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THE USE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUAL BRONZES IN THE LINGNAN REGION DURING THE EASTERN ZHOU PERIOD

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Abstract

The paper examines bronze vessels and bells excavated from late Bronze Age élite tombs in Guangdong and Guangxi. Categorized stylistically, such objects represent diverse traditions of manufacture, including 1) that of the Zhou states in the Yellow and Yangzi river systems (especially of Chu), 2) those of the Zhou-related, but basically independent bronze manufacturing cultures along the Middle and Lower Yangzi (known to Chinese archaeology as the Wu and Yue cultures), 3) those of Southeast Asian Bronze Age cultures (proto-Dian, Dongso'n), and 4) that of emergent local Lingnan bronze-casting workshops. The frequency and distribution of objects pertaining to each of these traditions changed somewhat over time; the assemblages from the tombs at Yangjia, Gongcheng (Guangxi) and Songshan, Zhaoqing (Guangdong), representing, respectively, an earlier and a later stage of local development, are scrutinized in some detail.

It is noted that, both in import and in local manufacture, the choice of bronze vessel types emphasizes functional equivalence with the indigenous ceramic inventory while evincing little if any awareness of the conventions governing the composition of Zhou ritual assemblages. Bronzes and ceramics appear to have been used in conjunction at ritual celebrations. Rather than documenting a process of acculturation, objects imported from the Zhou states were adapted to uses specific to Lingnan cultural contexts. One of their main rôles probably consisted in serving as symbolic prestige items to be handled and displayed by their élite owners. The primary rôle of display is indicated also by the fact that locally-made bronze bells are musically useless, and that, differing from their northern prototypes, they are fashioned in such a way as to emphasize visually one side over the other. Adducing cross-cultural parallels, and dwelling upon some ideas stated by K.C. Chang in a 1975 article, the paper speculates about the probable rôle of the exchange of such artifacts and of their local emulation in the emergence of an indigenous élite. Such analysis may yield some insights into local historical developments during the centuries preceding the area's incorporation into the Qin and Han empires.

Approach

Archaeological discoveries made in China during the last half-century have radically altered our image of early Chinese cultural history, formerly regarded as an essentially unilinear development. We have come to realize that many distinctive regional cultural traditions, with roots going back to Neolithic if not earlier times, coexisted simultaneously with the early dynasties known to traditional history. Chinese culture—to the extent that there was any one such thing—arose from the interaction and assimilation of such regional strains: a gradual process that started very early (see Chang 1986: 234–245) and was by no means ended by the political unification in 221 BC.

The Lingnan 嶺南 region does not come to mind as a major stage of early Chinese cultural history. The literal meaning of "Lingnan" (South of the Mountains) alludes to the geographical separation of the Pearl River (Zhujiang 珠江) and Xijiang 西江 drainage area from the Yangzi river basin to the north by a broad chain of moderately high mountains, which in ancient times constituted a barrier of some significance. To the inhabitants of northern China, this region and its population were anciently known as Nanyue 南越 (the "Southern Beyond"), another term with a literal meaning that bespeaks distance and separation (Qu Jiafa 1991: 132).[1] And indeed, the Nanyue were by no means close neighbors of the Shang 商 and Zhou 周 dynastic states: between them intervened a belt of distinct socio-political entities along the Yangzi river, which are poorly recorded in the historical literature (Kane 1974/75; Rawson 1990, vol. 1: 82–83 et passim; He and He 1986, Wu Mingsheng 1989). During the Eastern Zhou period (770–221 BC), the Yangzi river basin was gradually assimilated, politically as well as culturally, to northern China. The Lingnan region, much further to the south, was only very indirectly affected by these developments.

We know that the inhabitants of the Lingnan region were ethnically and linguistically distinct from their northern neighbors. In early textual sources (all, of course, written in the north), they are lumped with all non-Zhou populations south of the Yangzi under the term "Hundred Yue" (Baiyue 百越), a name that indicates not only their perceived remoteness, but also their political fragmentation. They had no states and no cities: the population was organized at what anthropologists

[1] Qu (1991: 132) points out that no autonym is recorded for the ancient inhabitants of Lingnan, except perhaps for the tribal names Fulou 縛婁, Yangyu 陽禺, and Huandou 驩兜 mentioned in *Lüshi chunqiu* ("Shijunlan," Chen Qiyou ed. 1984, vol. 3: 1322). The toponym Panyu 番禺, traditionally used for the Guangzhou area, likewise connotes remoteness and inaccessibility.

would call the chiefdom level (Service 1971; Lucas 1984; Allard 1994).[2] The texts make frequent reference to "barbarian" customs current in these southern areas, such as cutting one's hair short and tattooing one's body, wearing clothes made from rough plant-fibers, and living in pile-dwellings (Peters 1990). But we should beware of accepting uncritically the traditional notion that the "Hundred Yue" were all alike. Even the present-day ethnographic situation in the Lingnan region is highly complex, suggesting that this part of China has for a long time been inhabited by a variety of different ethnic/linguistic groups (Pulleyblank 1983; Meacham 1993).[3] So far, however, we cannot easily tell them apart archaeologically;[4] while differences *vis-à-vis* areas further north are pronounced, archaeological finds have shown that, despite all ethnic differences, many cultural features and material items were widespread over large parts of southern China.

The issue of ethnicity—well treated in connection with southern China by Heather Peters (1990 and 2001)—is, at any rate, peripheral to the present article. We shall, instead, look at excavated material objects that can illustrate how, during the later Bronze Age, that region was drawn into the expanding "Chinese interaction sphere," and in what ways its socio-cultural makeup may have been affected by connections with areas further north. Simplifying matters considerably, we shall disregard intra-regional differences within Lingnan. We shall classify objects under a mere four major cultural/geographical headings: the early Chinese dynasties in north-central China, the local cultures of the Yangzi river basin, the Lingnan region itself, and Southeast Asia. Objects of these four categories can be readily distinguished and traced through the time-honored methods of typological and stylistic seriation (Yu Weichao 1989); their co-occurrence in the archaeological record may be interpreted as manifesting a multi-directional interchange of ideas, customs, modes of governance, and technological innovations (von Dewall 1998). Taken as a basis for cautious generalization, our observations in the Lingnan region may be of help in defining the in-

[2] In Marxist terms, the mode of social organization in Lingnan during the Bronze Age has been characterized as corresponding to a "military confederacy," i.e. the earliest stages of "Slave-holding society" (Wu and Ye 1993). In spite of the different nomenclature, there is little disagreement as to the nature of the contrast *vis-à-vis* the Shang and Zhou state systems.

[3] The present non-Han inhabitants of Guangxi 廣西 and Guangdong 廣東 are affiliated with three major language groups: Miao-Yao (Sino-Tibetan), Tai, and Mon-Khmer (Austro-Asiatic); in the past, Malayo-Polynesian languages (Austronesian), now extinct on the Chinese mainland, may also have been spoken in this part of southern China.

[4] Hirata (1986) proposes to link the distribution of different styles of "Geometric Pottery" in southeast China to that of Chinese dialects that may be rooted in ancient indigenous languages. This idea, though fascinating, is highly speculative.

cremental interaction processes through which "Chinese culture" came into being.

Present state of research

The Bronze Age in this part of China started around 1000 BC;[5] various attempts at synthesis have been made (He Jisheng 1981; Huang Zhanyue 1986, 1987; Li Longzhang 1995; Li Yan 1990; Mo Zhi 1989; Qiu Licheng 1991; Xu Hengbin 1984; Yang Shiting 1998:115–123), but excavated evidence is still anything but plentiful. Bronze vessels and bells were occasionally imported into Lingnan from areas further north during the first half of the first millennium BC (Luo Tai 1997a); but the first sustained indications of the rise of an indigenous social élite in the Lingnan region date to no earlier than the sixth century BC. The existence of such a stratum in the local society is manifested archaeologically by a dozen or so large tombs that have been found since the nineteen-sixties in several localities in eastern Guangxi and western Guangdong, all within a 350-km perimeter around Guangzhou 廣州 (Table 1). Their grave-goods comprise locally-made objects alongside items imported from various places.

Most scholars today follow the historiographical tradition in assuming that the Lingnan area, incorporated into the unified Qin 秦 empire in 219 BC, had anciently been part of the Yue 越 kingdom and had been occupied and administered by the state of Chu 楚 after its conquest of Yue at the end of the fourth century BC (Li Xueqin 1985: 201–205; see also: Xu Hengbin 1982 and Jiang Tingyu 1982). This traditional narrative has greatly influenced previous interpretations of the bronze assemblages from mid-first millennium BC Lingnan. Francis Allard's (1994) impressively complex anthropological model of cultural interaction, for instance, is cast entirely in terms of the relationship between Chu and the local Yue tribes.[6] What is most problematic about such a

[5] Qu Jiafa (1991) argues vigorously that Lingnan never had a true Bronze Age; this has been refuted by several scholars (Wang and Ye 1993, Yang Shiting 1998: 124–136 *et passim*), but the debate revolves on nothing but the definition of terms. It is now clear, at any rate, that bronze was not only used, but also manufactured fairly widely throughout the Lingnan region during the first millennium BC.

[6] To his credit, Allard (1994: 312–13) at first indicates some skepticism with respect to the historicity of the Chu occupation of Lingnan; further on in the article, however, he accepts it as a universally agreed-upon fact (ibid.: 319–20). Allard falls victim to historiographical shibboleth in accepting that the Chu administrative seat in the Yue area (Chuting 楚亭—a term that he misleadingly translates as "Chu capital") was located "near the Zhujiang delta" (ibid.: 319); if he had checked the *Shi ji*, which he invokes as his authority on this point without giving an exact reference, he would have seen that

reconstruction is that it ignores the areas intermediary between Chu and the Lingnan region. The imposition of the Yue label upon Lingnan is likewise problematic, for both historical and archaeological reasons. The kingdom of Yue, one of several non-Zhou polities in the south that were increasingly drawn into the orbit of the Zhou league of states during the Eastern Zhou period, had its core area in northern Zhejiang 浙江 and later on expanded northward into parts of the Lower Yangzi valley.[7] Geographically, Yue was relatively close to the Lingnan region, and archaeology has confirmed that many of its material features—weapon types, vessel shapes and ornamentation styles—were shared during the Bronze Age across a wide area of shouthern China including the Lingnan region (Li Longzhang 1995). But other prominent characteristics of the local cultures of northern Zhejiang, such as mounded tombs with stone chambers and, later on, high-quality bronze weapons with inlaid Chinese inscriptions in ornamental script, are not seen in the Lingnan area, or, for that matter, in other putative Yue areas such as present-day Hunan 湖南 and Jiangxi 江西.

Qu Jiafa (1991) pointed out that the notion of a Chu presence in this region derives from Jin 晉 dynasty (AD 265–419) and later historical writings, which imposed a tendentious reading upon their Han 漢 sources. According to Qu, this spurious claim of early precedent may have been motivated by wishful thinking on the part of immigrants from the north, who hoped to imbue their presence in the Lingnan region with some time-depth. One cannot emphasize enough the cultural and geographic distance of the Chu political core from areas such as Lingnan during the Eastern Zhou period. Chu was part of the Zhou state system, and its material culture—that of the aristocracy at least—is in all essential respects indistinguishable from that of its northern neighbors (Li Ling 1991; Falkenhausen 1991 and 1999: 514–25). Chu was insignificant (and remains archaeologically unidentifiable) until the late seventh century, when the state started to expand from a home base the location of which is still in dispute (Yu Weichao 1985: 211–269; Blakeley 1988 and 1990; Shi Quan 1988), to conquer most of what is now west-central Hubei and southwestern Henan. Recent archaeological discoveries have basically confirmed the Qing dynasty historian Gu Donggao's

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neither that text (e.g. in its account of the Chu conquest of Yue, Zhonghua ed., 41: 1748–51) nor any other Standard History mentions a Chuting, which only props up in later historical works (see Qu Jiafa 1991: 133).

[7] During the period under consideration, Yue seems to have resembled the other major polities in the Zhou culture sphere (e.g. Chu and Qin) in that its principal direction of expansion was inward, i.e. toward its peer polities within the Zhou realm, rather than outward into the sparsely settled peripheries.

顧棟高 (1679–1757) contention that "in Springs and Autumns times, the territory of Chu did not reach as far as Hunan" (*Chunqiu dashibiao* 4, Zhonghua ed. v. 1: 555–57). The earliest Chu-related finds south of the Yangzi date to no earlier than the mid-sixth century, and they are limited to the area around Lake Dongting 洞庭湖 (Wang Shimin in Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo, ed. 1984: 306–7; Wenwu Bianjiweiyuanhui 1991: 209–212). It was only during the Warring States period that Chu expanded southward along the Xiang 湘 river into the areas of Changsha 長沙 and Changde 常德, as plentifully attested by tombs from the fourth and third centuries BC (Gao Zhixi 1982; Gu Tiefu 1982; Tong Enzheng 1990: 200–218; Gao Zhixi 1987; Fu Juliang 1991; Li Keyou 1982; on the dating, see Wagner 1987). In 278 BC, these parts of Chu territory were conquered by Qin.[8]

Chu expansion only very gradually displaced and/or assimilated the preexisting local populations of the Xiang river valley, sometimes identified with the Yangyue 揚越 tribes known from textual sources (Gao Zhixi 1980, Wu Mingsheng 1991 and 1982). Their distinctive inventory of bronze vessels can be traced through local filiations from the mid-second millennium BC onward; non-Chu assemblages are still prevalent in wide areas of Hunan throughout the Warring States period, contemporaneous with Chu tombs.[9] These regional cultural phenomena are sometimes lumped into a unit with those of the Lingnan area, but this is a simplification stemming from the fact that historical texts written in the north refer to all non-Zhou populations south of the Yangzi indiscriminately as "Yue" or "Baiyue." Archaeological finds suggest the independent existence of regional Bronze Age phases in Hunan, Jiangxi, and on the lower course of the Yangzi. These served as conduits for nonindigenous bronze vessels into the Lingnan region, which in turn had its own trajectory of cultural development.

During most if not all of the Eastern Zhou period, therefore, there would have been little possibility for direct Chu contact with the Lingnan region. Qu Jiafa (1991) holds that during all this time, the local populations remained at an extremely primitive level of cultural development, and that the bronze-yielding élite tombs listed in Table 1 must post-date

[8] The Chu conquest of Yue thus did not take place until less than two generations before the Qin conquest of the Chu heartland. It may be argued that Chu, already hard-pressed by Qin, was hardly in a position to expand into the Lingnan region, from where it faced no political threat, and which was probably too poor to be serviceable as a resource base to the Chu state.

[9] The inscription on the E Jun Qi 鄂君啓 boat tallies, which prescribes the trading routes of official Chu merchants, seems to attest to the absence of Chu administrative settlements in parts of northern Hunan even in the late fourth century BC (Falkenhausen 1999b).

the Qin conquest, when bronzes of earlier date were brought in by members of the occupying forces as items of conspicuous consumption. But such a view is implausible because there are clear differences among the tombs in question, allowing us to periodize their contents and to correlate their dates, albeit roughly, with Eastern Zhou bronze assemblages in northern China. If Qu were correct, one would expect a similar mix of objects in all tombs, and one would expect to see at least some objects of Qin date, which are, however, conspicuously absent. Although there is as yet no consensus about the micro-sequence of the tombs here under discussion, their pre-Qin chronological position is virtually unquestionable (cf. Yang Shiting 1998: 120).

Qu's article is commendable, however, in deemphasizing the role of Chu and in pointing to the prevalence of objects made in the intermediate area south of the Yangzi. Stylistic evidence clearly shows that the local cultures in that area played the crucial rôle in the early transfer of bronzes (and, perhaps, of bronze-manufacturing technology) into the Lingnan region during the first half of the first millennium BC (Luo Tai 1997a). The apparent increase in the number of such objects after the sixth century BC, and the emergence of élite tombs of impressive scale, may well be related to wider geopolitical developments. One may speculate, along lines suggested by Allard (1994), that Chu's economic florescence stimulated demand for trade goods from the far south, resulting in new or intensified trade networks. It is also possible that the Chu expansion into Hunan may have triggered the displacement of part of that area's aboriginal population into more southerly areas (see He Guangyue 1990: 250–66; Li Longzhang 1995).

While such historical details are likely to remain unclear, a reconsideration of some of the luxury goods from Late Bronze Age élite tombs in the Lingnan region may yield some tentative answers to the following questions: How did the local élites in the Lingnan region react to the influx of northern objects and, presumably, ideas? How did they integrate the northern imports into their own, local material-cultural context? And how might the conspicuous display of such luxury goods have contributed to increasing social stratification? As space does not permit a comprehensive discussion of all finds listed in Table 1, I shall here scrutinize two representative assemblages of bronze objects from high-status tombs in the Lingnan region, one dating to the sixth and one to the fourth century BC. At the end of the article, I shall briefly adduce two important Han dynasty élite tombs in the area to illustrate how the situation changed after the Qin unification.

Table 1. Discoveries of Late Bronze Age ritual vessels and bells in Guangxi and Guangdong.

Site	Context	Century	Reference
Yangjia, Gongcheng GX* 恭城秧家	tomb?	mid-6	*Kaogu* 1973.1: 30–34, 41; Guangxi Zizhiqu Bowuguan et al. 1978, nos. 40–45.
Nanxiang, Heng Xian GX 橫縣南鄉	?	ca. 6	*Kaogu* 1984.9: 803–804
Muluocun, Liujiang GX 柳江木羅村	?	ca. 6	*Wenwu* 1990.1: 92
Dalisanwucun, Boluo GD† 博羅大瀝散屋村	?	ca. 6	*Kaogu yu wenwu* 1987.6: 15–16, 24; Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan *et al.* 1990, nos. 51–57.
Tangcun, Zengcheng GD 增城湯村	?	?	*Wenwu* 1992.12: 72.
Matougang, Qingyuan GD M1 慶遠馬頭崗	tomb	late 6	*Kaogu* 1963.2: 57–61; Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan *et al.* 1984: 228–229.
Matougang, Qingyuan GD M2	tomb	late 6	*Kaogu* 1964.3: 138–142
Beifushan, Luoding GD 羅定背夫山	tomb	early 5	*Kaogu* 1986.3: 210–220; Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan *et al.* 1990, no. 59–67
Nanmentong, Luoding GD M1 羅定南門垌	tomb	mid-5	*Kaogu* 1983.1: 43–48, 29; Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan *et al.* 1984: 278–279
Niaodanshan, Sihui GD 四會鳥蛋山	tomb	mid-5	*Kaogu* 1975.2: 102–108
Longzishan, Heping GD 和平龍子山	tomb	5?	Yang Shiting 1998:122 Table 2.
Lanmashan, Huaiji GD 懷集攔馬山	tomb	5?	Yang Shiting 1998:122 Table 2.
Songshan, Zhaoqing GD 肇慶松山	tomb	mid/late 4	*Wenwu* 1974.11: 69–79; Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan *et al.* 1984: 264–275
Guishuwo, Xingning GD 興寧鬼樹窩	tomb	4	Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan *et al.* 1990, nos. 72–77
Weipocun, Binyang GX M1 賓陽韋坡村	tomb	4	*Kaogu* 1983.2: 146–148
Weipocun, Binyang GX M2	tomb	4	*Kaogu* 1983.2: 146–148.
Longzuigang, Guangning GD 廣寧龍嘴崗	cemetery	late 4	*Kaogu* 1998.7: 621–635.

Site	Context	Century	Reference
Tangyuan, Wuzhou GX 梧州唐源	tomb?	late 4/3	Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Bowuguan *et al.* 1978, no. 50
Tonggugang, Guangning GD 廣寧銅鼓崗	cemetery	4/3	*Kaoguxue jikan* 1(1981): 111–119; Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan *et al.* 1984: no. 87
Gaodiyuan, Sihui GD 四會高地園		early 3	*Kaogu* 1985.4: 360–364, 384
Menghutoushan, Fengkai GD 封開猛虎頭山	tomb	3?	*Kaoguxue jikan* 6 (1989): 69
Banshi, Fengkai GD 封開斑石	tomb	3	Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan *et al.* 1990, no. 58
Yinshanling, Pingle GX 平樂銀山嶺	cemetery	3	*Kaogu xuebao* 1978.2: 211–258; GX ZZQBWG et al. 1978, nos. 51–69.
Luoyanshan, Deqing GD 德慶落鴈山	cemetery	3	*Wenwu* 1973.9: 18–22.
Miantouling, Jieyang GD 揭陽面頭嶺	cemetery	3	*Kaogu* 1992.3: 220–226, 203
Duimianshan, Lechang GD 樂昌對面山	cemetery	3–2 AD	*Kaogu* 2000.6: 517–541

* GX = Guangxi Province
† GD = Guangdong Province

The bronzes from Yangjia, Gongcheng.

An important assemblage of bronzes was recovered in 1971 from what is presumed to have been a tomb at Yangjia 秧家 in Gongcheng 恭城 county, Guangxi.[10] Archaeologists came too late to record the finds *in situ*, and nothing is known about the tomb's shape. The bronzes are stylistically heterogeneous; they fall into three groups.

Quantitatively most numerous are objects of local manufacture, for the most part tools.[11] All these are comparatively small items that do not require a very high degree of sophistication in casting; such objects had been manufactured in the Lingnan region for some centuries. They

[10] For references to archaeological reports on tombs in the Lingnan region, see Table 1. For convenience of reference, comparative examples are taken, wherever possible, from Hayashi 1984 and 1988, where further references may be found.

[11] Yang Shiting (1998: 84) further subdivides this category in objects that show parallels to finds from Guizhou 貴州 and Yunnan 雲南 (such as boot-shaped axes) and objects of more local distributions (such as human-head topped fittings and bronze buckets). On present evidence, it seems, however, difficult to decide what sorts of objects should be assigned to the one or the other of these rubrics.

include the so-called "boat-shaped axes," named *yue* 鉞 in Chinese—a word that scholars have connected with the ethnonym Yue 越, speculating that such axes were a totem-like hallmark of southeastern China's indigenous bronze culture (Tang Lan 1975);[12] but this is quite doubtful as we know neither the word for such objects in the indigenous "Yue" language, nor, indeed, how the "Yue" referred to themselves (Ye Wenxian 1990; Meacham 1993: 140).[13] At any rate, such axes are widespread all over the area south of the Yangzi (Fan Yong 1992; Fu Juliang 1994; Lin Weiwen 1994; Qin Cailuan 1992), and their simple geometric decoration differs significantly from that of contemporary Eastern Zhou objects from further north. Other locally-manufactured objects found at Yangjia also feature similar decoration; these comprise various kinds of tools, as well as ornamental fittings ornamented with crudely-shaped bulls.[14]

Among vessels, the only type of probable local manufacture is the so-called "Yue-style *ding*" 越式鼎 (Figure 1), a usually flat-bottomed tripod vessel with slender, outward-bent legs and laterally affixed, flat handles. The label "Yue-style *ding*" has been used somewhat loosely in the archaeological literature to designate a variety of tripod-types widespread from ca. the eighth to second centuries BC throughout southern and southeastern China (Peng Hao 1984; Yu Weichao 1985: 211–53). Like north Chinese bronze vessels, these tripods are cast in the piece-mold technique, with the casting-seams well visible on the surface—a sign of a certain lack of care in manufacturing. Their vessel-bodies are always unornamented and thin-walled. Traces of soot indicate that these were utilitarian cooking vessels. Some specimens feature covers, ornate lateral fixed handles, or movable arched handles (Hayashi 1988: 17, figs. 160–163 and 28–29, figs. 277–89). The four "Yue-style *ding*" from Yangjia are so far the earliest instances of that type reported from the Lingnan region. Although the vessel type did not originate here—and may indeed be indirectly linked to north Chinese ritual vessels by way of a local *ding* type common in Hunan during the early part of Eastern Zhou[15]—I consider it likely, given their simplicity

[12] This idea goes back at least to the first (1954) edition of Fan Wenlan's 范文瀾 *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian* 中國通史簡編 (see Ye Wenxian 1990, n. 1; left out in the 1978 edition).

[13] It is possible that Yue is the transcription of a word in a local language; note that another homophonous word, Yue 粵, is sometimes used instead of Yue 越. In any case, the choice as one Chinese equivalent of a word meaning "Beyond" was certainly a calculated and evocative one; but we cannot assume that the indigenous meaning of the transcribed ethnonym was the same as in Chinese.

[14] The original report designates these as "chariot fittings," which is probably wrong as there is no indication of chariots in the archaeological record of the Lingnan region.

[15] Such *ding*, which appear to be intermediary between north Chinese *ding* and "Yue-style *ding*" have been reported, e.g., from Jiushi 舊市, Zixing 資興 (*Hunan kaogu*

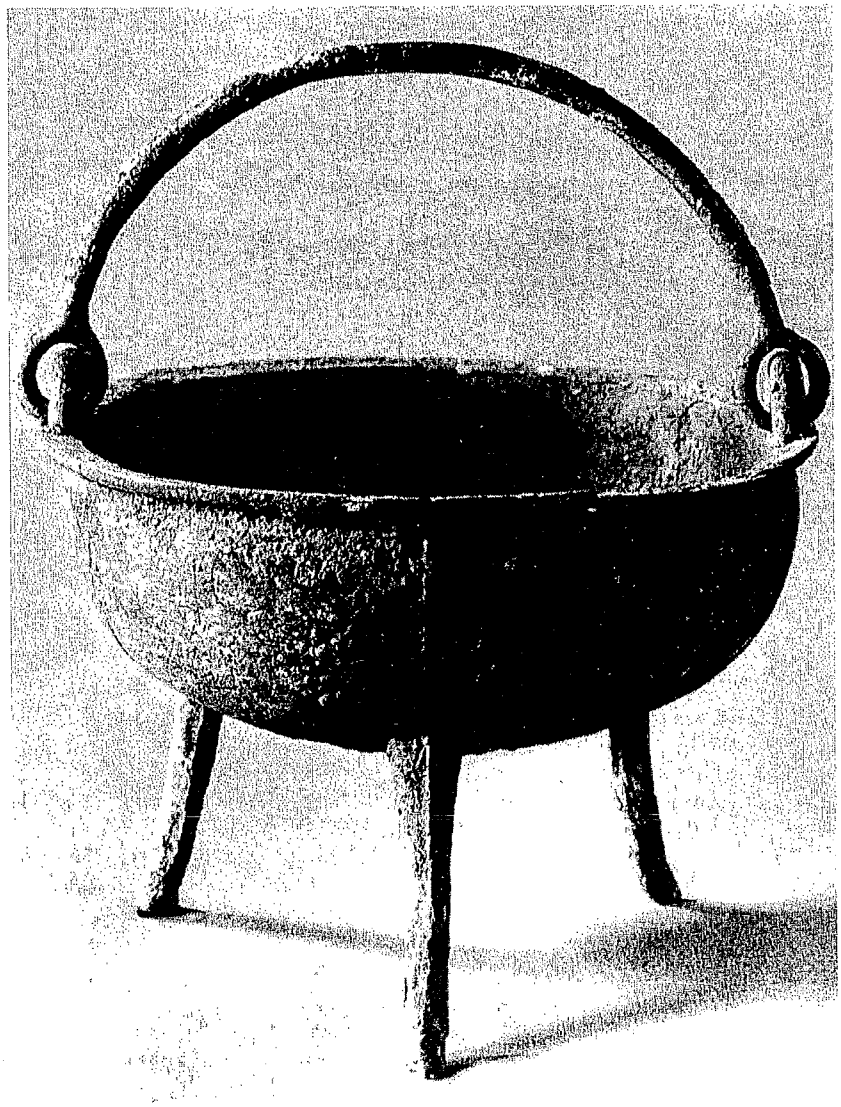

Figure 1. "Yue-style ding" from Yangjia, Gongcheng (Guangxi).
From: Kaogu 1973.1: pl.11.2.

jikan 1 (1982): 25–31) and Gankuang'aoshan 乾礦坳山, Changsha (*Hunan kaogu jikan* 2 (1984): 35–37); the fragmentary *ding* from Kemushanwei 柯木山尾, Huiyang 惠陽 (Guangdong) (Yang Hao 1961; Hayashi 1984, vol.2: 35, fig. 387) may also belong to this group. Song Shaohua (1991) has reported additional materials from Gaoqiaoxiang 高橋鄉, Changsha and linked the material to the finds at Tunxi 屯溪 (Anhui 安徽) (Hayashi 1984, vol.2: 383–86) and to the "Yue" tribes. See also Guo Xueren 1991.

Figure 2. Ding from Yangjia, Gongcheng (Guangxi).
From: Kaogu 1973.1: pl. 10.2.

of shape and utilitarian purpose, that these objects were made in the local workshops, rather than having been imported from elsewhere.

Bronze vessels imported from bronze-manufacturing centers within the Zhou cultural sphere are immediately recognizable on account of their shape and style. Two such vessels were found at Yangjia: a *ding* and a *yufou* 浴缶. The *ding* (Figure 2) represents a ritual vessel type current in the central states of the Zhou alliance during the second half of the sixth century. A round-bottomed tripod with squat, muscular legs and laterally attached, vertical handles, it may have once had a cover, and its walls are covered with ornamentation bands, executed in the pattern-block technique that was pioneered at the great bronze workshops of southern Shanxi 山西 in mid-Eastern Zhou times (Shanxi Sheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1993; Weber 1973; Keyser 1979; Bagley 1993 and 1995). The dense pattern of interlaced snakes is one of the commonest patterns in Eastern Zhou bronze vessels. In both shape and ornament,

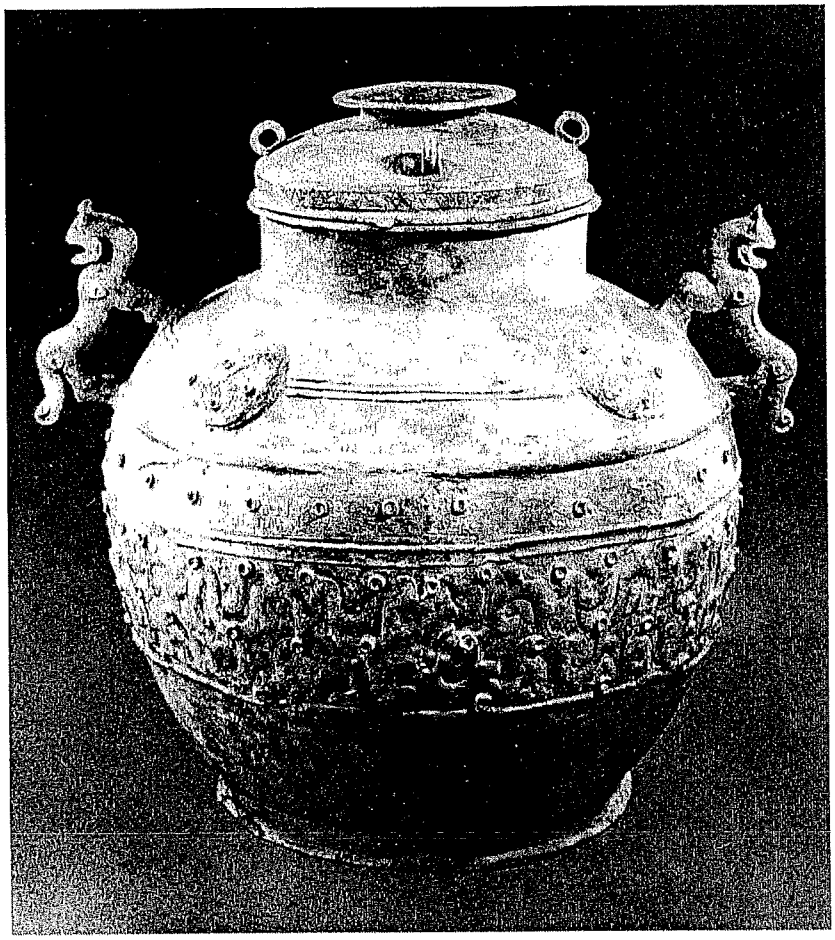

Figure 3. Yufou from Yangjia, Gongcheng (Guangxi).
From: Kaogu 1973.1: pl. 12.1.

this vessel could not be more different from the "Yue-style *ding*"; the closest typological parallels are to Middle Springs and Autumns period *ding* from Chu tombs in Dangyang 當陽 and Xiangyang 襄陽, Hubei 湖北 (Hayashi 1988: 7, figs. 63–64).

The *yufou* water-container from Yangjia (Figure 3) is recognizable as such by the four large ornate bosses placed on its shoulders (Li Ling 1991: 92–93). The handles are in the shape of sculpturally rendered dragons with their heads bent backwards. Complementing them, the main decoration band on the vessel walls consists of broad interlaced dragon bodies molded in relief, lacking heads or extremities. Raised circlets, once inlaid with semiprecious stones, are regularly spaced all

over the decorated surface. The tiny interlaced units and triangles of the supplementary decoration bands on the cover and shoulder of the vessel resemble the decoration of the *ding*, to which this vessel must be close in date and geographical origin. Comparable objects have also been discovered in Mid-Eastern Zhou contexts in north China (see Hayashi 1988: 136–140); but the *yufou* from Yangjia occupies a typologically intermediate position between *yufou* and *lei* 罍, another kind of water container (Hayashi 1988: 124–127), with which it shares the animal-shaped handles and the cylindrical neck. Stylistic similarities to vessels from the seats of the royal Zhou and their principal allies in north China are conspicuous.[16]

In addition to vessels, the Yangjia tomb has also yielded weapons of classical northern types, such as dagger-axes (*ge* 戈), which may be imports.

So far, we have considered bronzes of local manufacture (though not necessarily autochthonous in in derivation), and northern imports (i.e. objects that had their original significance in Zhou aristocratic contexts). Representing the important intermediary category, the Yangjia assemblage also contains objects from the long-standing regional bronze-casting cultures south of the Yangzi. Many of them are typologically related to north Chinese ritual bronzes, but they have their own distinctive stylistic features. In the Lingnan region at this time, these are still probably imports, though, as we shall see, similar objects were to be manufactured locally later on.

One such instance at Yangjia are two *yongzhong* 甬鍾 bells (Figure 4). The history of this bell type is a complicated one (Falkenhausen 1993a: 129–195 and 374–387). Developed in the middle Yangzi region around 1000 BC, *yongzhong* were introduced into the heartland of the Western Zhou dynasty in Shaanxi 陝西. They were perhaps the most important contribution of the ancient bronze-producing cultures along the Yangzi river to the paraphernalia of the classical tradition of court ritual in north China. Their ornamentation was assimilated to that of other Zhou bronzes, and they soon spread throughout the Zhou network of polities. At the same time, bronze casters in the Yangzi river basin continued to manufacture bells that were ornamented in a distinctive local style; later, these later southern *yongzhong*, as well, were modified under northern influence. For instance, from the early Springs and Autumns period onward, they were often made in sets, a development apparently originating in the Zhou heartland.

[16] The vessel's shoulder ornament has a particularly close parallel in a *lei* excavated from the mid-Springs and Autumns period princely tomb at Lijialou 李家樓, Xinzheng 新鄭 (Henan) (Hayashi 1988: 124, fig. 5). For Hayashi's instructive seriation of triangle bands on Springs and Autumns period bronzes, see *ibid.*: 412.

Figure 4. Yongzhong from Yangjia, Gongcheng (Guangxi).
From: Kaogu 1973.1: pl. 12.4.

Table 2. Constellations of Late Bronze Age ritual vessels and bells in Guangxi and Guangdong.

Site	"Yue-style *ding*"	Bells	Other Bronze Vessels found
Yangjia, Gongcheng GX*	5	1 *yongzhong*	1 *ding*, 2 *zun*, 1 *yufou*
Nanxiang, Heng Xian GX		1 *yongzhong*	
Muluocun, Liujiang GX		1 *yongzhong*	
Dalisanwucun, Boluo GD†		7 *yongzhong*	
Tangcun, Zengcheng GD		1 *yongzhong*	
Matougang, Qingyuan GD M1	2	5 *yongzhong*	1 *pen*, 1 *lei*, 1 *fou*
Matougang, Qingyuan GD M2		7 *yongzhong* 1 *zheng*	1 *yufou*
Beifushan, Luoding GD	2	1 *duo*	2 *yupan*
Nanmentong, Luoding GD M1	2	5 *yongzhong* 1 *zheng*	2 *yupan*, 1 *fou*, 1 covered *ding*, 1 *jiaohe*
Niaodanshan, Sihui GD	3	1 *duo*	1 *jiaohe*
Longzishan, Heping GD M1	1(?)		
Lanmashan, Huaiji GD	1+(?)		
Songshan, Zhaoqing GD	5	6 *yongzhong*	2 *lei*, 1 *tilianghu*, 1 *pan* (*lupan*?), 1 bucket
Guishuwo, Xingning GD		6 *yongzhong*	
Weipocun, Binyang GX M1	1	1 *yongzhong*	
Weipocun, Binyang GX M2		2 *yongzhong*	
Longzuigang, Guangning GD M4	1	1 *duo*	
Longzuigang, Guangning GD M5	1		
Longzuigang, Guangning GD M13		1 *pan*	
Tangyuan, Wuzhou GX			1 *ding*
Tonggugang, Guangning GD	4		2 *pan*, "steelyard-shaped bronzes"
Gaodiyuan, Sihui GD	1		"steelyard-shaped bronze"
Menghutoushan, Fengkai GD	1		
Banshi, Fengkai GD	1		
Yinshanling, Pingle GX	8		2 iron-footed *ding*, 7 *pan*
Luoyanshan, Deqing GD	1		*pan*
Miantouling, Jieyang GD M1	2		
Miantouling, Jieyang GD M2			1 *lei*(?)
Miantouling, Jieyang GD M3	1		
Miantouling, Jieyang GD M7	1		
Miantouling, Jieyang GD M11			1 *lei*(?), 2 *pan*
Miantouling, Jieyang GD M14			1 *lei*(?), 1 *pan*
Duimianshan, Lechang GD	7(?)‡		

* GX = Guangxi Province
† GD = Guangdong Province
‡ from different tombs (breakdown not given in report)

The larger élite tombs of the Lingnan region all contain such bells; while only two were found at Yangjia, other tombs have yielded sets of up to seven pieces (see Table 2) (Jiang Tingyu 1989). Their abstract and relatively simple decoration differs stylistically from that of Eastern Zhou bells of more northerly provenience, which are usually ornamented with dragon-derived decoration motifs. Another distinguishing criterion is the presence of decoration, on southern specimens, in the central panel of the bell-face (traditionally called *zheng* 鉦), which is usually left empty or covered with an inscription in northern specimens. In contrast to the stylistically homogenous northern bell-chimes, sets of bells from the Lingnan region sometimes comprise bells with diverging kinds of ornamentation. Moreover, their back faces are consistently ornamented in a simpler fashion than the front faces, often being devoid of any decoration whatever; while on northern specimens, both faces usually have identical decoration. By comparison, moreover, the local Lingnan-type *yongzhong* tend to be of rather poor manufacture. Such features suggest that, unlike their northern counterparts, bells made in the Lingnan region were meant primarily for display; their musical function seems to have been, at best, secondary.

An even more remarkable kind of bronzes that can be assigned to the Yangzi river basin on the basis of their style and manufacture is represented by the two *zun* 尊 found at Yangjia. Similar in shape, they diverge somewhat in their decoration pattern, though stylistically, both vessels are far removed from contemporary northern bronzes. The first *zun* (Figure 5) features a decoration of paired snakes framing single frogs and salamanders, deployed in two tiers over the vessel surface. The second specimen (Figure 6) lacks the figurative ornamentation of the first, featuring instead a main decoration band with rhombus-shaped fields enclosed by bands of circlets and filled with triangular, abstract decoration units arranged on a cruciform scheme. On both vessels, the secondary ornamentation in the lower portions is abstract, consisting of bands of slanted S-shaped volutes placed on the side.

The two *zun* exemplify, respectively, a representational and a more abstract tendency within the same regional style that is manifested by the Yangjia bells. While the latter objects' ornament is executed in sunken lines (*yinwen* 陰文), the two *zun* feature raised-line (*yangwen* 陽文) variants of the same ornaments. Generally in Eastern Zhou bronzes, raised-line decoration is much less commonly seen than sunken-line decoration and may indicate higher status.

Very few objects with decoration resembling that of these two *zun* have been found so far; they all provene from the Xiang river valley in Hunan, which may be the cradle of this idiosyncratic variant of ornamentation. The present corpus comprises one more *zun* (Fong, ed. 1980,

Figure 5. First zun from Yangjia, Gongcheng (Guangxi).
From: Kaogu 1973.1: pl. 10.1.

no. 68), remarkable for the three-dimensionally protruding snakeheads pullulating on the inner surface of its flaring mouth, and three very large *you* 卣 (*Hunan Bowuguan wenji* 1 [1991]: 142–151, 57; *Hunan kaogu jikan* 4 [1987]: 19–21; and *Kaogu* 1999.6:530–531 [Zhongguo Wenwu Jiaoliu Fuwuzhongxin, ed. 1990: no. 63]; an unprovenienced similar *you* is in the British Museum [Rawson 1987]). Stylistically isolated, these vessels are difficult to date on their own. So far, the Yangjia assemblage is the only find allowing to cross-date them with bronzes of other styles; since its northern imported objects date to after the mid-sixth century BC, the

Figure 6. Second zun from Yangjia, Gongcheng (Guangxi).
From: Kaogu 1973.1: pl. 11.4.

two *zun*—as well as, presumably, the stylistically related vessels mentioned—may have been made around that time or slightly before.

At first sight, a sixth-century date appears very late for *zun* and *you* vessels. Once in common use as wine containers in the dynastic centers along the Yellow River, they had—like all wine vessels—fallen into disuse in the north after the Late Western Zhou ritual reform around 850 BC (Rawson 1990, vol. 1: 93–110; Falkenhausen 1993b; Luo Tai 1997b).

But these obsolete vessel types continued to be manufactured in the south Chinese regional cultures, where vessels of Shang and Zhou dynastic origin had been introduced at various times during the Bronze Age. Finds from the tumulus tombs at Tunxi in southern Anhui, in the lower reaches of the Yangzi river, show how they were initially assimilated to local styles. For instance, tomb no. 3 at Tunxi yielded one Middle Western Zhou period *you* with phoenix decoration of clearly northern manufacture (Anhui Sheng Bowuguan 1987: item 24) alongside with several locally manufactured ones (ibid. items 25–26), probably dating not before the 8th–7th centuries (see Ma Chengyuan 1987; Zhou Ya 1992), showing geometric decoration resembling that of the hard-fired pottery characteristic for this region. The same tomb also contained *zun* vessels of similarly contrasting types of decor. Local bronzes decorated in this geometric style continue in the Lower Yangzi region and in northern Zhejiang until at least the end of the fifth century BC.

The *you* and *zun* found in Hunan and Guangxi are another example of a similar survival of earlier Shang and Zhou ritual vessel types in a local cultural context, but differing from those of the Lower Yangzi region in their eccentric ornamentation style. That the two southern regional styles are in some way interconnected is, however, shown by a *zun* from Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山, Songjiang 松江 (Shanghai) (Chen Peifen 1987: 229; Ma Chengyuan 1987: 215), which combines the dense, spiky patterns of the Lower Yangzi style with the line-enclosed, jagged geometric shapes seen, e.g., on the second *zun* from Yangjia.

This "intermediary" group of Eastern Zhou period bronzes—made in non-Zhou cultural contexts south of the Yangzi, but related to ritual objects of the Shang-Zhou tradition—illustrates the complexity of diffusion processes during the Chinese Bronze Age: cultural elements originally from one place could be transformed and adapted to different sets of priorities when transplanted into another cultural context, from where they could in turn be handed on into yet another cultural environment. As far as the presence of ritual bronze vessels and bells is concerned, the Lingnan region was at the receiving end of a long and multi-stranded chain of transmission; but this may not be the whole story.

The finds from Songshan, Zhaoqing

My second example is the tomb at Songshan 松山, Zhaoqing 肇慶 (Guangdong), almost on the outskirts of Guangzhou.[17] This was a single

[17] Huang Zhanyue (1986: 427) assigns this tomb to the Early Western Han period, an assessment with which Wang and Ye (1993) concur. Both the shape of the tomb and

large tomb with an outer sarcophagus 7 x 4.5 m in size, filled with grave goods of all kinds. The bronze assemblage, while showing some stylistic changes due to the passage of time, has much in common with that from Yangjia, and it is similarly heterogeneous.

Besides 21 weapons, 40 tools, and 24 miscellaneous bronze items, which are for the most part locally-made, this tomb yielded four imported ritual bronze vessels. The silver-and-lacquer inlaid *lei* liquid container (Figure 7) is particularly spectacular, and it remains unique among known vessels of its class.[18] This is, incidentally, the latest *lei* vessel on record. Its exuberant decoration style and sophisticated technique suggest a mid-to late fourth-century date (for illustrations of vessels with similar decor see Hayashi 1988: 377), and possibly a Chu workshop. A second, fragmentary *lei* from the Songshan tomb is unornamented (no illustrations have been published).

Moreover, the tomb contained a chain-handled *hu* 壺 liquid container (Figure 8) decorated with even bands of square arrangements of raised hooks; it has a close parallel in a *hu* found in tomb no. 1 at Mashan 馬山, Jiangling 江陵 (Hubei), near the Chu capital (Hubei Jingzhou Diqu Bowuguan 1985: pl. 31; for other parallels, see Hayashi 1988: 110, figs. 107–110; for earlier antecedents, see *ibid.*: 108, figs. 82–85.) Last but not least among the northern imports at Songshan is an unusual three-footed *pan* 盤 basin (Figure 9) with flat bottom and vertical walls, decorated with a pattern of disjointed animal parts scattered without any particular order over a slightly recessed surface. This vessel, too, is typologically isolated, its form suggesting that it might have served as a brazier (*lupan* 盧盤); its decoration, on the other hand, is widely paralleled on Warring States period Chu bronzes, e.g. on the bells from Changtaiguan 長台關, Xinyang 信陽 (Henan) (Henan Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1986: 21–25). For both the *hu* and the *pan*, thus, the closest parallels are with Chu bronzes from the mid-fourth century BC. Chu artisans at this time were developing an ever more distinctive substyle within the Zhou tradition; nevertheless, the types of objects they manufactured remained eminently comparable to contemporaneous products from elsewhere

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the stylistic features of the burial goods, however, would seem to speak quite unequivocally for a pre-Qin date; the difference to early Han tombs in the region (such as those reported in Guangzhou Shi Wenwu Guanliweiyuanhui and Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan, ed., 1981) is conspicuous. The chronologies of the material features on which Huang bases his dating—bronze buckets with Southeast Asian parallels and pottery vessels—are as yet not firmly established.

[18] Liu Binhui (1991) opines that this vessel is a hybrid—north Chinese in shape and Chu in decoration—and therefore must be of local Lingnan manufacture; but this is highly implausible given the fundamental differences *vis-à-vis* those bronzes that we know were made in Lingnan during this period. The apparent incongruity noted by Liu is probably due to an exaggerated view of the contrasts between Chu and other Zhou states.

Figure 7. Lei from Songshan, Zhaoqing (Guangdong).
From: Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan et al. 1984, p. 269.

in the Zhou culture sphere. In both design and execution, the imported bronzes at Songshan may be ranked among the highest-quality products of the Eastern Zhou period found anywhere in China.

As to bronzes of the intermediate category, the Songshan tomb yielded a set of six *yongzhong* bells (Figure 10). Their ornamentation is simplified by comparison to those from Yangjia, the reason being, conceivably, that these bells were local products made in the Lingnan region. From the mid-fifth century BC onward, bells of this formerly

Figure 8. Hu from Songshan, Zhaoqing (Guangdong).
From: Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan et al. 1984, no. 84.

Figure 9. Pan from Songshan, Zhaoqing (Guangdong).
From: Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan et al. 1984, no. 85.

widespread regional type had died out in the Yangzi river system and are only seen in the Lingnan region; *yongzhong* of northern characteristics manufactured in Chu had displaced them everywhere else (see Falkenhausen 1991). Regional-style *yongzhong* had thus, by the fourth century, become a class of artifacts similar to the above-mentioned "Yue-style *ding*" at Yangjia, which likewise originated in the Bronze Age cultures along the Middle and Lower Yangzi, were introduced into the Lingnan region, and were subsequently manufactured there even after they had died out in their area of origin. Six such "Yue-style *ding*" were, incidentally, found at Songshan.

Representing a category of objects absent at Yangjia is a bronze bucket found at Songshan (Figure 11). Originating from a utilitarian ceramic type, buckets were widespread in southeastern China and may go back to the early first millennium BC (a typical hard-pottery specimen is illustrated in Zhejiang Sheng Bowuguan 1987, pl. 51). Even though they have no parallel among Shang/Zhou ritual bronzes, vessels of such a shape were made of bronze in southeastern China during Eastern Zhou times and incorporated into ritual assemblages, as attested by a specimen from tomb no. 306 at Shaoxing 紹興 in central Zhejiang (*Wenwu* 1984.1: 10–26 and pl. 4.6). The ornaments and fittings of the Shaoxing bucket are close to those of Eastern Zhou vessels of northerly provenience; by contrast, the ornamentation of the Songshan bronze

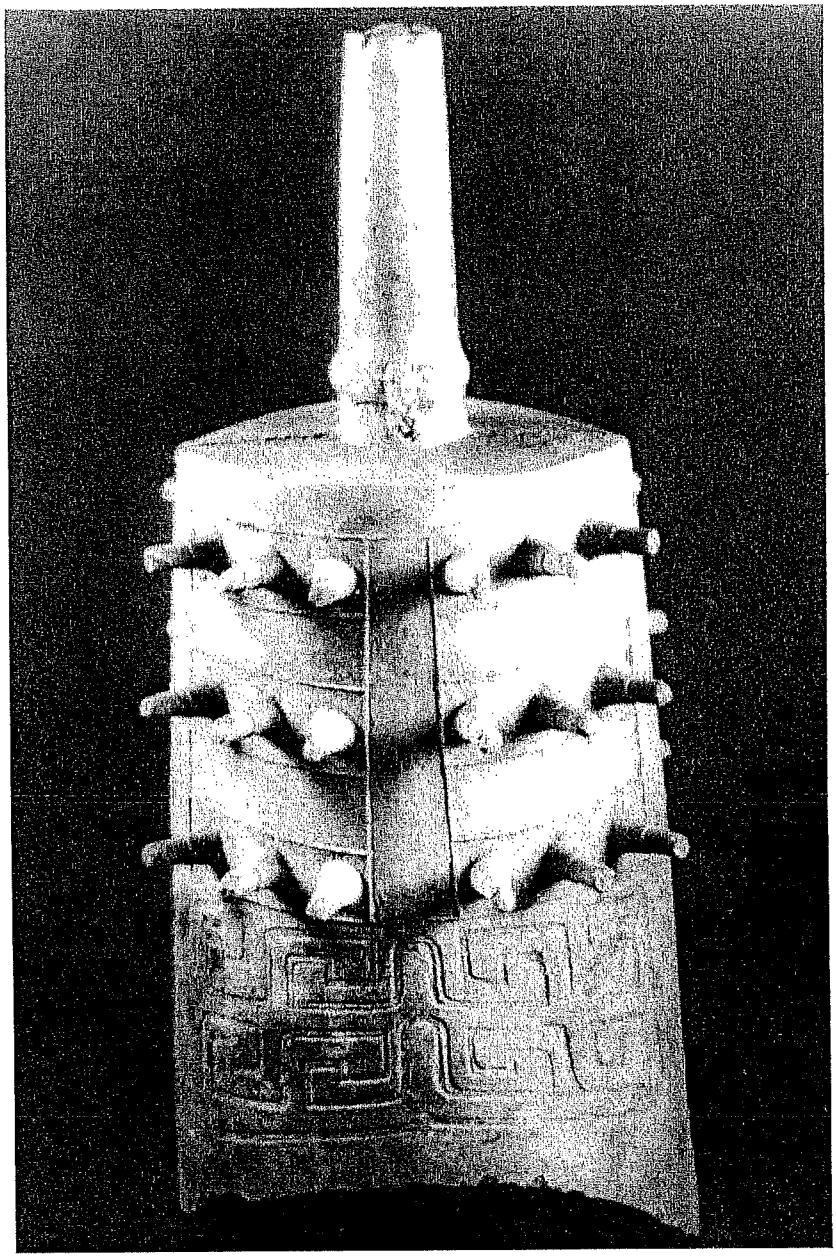

Figure 10. Yongzhong from Songshan, Zhaoqing (Guangdong).
From: Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan et al. 1984, no. 83.

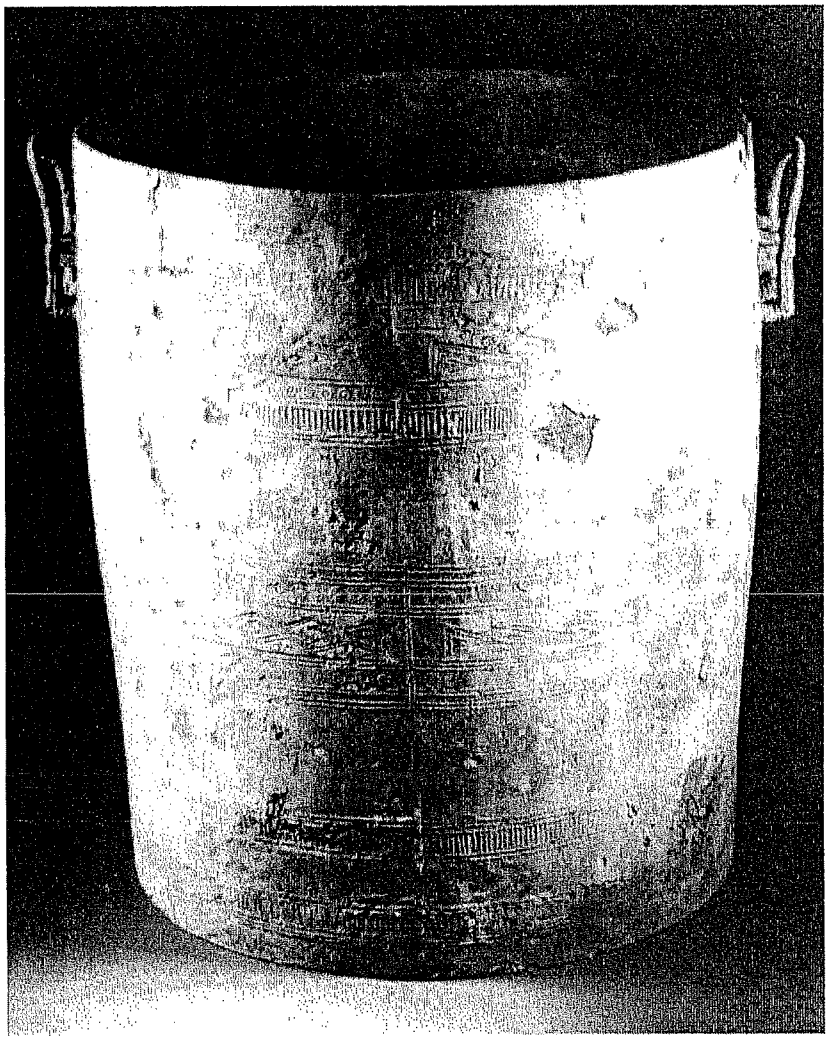

Figure 11. Bronze bucket from Songshan, Zhaoqing (Guangdong).
From: Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan et al. 1984, no. 86.

bucket is of a distinctly regional character, reminding of Southeast Asian (Dongso'n) bronze styles.

The decoration of the Songshan bronze bucket has its closest parallel in that of the well-known bronze drums, a type of musical instrument that probably originated in the area of present-day Yunnan during the middle of the first millennium BC (Jiang Tingyu 1982; Tong Enzheng 1990: 163–199), and soon became widespread all throughout the south-

ern border provinces of China and Southeast Asia. The geometric ornamentation on these bronzes bears some resemblance to that of contemporary high-fired pottery from the same area. In the Lingnan region, such southern traits, which signalize links to such areas as western Guangxi, Guizhou, Yunnan, northern Vietnam, and further afield in Southeast Asia, appear to be a new phenomenon in the time of the Songshan tomb (see Huang Zengqing 1985).

Interpretation

What can the bronze assemblages from these two tombs tell us about their owners? What, in particular, was the role of imported bronzes?

It bears emphasis, first of all, that bronze assemblages in Lingnan tombs are extremely different from those in contemporaneous Zhou contexts (see also Qu Jiafa 1991: 137). The numbers of ritual vessels and bells in Lingnan contexts are quite small (for vessels, the maximum number is five; see Table 2), contrasting with the far wealthier assemblages of many aristocratic tombs in the states of the Zhou league. Zhou-type aristocratic tombs are characterized, furthermore, by an emphasis on sumptuary distinctions that were epitomized by sets of tripods, grain-offering vessels, and bells; the Lingnan tomb assemblages do not seem to fall into such categories.[19]

In the north, the bronzes were used in ceremonies and banquets associated with the ancestral cult—ritual activities about which we have a certain idea from extant textual sources; their altar-like display in tombs reflect such usage. From the assemblages of vessels found in the Lingnan élite tombs, on the other hand, it seems highly unlikely that the southern populations followed similar rituals. Even if we include into our consideration vessels made of non-bronze materials found in the same contexts, the containers fail to constitute anything like the Zhou standard sets. Bronze vessels of northern types are always single items, even when there is more than one specimen of the same class in one tomb. All this indicates that the significance and function of such vessels were probably reinterpreted as they entered into their Lingnan contexts.

[19] Wang and Ye (1993: 91) express a healthy skepticism about attempts to impose sumptuary distinctions on Lingnan élite tombs based on the numbers of *ding* (as proposed, e.g., by Qiu Licheng 1984); they point out that only 13 out of 37 bronze-vessel yielding tombs in Guangdong have any *ding* at all (counting Yue-style *ding*); unlike ritual vessels in northern contexts, the *ding* found in Lingnan tombs show traces of use over fire; the numbers of *ding* do not correspond to the constellations of burial chambers and inner coffins; and a number of tombs without any *ding* are considerably richer than some of the tombs that do contain *ding*.

Not only are the ritual vessels found in Lingnan tombs single items, but their typological variety is quite limited, a far cry from the many different classes of bronzes seen in Zhou aristocratic contexts. In particular, the principal meat and grain offering vessels central to the northern assemblages are either deemphasized (in the case of the meat-offering *ding*) or entirely lacking (in the case of grain-offering vessels such as *gui* 簋, *dou* 豆, *dui* 敦, or the vessels conventionally designated as *fu* 簠). Instead, we note (in Table 2) a clear typological preference for liquid containers and water basins, which in shape and usage resembled the kinds of ceramic vessels that were indigenous to the area. The minute distinctions between different types of vessels (e.g. between *lei* and *yufou*), which in northern contexts denoted specific differences in their usage for the preparation, storage, and ritual consumption of liquids, were quite possibly of no concern to southerners as long as imported bronze vessels of a given shape could be used as functional equivalents of long-established ceramic types (cf. Falkenhausen 2001).

The comparison with local Lingnan ceramics is instructive. Pottery found at Bronze Age sites in the area generally falls into two main categories: bowls and jars made of a hard-fired stoneware decorated with stamped geometric ornaments and sometimes glazed, and pots and other utilitarian items made of low-fired earthenware. Due to its far more resource-consuming manufacture, the former kind, though quite common both at habitation sites and in tombs, may be assumed to have commanded higher prestige than the latter, and it may have enjoyed a more prominent position in symbolically charged contexts such as rituals. It is perhaps no accident, then, that the imported bronze liquid containers (the *yufou* from Yanjia, the *lei* and *hu* from Songshan) from the north generally resemble vessels that belong to this more prestigious class of ceramics; they may have been used in similar functions. Similarly, the single northern *ding* found at Yangjia was quite probably assimilated in its function to "Yue-style" tripods, and would have been used together with the four specimens of the latter with which it was found in association.

Such reinterpretation of alien objects within an indigenous cultural environment calls to mind parallels in modern Third World contexts, where self-assured recipients of supposedly "advanced" equipment from abroad often do not import wholesale the behavioral patterns associated with its use, incorporating it instead in a selective way so as to fit the local people's own culturally conditioned concerns and purposes (Sahlins 1992; Wolf 1982). This sort of thing has been going on throughout history in situations where the political and economic relations between local populations and the centers of advanced civilizations were sufficiently tenuous as to preclude wholesale cultural absorption. If the

parallel is a valid one, it should serve to caution us even further against stipulating too intimate a relationship between the Lingnan region and areas further north during the pre-Qin period.

The impact of imported ritual paraphernalia on the Lingnan cultural scene during the late Bronze Age must instead be discussed, above all, in local terms. In the hands of the local élite owners, Zhou-manufactured ritual vessels undoubtedly had enormous importance as items of prestige, and we may assume that they were in high demand. Possession of such imported luxury objects was a way of flaunting one's riches and also, and perhaps more importantly, one's status and one's prestigious contacts (Appadurai, ed. 1986). Here one may draw an analogy to late prehistoric Central Europe, like the Lingnan region an area on the margins of a long-established and highly developed state-level civilization. In an important archaeological study on that region's contacts with the Mediterranean world, Peter Wells (1980) has pointed out that portions of the élite manipulated access to and possession of imported luxury goods in asserting their superiority over rival contenders to power, in a process leading to significantly increased political centralization. Similar processes may have been ongoing in the Lingnan region just prior to the Qin conquest (Wang and Ye 1993; Allard 1994; von Dewall 1998). Of course, state-level social organization never did emerge locally but was imposed onto the Lingnan area from the outside; we do not know to what extent the local élites may have been involved in that process.

It is difficult from presently available material to glean details about how imported material objects were manipulated in the Lingnan region during the time before the area's incorporation into the Qin empire. One may, nevertheless, indulge in some speculation. It is reasonable to assume, for instance, that the imported prestige items visually manifest, on the part of the Lingnan élites, some level of awareness of, and interest in, their powerful northern neighbors. It is likely that the inhabitants of the Lingnan region were far more aware of the Zhou sphere and its culture than vice versa. Their exposure to northern culture may not have been limited to material objects. Conceivably, the Qin conquest was facilitated by the latter's longstanding awareness of northern habits. It cannot be excluded that, from a northern point of view, trade in luxury objects to the Lingnan region was engaged in less with a commercial aim in mind than with the idea of attracting, if not coopting or subverting, the local élites. This would, of course, presuppose a model of exchange in which (at least on the "northern" side) the state or its agents played a major role.

In this connection, we may do well to remember K. C. Chang's (1975) characterization of ancient trade as an essentially political activity. This was especially true in Bronze Age China, where long-distance exchange

of luxury items was virtually always couched in terms of tribute offerings and diplomatic gifts. Whether the Lingnan locals had much to give in return for prestige items from their northern neighbors is open to debate; Allard (1994: 313 and 321), based on much later sources (see also Schafer 1967), enumerates a variety of exotic goods that he thinks were coveted by the Chu aristocracy—ivory, cinnamon, pearls, peacock feathers, and rhinoceros horn. The iconoclastic Qu Jiafa (1991), by contrast, implies that the level of material and political development of the Lingnan area before the Qin conquest was too low to produce the kind of surplus needed for sustained commercial trade. But one must remember that, in the institutionalized networks of ceremonial exchange prevalent throughout much of the Chinese Bronze Age, as well as later on, exchange often had no pretension of being symmetrical. The "tribute" items offered up by outside rulers in the expectation of lavish presents from the dynastic centers were often merely symbolic in nature (see Barfield 1989).

As to the Lingnan chiefs, we cannot tell exactly how they obtained their bronzes, and how they would have been integrated into ritualized patterns of exchange. In all likelihood, networks of exchange were complex, and individuals or groups of people living in the areas between Lingnan and the dynastic centers in north China (the latter category of course including Chu) played a crucial role in them. The manifold cultural affiliations of the bronzes encourage us to keep an open mind about the possible avenues through which extraneous objects reached the Lingnan region, and the haphazardness and eclecticism of the bronze assemblages would suggest that their Lingnan owners were not strongly committed to one particular source of imports (such as Chu). Moreover, their evident non-adherence to Zhou ritual practices bespeaks a certain cultural distance, implying (from the northern point of view) lowness of status. Most probably, Lingnan chiefs were not regarded by their northern trading partners as being, socially, on a par with rulers or aristocrats from states that were members of the Zhou alliance.

The sets of bells found in the Lingnan tombs may illustrate this situation. The contrast between them and the late Eastern Zhou period chimes found in the Lower Yangzi area is instructive. As I have shown elsewhere (Falkenhausen 1991), Chu-manufactured bells—i.e. chimed sets of bells in the Zhou manner showing the characteristic Chu ornamentation style—became standard throughout much of the Yangzi river basin from the mid-sixth century BC onward. In Chu, as elsewhere in the Zhou culture sphere, chime-bells were restricted by sumptuary laws to members of the higher echelons of the aristocracy. The rulers of southern polities such as Xu and Wu, which were, at that time, gradually developing into Zhou-style aristocratic states, received

Chu-style bells as diplomatic gifts symbolizing their political alliance with Chu; this process can be substantiated both by inscriptions and by stylistic analysis. By contrast, the continued appearance of non-Chu regional-style bells in Lingnan contexts may signify that the local potentates of that region lacked the ritual-political standing that would have made them eligible for such gifts. Whatever the local chieftains had to offer their political partners up north may have been good enough to secure acquisition of sundry individual vessels—selected, it seems, to fit the Lingnan ceramic assemblages—but not of more sophisticated, high-status objects such as bells. Eager to possess the status trappings of Zhou aristocrats without possibly fully comprehending their significance, and yet incapable of manufacturing bells of the same level of quality, the Lingnan chieftains helped themselves as best they could by continuing to patronize the manufacture of the older, regional types of bells. Although superficially similar to Chu bells, these were technologically inferior and probably useless as musical instruments. What seems to have mattered was the possession and display of such bells, rather than their use in musical performance; or, if they were played, it was probably as a sort of percussion accompaniment to local music. It seems extremely unlikely that Zhou-type ritual music and the complex theory surrounding it would have been known in the Lingnan area. The case may have been similar, *mutatis mutandis*, with other Zhou items that had reached the Far South.

Imported objects of probable Chu manufacture were found both at Yangjia and at Songshan. They may be archaeological evidence of some sort of Chu contact; but as we have seen, these imports are firmly embedded into local cultural contexts, and they are commingled with other objects of non-Chu (i.e. non-Zhou) derivation. Pervasive adherence to local (or "Yue") traditions persists throughout the time of the supposed Chu dominance, and beyond. The spread of Chu-manufactured luxury items is a phenomenon that can be traced at the élite level throughout the southern part of China during the Warring States period. The dazzling Chu imports at Songshan may be viewed as part of such a general trend, which may have more to do with the ongoing expansion of exchange networks than with issues of territoriality.

Epilogue: Local survivals in early Han tombs.

The Qin conquest of Lingnan triggered the first significant wave of immigration from the north, thus initiating cultural changes that proved to be of lasting impact. Archaeological finds suggest, nevertheless, that the cultural transformation of the Lingnan region after 219 BC, rather

than being marked by sudden change, continued to be gradual, and the ethnically diverse local élites of the Lingnan region may well have continued to flourish (Liu Xiaomin 1999). Until well into the Han period, objects with strong regional characteristics were buried in tombs, even those of the immigrant élite.

After the founding of the Han empire in 206 BC, the region reverted to de-facto independence for 95 years under a local dynasty founded by Zhao Tuo 趙陀, a Han general who was installed in what is now Guangzhou as the king (and sometimes emperor) of Nanyue. The extraordinarily rich tomb of Zhao Mo 趙眜, the second king of Nanyue (d. ca. 125 BC), was excavated in 1984 at Xianggangshan 象岡山 in downtown Guangzhou (Guangzhou Shi Wenwu Guanliweiyuanhui et al. 1991, Prüch [ed.] 1998). With its multi-chambered stone architecture, it resembles contemporaneous high-status tombs in north China; its furnishings reflect the sumptuary ranking system as well as the religious beliefs current in the Han empire. Two large tombs of similar date, but with wooden tomb-chambers and thus of somewhat lower rank, were excavated in 1976 at Luobowan 羅泊灣, Gui Xian 貴縣 (Guangxi) (Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Bowuguan 1988); their unknown occupants may also have been involved in the administration of the southern territories.

Even though the tombs at Xianggangshan and Luobowan are in many ways typical high-status Western Han tombs, their grave goods show a mix of cultural elements in some respects comparable to those seen locally in élite tombs of pre-Qin times (Li Longzhang 1996). Besides a large number of ceramic, jade, lacquer, and bronze objects with close parallels in early Han contexts in the north, objects of southeastern lineage were also found. Such objects are particularly plentiful among the bronzes found in the two tombs, perhaps indicating that Lingnan bronze workshops founded in pre-Qin times continued to operate into the Han period. Bronzes of regional characteristics include large numbers of "Yue-style *ding*," (17 at Xianggangshan, 3 at Luobowan) as well as bronze buckets featuring the same ornaments as the specimen from Songshan (9 at Xianggangshan, 3 at Luobowan, where they occur in conjunction with similarly decorated bronze drums). Other distinctive musical instruments found at Luobowan include a "sheep's horn loop-bell" (*yangjiao-niuzhong* 羊角紐鍾), a type of bell found only in extreme southern China and in Vietnam (Jiang Tingyu 1984); as well as a bronze gong, another kind of musical instrument far more characteristic of Southeast Asian than of early Chinese musical traditions. The Xianggangshan tomb, besides two chimes of Zhou-style musical bells (*niuzhong* 紐鍾), yielded a set of *goudiao* 句鑃 bells, dated by inscription to 129 BC. *Goudiao* are a regional type of chime-bells current three centuries

earlier in the Lower Yangzi region, where they were superseded by Chu-made bells during the fifth century BC; earlier examples are linked by inscription to the states of Wu and Yue, and—in a parallel to processes noted earlier—they seem to have continued to be manufactured in the Lingnan area after their demise in their original area of origin.[20]

Items such as these attest to the survival of regional traditions even as a new unified "national" culture was gradually emerging under Imperial rule. Regional cultural continuities are visible not only at the highest level represented by the Xianggangshan and Luobowan tombs, but also at numerous Han dynasty tombs in the Guangzhou area, whose masters were may have been either immigrant northerners or assimilated individuals of local descent; here, as well, "Yue-style *ding*" of various subtypes are encountered with some frequency (Guangzhou Shi Wenwu Guanliweiyuanhui and Guangdong Sheng Bowuguan 1981, vol. 2: pls. 29.5–6, 63.2, and 166.1). Different from conditions during pre-Qin times, local Lingnan elements were now drawn into the framework of generalized Han culture; cultural traits of non-local origin are now predominant in Lingnan archaeological contexts, even among objects that were clearly manufactured locally, such as funerary ceramics. (Given that the vast majority of reported finds is from the Guangzhou metropolitan area, it remains to be seen whether the penetration of northern-derived Han culture was equally strong and speedy everywhere throughout the region; future investigations in remoter areas may conceivably reveal pockets of more strongly pronounced regionalism [cf. He Gang 1989]).

Whereas luxury items imported from the Shang and Zhou realm had been status-defining exotica to the local élites during pre-Qin times, objects from that part of China had, by the second century BC, come to define the norm of material culture in the Lingnan region—at least around Guangzhou. The Western Han inhabitants of Lingnan had highly-valued foreign things of their own: objects imported from overseas, reflecting the fact that during this time, Guangzhou (then known as Panyu 番禺) became important for the first time as a port of long-distance overseas trade. A prominent instance of such an object is a small multi-lobed silver box of Indian or Persian manufacture found in the tomb of the king of Nanyue (Figure 12). Serving as a medicine-container, this box had been fitted in China with a bronze stand and three nobs on the cover, to which, judging from a similar box found in the early Han princely tomb at Wotuocun 窩托村, Linzi 臨淄 (Shandong 山東) (*Kaogu Xuebao* 1985.2: 258 and pl. 14.3; Wenhuabu Wenwuju and Gugong Bowuyuan 1987: 305; Prüch [ed.] 1998: no. 55), reclining

[20] The Xianggangshan bells were musically viable; their tone distributions are studied in Falkenhausen and Rossing 1995.

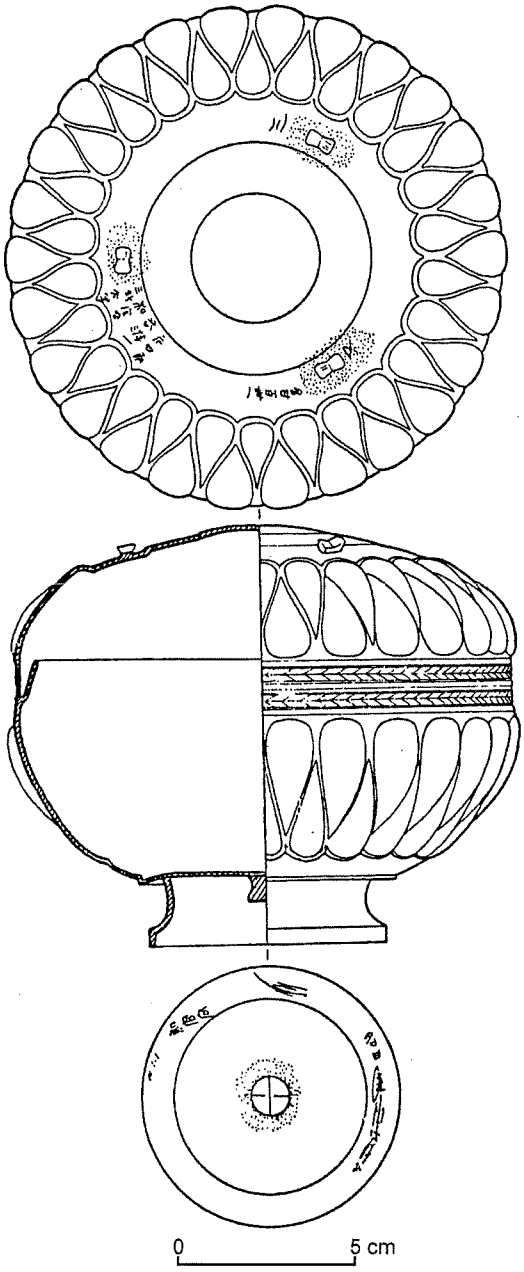

Figure 12. Silver box from the tomb of Zhao Mo, king of Nanyue, at Xianggangshan, Guangzhou (Guangdong). From: Guangzhou Shi Wenwu Guanliweiyuanhui *et al.*, vol. 1: 209, fig. 138.

animal-shaped bronze ornaments had probably once been attached. Evidently, these bronze attachments had been added to the silver bowl in order to assimilate the foreign silver box to more common Chinese vessel types current during Zhou and Han times, such as stemmed bowls (*dou*) and *ding* tripods with animal-ornamented covers. This accomodation of imported foreign prestige objects to the Han cultural environment is quite comparable to earlier practices *vis-à-vis* objects from the Zhou culture area imported into the Lingnan region.

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