rites* (《周礼》), *Huayangguo Annals* (《华阳国志》) and *The Classic of Oceans and Mountains* (《山海经》).

All these approaches are useful in the research of the Sanxingdui Culture. However, it is also important to point out the limitations of such analysis in

addressing social organization and ideology, which remains beyond standard methods of investigation used in archaeology since 1950s. There was an ascending scale of difficulty in interpreting archaeological data in terms of human activities: technology was the easiest category, while economy, social and political organization, and ideology, exhibited escalating difficulties (Hawkes 155 – 68). So, powerful theory support and rich information are needed if we intend to explore its ideology. In order to address the social implication of Sanxingdui, we need to revise our analytical tools. This article will begin with how these bronzes objects were used and employ different research approaches to explore Sanxingdui's religious system and its related social and political organizations.

2. Functions of the Sanxingdui Bronzes

It has been widely accepted that bronze objects from Sanxingdui were used for religious and ritual ceremonies. However, it is not so persuasive as some scholars have stated, that these bronze objects were made for one-time use only (Zeng 76 – 80). The relationship between the nature of the two burial pits and the functions of the artifacts requires further research (Xu 32 – 8). What is more, claims that the bronze figurine heads were substitutes for human sacrifice are not convincing. Nor are the claims that the elite self-sacrifice might exist in Sanxingdui to placate gods, bring rain and end plagues, or the bronze heads were symbolic sacrifice of persons of high status (Bagley 59 – 71). Sanxingdui findings are very different from ritual objects and sacrifices recorded in the archaeological or ethnographic documents. It indicates that such activities might not happen very often. In addition, human sacrifice was prevalent in the Shang Dynasty, which had more advanced technology of bronze production and abundant metal supplies that fostered the reliance on casting than Sanxingdui has, and it seems unlikely that the Sanxingdui people would rather choose bronze heads or masks to substitute for human sacrifice with an extremely high cost.

Jessica Rawson argues that;

The immense bronzes probably stood in some sort of building — a temple or palace — where they may have been seen by an audience, for whom they would have carried meanings and associations. Rather than being the props for the performance of a ceremony, as were the vessels of Fu Hao (妇好), the Sanxingdui bronzes were stage setting depicting spiritual worlds, of great importance to those who participated in the drama. (Rawson 18)

Some Chinese researchers hold similar opinions. They argue that these bronze masks were attached to the wooden or ceramic body or some kind of building, and whether they were placed in the temple or attached to the part of building, they were used mainly for people in worship rather than used as props in ritual performances (Chen and Wei). Some have noticed two rectangular holes in each side of the masks and red and brown mud inside the masks. They conclude that bronze masks should have been attached to the wooden or ceramic body (Chen 40 – 1), or they should

have been attached to the part of building in stationary form for people to worship (Zhao). Such explanations are persuasive. However, wooden or clay bodies have not been found, leaving us to question these hypotheses that postulate the use of such auxiliary props.

Some would expect to find wooden or clay bodies but also search for palaces or temples. In the latest survey a strata report indicates that from south to north in the middle line of the Sanxingdui site there exist four mesas of data including: Sanxingdui, Yueliangwan (月亮湾), Zhenwugong (真武宫) and Xikanquan (西坎泉). And the two pits were also distributed along this middle line (Jiang). All these suggest the possibility of existence of palaces or temples. However, they will not help further to reveal the functions of bronze figurines and masks.

Many scholars think it barely possible for Sanxingdui people to have used the bronze masks as props in the performance of a ceremony, and particularly wore these masks on their face. One reason is that the large size of a mask from Pit II is 65 cm long, 138 cm wide and 0.5 - 0.8 cm thick. Another important reason is the notation "The pupils of the King of Shu extend north to south" ("有蜀侯蚕丛,其目纵") in the *Huayangguo Annals* by Chang Qu (常璩). This textual record has certainly been widely regarded as an evidence to suggest that masks with protruding eyes were the symbol of the King of ancient *Shu*, and thus these bronze masks should have been placed in temples or palaces as the ancestral idol for Sanxingdui people.

However, it is unsafe to build the inference that masks with protruding pupils were the King of ancient *Shu* only from a mythological record. We should be prudent about the credibility of various mythological records regarding the Shang and Zhou dynasties written in the Eastern Zhou dates. The *Huayangguo Annals* were written during the Jin Dynasty (A. D. 317 - 420), a period much more recent than the Eastern Zhou (770 - 221 B. C.).

The Chinese word *zong* (纵) usually means a direction from north to south, a word that defines a concept of two-dimensional space. If we regard it as protruding, it would refer to the concept of three-dimensional space. It is hard to know or prove whether the author Chang Qu in the Jin Dynasty referred to three-dimensional space during the Jin Dynasty when he used the character.

What is more, if we take look at materials worldwide, Sanxingdui is not the only place to have protruding pupils on masks. Similar pupils are used in black wooden masks made for the dead in Liberia (Zhu). Their origins may be different, but overall one can state that the purpose of the protruding pupils reflects a wish to intensify their eyesight.

Levi-Strauss once summed up different origins of the protruding pupils, one of which indicates that a shaman uses cylinder elephant tusks and wooden artifacts to catch the souls of the sick and then put them back in the ill bodies. It is interesting for us to look at whether the Sanxingdui masks might have functioned as staring at and catching human souls.

Then, let us turn our discussion from masks to bronze standing figurines. One standing figurine has massive hands, each of which forms hollow or open circles. What did the figurine hold in its hands? This question has led to different opinions.

Many Chinese researchers agree with a suggestion that the bronze figurine might grasp a jade *Cong* (琮) (Shen 16 – 7), while others have different ideas. Since the immense hands were not positioned in a straight line, it would be impossible to place a *Cong*, which was made as a solid jade shaft. It has been suggested that the figurine might hold an elephant tusk in his massive hands (Barnard). This explanation sounds more reasonable when we take the placement of the two hands and the occurrence of great number of tusks in Pit II. Why did this figurine hold an elephant tusk then?

As Bagley points out, the bronze standing figurine could have been a shaman with an elephant tusk in his massive hands. But if the figurine really represents a shaman, how could a shaman be buried with his ritual sacrifice offerings (Bagley 52 – 67)? It should be mentioned that although the elephant tusks were used in rituals, perhaps they were not sacrifice offerings and might have served as a kind of tool used by the shaman in the performance of a ceremony. Strauss's suggestion of tusks as a tool to catch a patient's soul is one plausible explanation for its function. In the *Book of Rites*, there is such a record as "put elephant tusks in the water and let it sink down." This record indicates that elephant tusks might have been regarded as having some magic powers to drive evils out.

Generally, various analysis and explanations from Chinese and foreign researchers all help to reveal the functions of the Sanxingdui bronze objects. However, it is still not clear whether these bronze masks and other bronze objects could have been used by shamans or Sanxingdui people not only as stationary stage setting depicting spiritual worlds, but also as tools or props in the performance of a ceremony? In next chapter, we turn to discuss primeval ritual dancing and rituals of exorcism, which helps to explore the richness and complexity of the primeval religion and beliefs.

3. Dance Elements in Bronze Masks

Since any similar findings like bronze masks, human-like heads and the standing figurines have not been found before, various inferences about their functions have appeared. Perhaps one would be able to reveal the special functions of these bronze artifacts by exploring with a premise of knowing the characteristics of the foundation of early religion and associated practices.

Duan Yu claims that there was a long history of exorcism of ghosts in the Ba and Shu regions according to records in *Jin Shu* (*The Jin History*) and *Huayangguo Annals*. He dates the Daoist tradition and history of shamanism, astrology, medicine or occult science and ghost exorcism back to Sanxingdui. According to the definition of four types of religious institutions or "cults" (individualistic cults, shamanistic cults, communal cults and ecclesiastical cults) (Dickson), the nature of Sanxingdui's religious practice belonged to shamanistic cults as its practices were full of magical elements, although its population size and social structure might suggest its form to be closer to communal cults. As for "shaman," it seems a unified definition is unavailable. Shamanistic cults are a form of early or primitive religion prevalent in the north part of China and ancient linguistic system of A'ertai ethnic group in north

Asia. The word “shaman” comes from “Tungus,” originally referring to a man dancing with enthusiasm and later changing to a necromancer (Guo). Holding rituals and using multifarious magic is a way that people pay their respect before the gods. In the *Shuowen Jiezi* (《说文解字》), the sentence indicates that witches danced to communicate with and to invoke gods.

Li Ling claims that there are three aspects related to Chinese early religious institutions before the appearance of Daoism and Buddhism. Firstly, they are magic and witchcraft, or “shamanistic cults” called by Western scholars. Secondly, they are the arts of necromancy, astrology and medicine, commonly called occult science. And thirdly, it is ceremony or etiquette. The artistic performance of the shamanistic cults has long attracted scholars’ attention. Li Ling sums up sixteen characteristics of shamanistic cults and concludes that the shamans serve less specialized functions, their limited service in range, and their non-governmental activities.

As K. C. Chang explains, magic or witchcraft is a form of shamanistic cult with aims to communicate with a god, and the animal motifs on bronze vessels partially help achieve this function. Singing, dancing and drinking were related activities used to please the gods (Chang 455–67). Chang also summarizes the symbols used by the witch or shaman to communicate with gods. These include mountains (shamans go through high mountains to get to where the god lives); trees used to reach the sky; birds, and heralds of Celestial Ruler Supreme God; animals, used as sacrifice; auguries; rites and instruments used in the rites; wine and drugs that on one hand please gods and on the other hand lead the shaman to hallucinations to access the god; and methods of singing, dancing and drinking (Chang 252–80).

It is clear that Sanxingdui findings cover most of the symbols mentioned by Chang including the bronze trees with standing birds, birds’ heads, bronze wheel, golden mace, elephant tusks, bronze animal masks, and wine vessels like *Zun* (尊) and *Lei* (罍). However, among them bronze masks are the most special.

Some people do not believe Sanxingdui’s masks could have been worn on the face in ritual dancing because of their large size. However, one mask from Pit I (6.5 cm high, 9.2 cm wide and 0.4 cm thick), some other masks with protruding pupils and the animal masks from Pit II were adequate to wear or hold. Bronze masks are sporadically reported ethnographically, though masks made of wood or animal hide appear more common. Ethnographic evidence from Ewenke (鄂温克族) and Dawo’er (达斡尔族) ethnic groups indicates that they have used bronze masks in the ceremony (Guo).

The most powerful evidence to interpret Sanxingdui’s bronze masks as props in ritual dancing is a bronze tablet unearthed from Pit II, which has been overlooked in current scholarship. Fortunately, this tablet was published in the book *Sanxingdui Ritual Pits*. The bronze tablet is shaped like a human back. There is a ridge in the middle with two legs below. On the tablet there are two groups of similar motifs. The upper group is composed of two “strange” birds and another group consisting of three “strange” birds. Between these two groups of birds is a belt decorated with a V-shaped grid.

However, the original placement of this bronze tablet has probably been

misunderstood. The tablet should have been placed upside down with the two legs on the top (Fig. 1). Its shape is similar to a *Gu* (觚). As Japanese scholar Hayashimi explains, *Gu*'s shape originated from the sun (Hayashi 182 – 204). Mythology involving sunrise and sunset along tree trunks can be found in two important early texts the *Huainanzi* and the *Classic of Oceans and Mountains*.

Analysis deriving from mythology or textual sources may be too obscure. When it comes to the interpretation of image or motif, many scholars used to rely on mythology or historic documents to search for corresponding evidence, regardless of the fact that records about Sanxingdui (equivalent in time to the Shang Dynasty, 1600 – 1046 B. C.) were not kept at that time or do not survive. Here we agree with German philosopher Martin Heidegger's interpretation of art's origin. This bronze tablet is artistic in our eyes. The best way to reveal its original meaning is to raise a simple question: what is it?

In leg-underneath position, the image of the tablet will be too strange and hard to understand and we guess that is why they were described like "strange" birds. If we turn the tablet upside down, it is suddenly clear that these "strange" birds becomes the image of dancers wearing a feather clothing and a mask with two large protruding eyes.

The tablet has two groups of dancers, three dancers above and two dancers below. And between two groups, there is a V-shaped grid. On dancer's head there is adornment, which seems to accord with the small holes in the forehead of some bronze masks which might be the position for ornaments. Among the five sense organs on the dancer's face, only two eyes are depicted, which is consistent with the protruding pupils emphasized on bronze masks.

The *Book of Rites* records six kinds of dances in ritual ceremonies. They are *Pei* dance (帔舞), *Yu* dance (羽舞), *Huang* dance (皇舞), *Jing* dance (旌舞), *Gan* dance (幹舞) and *Ren* dance (人舞). According to Zheng Sinong's (郑司农) Annotation to the *Book of Rites*, among the six dances *Pei*, *Yu* and *Huang* dances had something to do with feathers. Perhaps the dancers with feathers on the bronze tablet are idealized portraits for the ritual dancing. This provides an evidence that bronze masks might have used as props in ritual dancing. That is, if we interpret these as feathered bodies wearing masks, then they might be interpreted as representations of the activities of ritual dance to which they were connected.

Perhaps we could imagine that the standing figurine was the embodiment of the shaman with an elephant tusk in his hands. The standing figurine might have some supernatural power for exorcism and he could control people's soul and communicate with the gods. It usually stood in the temple or palace as stationary setting depicting spiritual worlds for people to worship and could also be moved to the sacrificial altar in the open air when there was a sacrificial ceremony. Those smaller bronze heads might have been attached to some clay or wooden bodies and stood around the standing figure. In the sacrificial ceremony the shamans might hold bronze masks in their hands or wear them on the face with feathers or other ornaments around their bodies. They also might drink wine, take drugs and dance to invoke the gods.

Pushing this interpretation further, we have to face the contradiction of how these

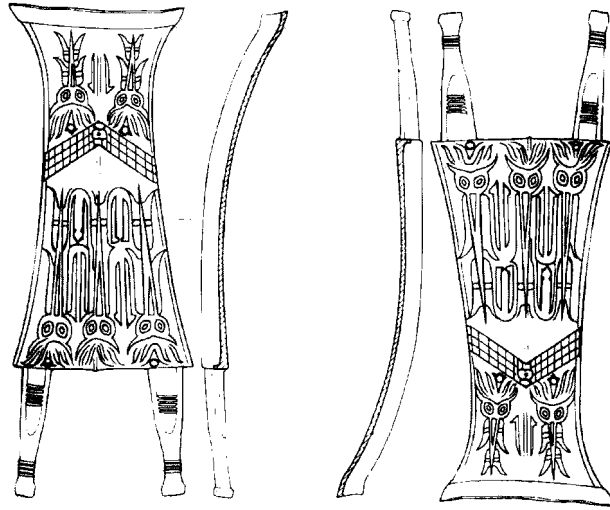


Fig. 1. Bronze tablet with dancers' image (from *Sanxingdui Ritual Pits*, 2001)

bronze masks and standing figurines, symbols of some supernatural powers, could be destroyed and buried? In fact, the investigation of the magic nature of these artifacts, and how and why they were buried are two separate inquiries. These bronze objects were probably often used in Sanxingdui's sacrificial rituals as one can see obvious worn traces on a bronze bell, a musical instrument unearthed from Pit II, and they might have been destroyed and buried for some unknown reasons which compelled Sanxingdui people to resort to extremes in an emergency.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Obviously, Sanxingdui findings unearthed from two burial pits have two distinct styles. First, bronze vessels and jade objects are similar to those of the Shang Dynasty in the Central Plain. Second, another style of bronze masks, bronze trees, standing figurines and the golden mace that are uniquely local. Primarily this local feature has been regarded as belonging to the Shu Culture, a religious belief distinct from the Central Plain. Generally speaking, the character of religious organization corresponds in a broad way with the overall institutional complexity of the socio-cultural systems in which they occur. For example, the individualistic cult is the simplest and most basic type of religious institution that everyone is his own religious specialist and it might have been based upon a household's scale. Together with the individualistic type, shamanistic cults are the only cultic institutions found in simple socio-cultural systems organized around family or band. Communal cults are associated with socio-cultural system which have achieved a moderate population size and a more complex level of political and economic organization like chiefdom. Ecclesiastical cults are the most complex form of religious institutions and are found only in highly developed

socio-cultural systems such as politically organized states. In China, shamanistic elements in religious system had still persisted during the Shang and Zhou Periods and even remained in the Han Dynasty.

If the bronze objects are regarded as the props in the religious cults, the most obvious distinction of religious beliefs between Sanxingdui and central China is that Sanxingdui people produced figurines or idols to worship, which was very unusual before Buddhism and Daoism appeared in central China. Many bronze heads, bronze masks and figurine with explicit facial features have been unearthed from the Sanxingdui pits. Perhaps some of them were placed in temple or palace to represent the gods or ancestors. Others such as bronze masks might have been used as props in sacrificial ceremonies for priests or shamans to change their roles between the secular and the gods, that is, they might also have been embodiments of the ancestor or the gods. Thus, the image of the ancestor and deity for Sanxingdui people was probably visualized. In contrast, Shang people's image of their ancestor or deity was invisible. Regarding the deities, there were sun god, moon god, cloud god, wind god, rain god, snow god, land god, mountain god and river god. All these deities are abstract rather than anthropomorphous. Although priests or shamans had special ability to communicate with deities, they might have exchange with deities spiritually. They might have never known what these deities looked like.

Qinshihuang, the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty, put bronze statues in front of the E'Pang Palace (阿房宫). These bronze statues were called *Wen Zhong* (翁仲), a general term for ghosts and spirits. However, no evidence has been found that these bronze statues could have been put in the temple or used in the ceremony for worship. There is no any information about the relationship between bronze figurines of Sanxingdui and bronze statues of Qin either. It is generally true, however, that in ancient China, there were nor anthropomorphous idols or statues of deities and ancestors for worship.

Bronze vessels of the Shang and Zhou periods not only served as props in sacrificial ceremonies, but also symbolized the authority, prestige and social hierarchy. Different combinations of bronze vessels might have been used to codify and regulate the status of different people, which symbolized the reign of a state.

From the Shang Dynasty onward bronze vessels became props or emblems for elites of stratification. Kings awarded bronze vessels and weapons as gifts to their relatives or subjects who went to build cities in their domains. When these bronze vessels went on along patriarchal clans in local towns or districts, they were used as gifts handed down through aristocratic lines as well. The bronze vessels had such functions due to their association with elites who counted kin with ancestor or the kings in the sacrificial ceremonies. Generally speaking, these ritual vessels only had something to do with the elite rank or status, so the number and the combination of the bronze vessels correspond with their status in political affairs (Chang 1-27).

The characteristics and combinations of bronze vessels and the religious system of the Shang and Zhou reflected an incipient form of *Li*, that is, the syncretism of the heaven and man and the worship of sky, terra, state, moral human relations and knowledge. Though the practice of auguring and other magics prevailed in the Shang,

they never occupied a dominate position in the religious system and were mostly suppressed by *Li* (礼). Contrary to the Shang, Sanxingdui's bronze objects and sacrificial offerings were full of magic elements, lacking keen consciousness of kingship (compared with its theocratic power) and consciousness of classification in the rank and status. The Shang and Zhou bronze vessels suggested the complexity of the ruling class and social hierarchy. And numerous motifs with trivial details were probably designed to indicate the strict social hierarchy, authority and power rather than to represent the horror of the ghosts and deities. While Sanxingdui's bronze objects did not have such meaning but demonstrated the nature of shamanistic cults to communicate with gods. Thus, it is clear that Sanxingdui's socio-cultural system was not so complex as the Shang in the central plain of China.

Rawson points out:

Some sort of contact with the Shang cultures of Henan is indicated by the use of bronze and jade and by the shapes of a number of the artifacts, especially the ceramic and bronze vessels, while the range and type of items found in the sacrificial pits belonged to a culture whose beliefs and practices must have been quite unlike anything known to date. Neither the Neolithic peoples nor the Shang who built up a state in Henan made massive images of priests or deities in human-like form. A society that made human-like statues with large quantities of bronze must have visualized them set within their own religious and intellectual worlds. Moreover, so sophisticated are the figures from Sanxingdui that these cannot be the tentative beginnings of a culture using bronze and jade for the first time in the service of religious belief. These finds must have a long history behind them.

In the research of Chinese archaeology, metallurgy is always regarded as an important criterion of the civilization. However, in fact, production technology does not always correspond with the complexity of social and political organization. For example, Maya and Inca remained in the Stone Age though they exhibited splendid civilization, whereas Western European had already entered the Bronze Age but they still remained in the period of chiefdom. So, it is unwise for us to infer directly about the social development level merely by technology.

Four social evolutionary levels advanced by American anthropologist Service as band, tribe, chiefdom and state have been generally accepted by global academic community. Chiefdom is a social type bridging egalitarian societies and politically coercive states. The hereditary policy and system made chiefdoms full of elite characters, basically lacking forceful repression by the monopoly. Chiefs usually exercise their authority by means of ritual ceremonies. Though some scholars think that three dynasties Xia, Shang and Zhou in central China had already entered the period of state, from the point view of social anthropologists, it is still not clear whether they should be termed as chiefdoms or early states.

Though Sanxingdui displayed obvious traces of early civilization for the presence of exotic and bronze objects which required huge amounts of labor force, what is more remarkable is the magic character of the bronze artifacts lacking functions of codifying and stipulating social hierarchy like those of the Shang Dynasty. It seems that Sanxingdui's social and political organization remained the level of chiefdom

characterized by theocratic power. In another word, though Sanxingui might have had some contact with the Shang Culture, its social and political organization is more like the Liangzhu Culture in the lower reaches of Yangtze River than the Shang Culture.

As Wright argues, the development of chiefdoms is characterized by processes of "cycling." This refers to a periodic fluctuation between simple and complex chiefdoms. After a period of expansion, most complex chiefdoms might break down or split into simple chiefdoms, or collapse altogether. Only a tiny percentage of chiefdoms could give rise to states (43 – 77). Cycling is regarded as a common attribute of chiefdoms and becomes myths for many lost civilizations such as the Sanxingui, Liangzhu, Longshan and Hongshan Cultures. The cause of fragmentation may be competition between chiefly families or factions, uneven population growth, agricultural failure, weak leadership, usurpation, or problems in succession.

In terms of social and religious system of chiefdoms, cult and belief played an important role in the development of early civilization. Generally, disadvantages of religious cults might outweigh its advantages if its rigid theocratic institution weakened a chief's ability to cope with various emergent affairs. It might become an obstacle for chiefdoms or early states to develop into a higher level. As Childe states, revolution is full of risk for the societies with simple and crude conditions. The succession of the societies was based upon every member's right action in the right place with right timing and with right method. Early society proved to be weak in adaptive abilities to cope and once it suffered from the rigid and banal religious cults and systems, it would inevitably collapse.

Although there were many shamanistic elements, Shang's religious system seems mainly based upon *Li*, which led to the development of the political system controlled by secular authority and to certain extent suppressed the magic. Thanks to *Li*, early states in central China were not strongly restricted by theocracy. This might help to explain why so many early civilizations in China were like shooting stars in the sky once bright and then disappeared completely without traces. Even the complex chiefdoms such as the Sanxingui, Liangzhu, and Hongshan Cultures could not escape from disintegration. Only chiefdoms and early states in the central plain could persist and finally became the mainstream of Chinese civilization.

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Geographical Knowledge of Central Asia and West Asia in China in the Fifteenth-Sixteenth Century

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Abstract:

The Summary of the Land and People in Western Regions published in 1542 contains rich geographical knowledge at that time from West of Jiayu Guan in China to the region of Mediterranean Sea. Based on tentative research, most of the major place names could be confirmed by taking into account of factors of geography, people's name, and history, and meanwhile by referring to the pertinent documents from Europe, Arab, and Persia. This paper attempts to study the place names of part of the Central Asia and West Asia, so as to understand the geographical knowledge of those areas in China at that time.

Key words:

The Summary of the Land and People in Western Regions; Central Asia; geographical history

The fifteenth-sixteenth century coincides with Ming Dynasty in China. *The Summary of the Land and People in Western Regions*^[1] (《西域土地人物略》) in *Shanxi Tongzhi* (《陕西通志》, *The General Record of Shanxi Province*), which was published in 1542, became well-known to some of the scholars after it was included in Gu Yanwu's famous work *Political and Economic Geography of China* (《天下郡国利病书》) at the beginning of Qing Dynasty. This document contains rich geographical knowledge at that time from West of Jiayu Guan in China to the region of Mediterranean Sea. Part of the names of places that are now in Gansu and Xinjiang was studied by Tao Baolian in the late nineteenth Century in his book titled *Xinmao Shixingji* (《辛卯侍行记》, *Travels of Accompanying Father in 1891*) and by Chen Zhongmian^[2] and Feng Chengjun^[3] in 1940s. The place names of Central Asia and West Asia were only included in the paper of textual research of the place names of Yuan Dynasty by Zhu Jieqin,^[4] in which one of the place names was quoted from *Bian Zheng Kao* (《边政考》, *Research of the Frontier*) in 1547, the same age of

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[1] Simply put as *Summary of Western Regions* below.

[2] Chen Zhongmian. "From Jiayu Guan to the West of Southern Xinjiang — A Record of Journey Written by People in Ming Dynasty (1948)" (《从嘉峪关到南疆西部之明人纪程》), published in *Textual Research of Chinese Foreign History and Geography* (《中外史地考证》), Vol. II. Press of China, 2004.

[3] Feng Chengjun. *Place Names of West Region* (《西域地名》). Press of China, 1982.

[4] Zhu Jieqin. "Textual Research and Explanation on Place Names of Northeast in the Book of Regional Administration in History of Yuan Dynasty" (《元史地理志西北地名考释》), published in *The Collection of Themes on History of Chinese Foreign Affairs* (《中外关系史论文集》). People's Publishing House of Henan, 1984.