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A Study of the Cultural Meaning of Zhuang's Frog Festival in Guangxi, China

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Abstract

The frog festival is a cultural large-scale folk activity, centered on frog worship of the Zhuang ethnic group, which mainly live in Guangxi, China. Now the Zhuang ethnic group has the largest population of all the ethnic groups in China. Therefore their culture is an important part of Chinese civilization. Although there were some Chinese scholars studied the frog festival, but I have not found anyone studied it through the cultural meaning of frog worship for promote reproduction yet. This document-based research collect data from ancient document (the Epic of Buluotuo), archeological artifacts and other concerned archaeological research.

The study concluded that the Frog Festival is celebrated annually by the Zhuang in Guangxi, China during the first month of the lunar calendar; the tradition has been handed down through generations of Zhuang. The cultural meaning of this festival, which focuses on 2 main objectives: (1) Frog Worship for rain and to a bountiful harvest, since the Zhuang significant ways of living is rice planting on seasonal rain. When the dry occurs, they must held a ritual as frog worship (2) Frog Worship for reproduction; historically the population and reproduction of the Zhuang had a low growth rate. The rituals of frog worship for increase their population. Importantly they hoped that the Zhuang population could have the ability to reproduce just as well as the frogs.

Keywords: Frog Festival, Zhuang Ethnic Group, Worship, Rain and Reproduction

Introduction

The Zhuang ethnic group mainly live in provinces of Guangxi, Yunnan, Guangdong, Hunan, Guizhou and Sichuan. Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region has the largest population of Zhuang people. In the year 2001, there were 17 million people. Nowadays the Zhuang has the largest population among all the 55 official minority groups in China.

As many other nationalities, the Zhuang people also have totems, worshipping the sun, the moon, thunder, snakes, dogs, tigers, and so on. Frogs are also one of their totems. Frogs were the original totems of the Zhuang ethnic group. Some Zhuang people consider frog as divinity, believing that it is “Prince of the Thunder King” and is dispatched to the world as an angel. Even now, some Zhuang people still consider the frog to be a god. Therefore many bronze drums with three-dimensional frogs made by the ancient Zhuang people were founded today.

The Zhuang people love and respect frog very much. They have the frog-worshipping rite. “Ma Guai” is a local dialect, referring to “frog”. “Ma Guai Festival”, which is also called “Frog Festival” .

Since the Zhuang people has a comparably large population in China, so its culture is an important part of Chinese civilization. The Zhuang have a unique lifestyle, including ethnic costumes, folk singing and dancing, special cuisine and indigenous religions. All these cultural elements can be studied in “The Frog Festival”. The cultural meaning is relating to the habits, traditions, beliefs and social behavior of a society. The rituals originated from the human beliefs and religion. The frog festival covers most aspects of the characteristic culture of Zhuang people, which is still less known, but should not be neglected. Therefore Frog Festival of Zhuang ethnic group has been included as one of China’s national intangible cultural heritages since 2005.

Literature Review

Since the 1980s, several fruitful lines of academic inquiry have been conducted, in China, into the Frog Festival of the Zhuang in Guangxi. Yu Shijie, in his paper “Frog Worship of the Zhuang ethnic group” (壮族的青蛙崇拜) writes that “the Zhuang’s frog worship first manifested itself as a festival.” The Frog Festival continues to be celebrated in parts of Guangxi including Nandan, Donglan, Tian’e, Bama, Fengshan and Hechi in the Hongshui River basin. The Frog Festival is held every year during the first month of the lunar calendar, and lasts from three to five days for a short festival and up to a lunar month for along one. Starting at the beginning of the lunar year, villagers of all ages hunt for frogs in the rice fields; the first person to find one is considered the luckiest person for the year.

The second step is to worship the frogs. Some people place them into a well-crafted wooden coffin. The coffin is decorated with colored paper and carried with yokes by two young men to a temple of pavilion outside the village. In the evening, people of all ages guard the frogs; elders beat copper drums whilst young people participate in a frog dance; they all sing folk songs, continuing through the night.

The third step is to travel round the village with the frogs. On subsequent days young men and women carry the coffin of frogs round the village whilst beating drums and striking gongs. They stop in front of each house to sing the Maguai Song (蚂拐歌) and bless the occupants and wish them good luck and fortune. The householders are obligated to return the favour with rice, 'zongzi' (rice wrapped in pyramid-shaped reeds or bamboo), rice cakes, meat; painted eggs will be offered to the frogs.

The fourth and last step is the burial of the frogs. In the early morning on a selected day, a bamboo pole is set up to hang colorful flags. At an auspicious time, the people will begin beating their drums, lighting firecrackers and worshipping the frogs. Young people wear different kinds of masks and commence the Frog Dance, imitating the movements of frogs. Afterwards, people of all ages gather to carry the coffin containing the frogs while singing the Maguai Song. Villagers walk once around a cave or rice field outside the village and select a location for the coffin to be buried. Prior to burial the coffin from the previous year is recovered and opened in order to examine the color of the bones which enabling a prediction of the forthcoming harvest. "This form of sacrificial frog worship has slowly changed over time and has developed into a form of prayer for rain and celebration for pleasure" (Yu, 1989, pp. 313-315, 320).

Li Fuqiang of the Guangxi Institute of Nationalities states: "The worship rituals in three major districts of Guangxi – Donglan, Nandan and Tian'e – are similar not only in terms of time and ceremonial practice, but also extremely similar in procedure and content. According to the legend of the rituals, the frogs are viewed by the Zhuang as envoys of the gods of rain and thunder in the realm of humans. If someone wishes to gain favorable weather for a bountiful harvest, then they must demonstrate respect by worshipping them" (Li, 1998, pp. 82, 84).

Pan Yuan and Huang Jiaxue state that: "While the ancestors were toiling the rice fields they were worried about the sun and the rain. They became conscious of the fact that the frogs would always begin croaking when it began to rain. They took the phenomenon "The frogs croak, the rain has come" as meaning that the frogs are able to call upon the gods for wind and rain. The Zhuang viewed the frogs as children of the god of thunder and also thought that they were supernatural beings that could pray for rain and as such they were also seen as gods" (Pan & Huang, 2016, p. 57).

Huang Yipeng states that: In the area of the river basin of the Hongshui River: Hechi, Donglan, Tian'e, there is a traditional dance passed on called Maguaiwu (蚂拐舞). Maguaiwu is a form of prayer dating back to primitive society, it is used to pray for a bountiful harvest throughout the year; it is a dance for smooth and unhindered rain. The Zhuang in ancient times hoped that by sacrificing frogs they would be able to have smooth and unhindered rainfall (Huang, 2018).

Wei Mengqi states that: "In early times the Zhuang worshiped totems, the objects of worship were toads; it was only after reaching agricultural society that frog totems became objects of worship. This was caused mainly by the demand for water in an agricultural society" (Wei, 2018, p. 68). Li lan states that: "Zhuang folktales state that the Zhuang people thought frogs were the sons and daughters of the god of thunder, and that the god of thunder had sent them to the human realm as "emissaries of rain". The reason for frog worship was to pray for rain, and prepare the rice fields for agricultural farming" (Li, 2000, p. 93).

Qin Naichang states that: "The mural art on the cliffs near the Zuojiang river basin display a scene of people frog dancing, imitating the movements of frogs. This is yet another case of the descendants of the Zhuang worshipping frogs in order to pray for rain. It's origins stem from rice cultivation and it is a form and exemplification of "Na Culture" (Qin, 2012, p. 13). 'Na' means 'field and here refers to cultivation.

In summary, Chinese academics have conducted studies on frog worship and its cultural significance within the Zhuang of Guangxi; the ideology and values of frog totem worship; research on agriculture and the mural art on the cliffs near the Zuojiang river basin; and the dances imitating of frog movements. All researchers generally accept that the reason for frog worship is to pray for rain, and to deter drought in order to procure enough rain for a smooth and successful harvest; however, the author believes that the frog worship by the ancestors of the Zhuang in Guangxi derives from their unique philosophy and from their environment; therefore, frog worship originated to enable the Zhuang ethnic group to pray for large families whilst also praying for rain and a bountiful harvest. This paper attempts to utilize archaeology, archeological artifacts, historical documentation, ethnology and the folktale poem The Epic of Buluotuo (布洛陀史诗), and other sources to conduct research and to facilitate discussion and dialogue by specialists in this field.

Research Objectives

To study the cultural meaning of Zhuang's frog festival in Guangxi, China in term of

1. Frog worship for rain
2. Frog worship for reproduction

Research Methodology

The research methodology implemented was the documentary research by content analysis from historical material, i.e. ancient Chinese documents (the Epic of Buluotuo), archeological artifacts, ethnological research and ancient Zhuang poems. The results will be presented as a descriptive method.

The main documents were used for this study:

1. The Epic of Buluotuo: by Professor Han Jiaquan and his team, printed in 2012

The Epic of Buluotuo is a fresh collection based on the Creation stories from Buluotuo Scripture and the Photocopies and Annotation of Mo Scripture of the Zhuang Buluotou. The Epic includes 11 chapters, namely, Creation of Heaven and Earth, Creation of Human Beings, Creation of the myriad Creatures, Origins of Rice, System and Humanization, Fighting against Natural Disaster, Doenglingz's Awakening, Prince Cojvuengz and Prince Hanquengz, Reconciliation, Redeeming of Lost Souls, Toast-Offering and Blessing-Entreating. In the seventh century AD, the Zhuang people recorded the Epic of Buluotuo with the square Chinese characters. At the end of 1970 and 1980, Guangxi province, China collected the Epic of Buluotuo from the Mo Scripture of the Zhuang, and in 1991 the Guangxi People's Publishing House bound the book into volumes and published it in Zhuang, Chinese and Phonetic. In 2008, Professor Han Jiaquan and his team at Guangxi Baise University began to translate the Epic of Buluotuo into English, and in 2012, Guangxi People's Publishing House published the book in Zhuang, Chinese, English and Phonetic. I chose this book as a research material because the Epic of Buluotuo is the precious record of Zhuang ethnic group. It has importance of cultural, historical and academic value.

2. The book of "Cultural theory of fertility worship" by Mr. Zhao Guohua

Mr. Zhao Guohua is a researcher at the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. His research focuses on the issue of fertility worship. He conducted research on the fish-patterned faience pottery excavated from the Banpo cultural site in China, this is the first basic pattern of fertility worship in the socio-cultural remnants of the matriarchal clans. Subsequently, he also studied the second breeding cult frog pattern in the social and cultural remnants of the matriarchal clan in China. This book was published in 1990 by the China Social Sciences Press. His academic works are widely recognized in China.

3. The book of "Ancestors" by Professor Yi Zhongtian

Prof. Yi Zhongtian taught ancient Chinese literature at Wuhan University and Xizmen University. He did an in-depth study of ancient Chinese reproductive cultural symbol, and he believed that woman's cultural codes were fish, frogs, moon and earth. His research results are valuable. His book was published in 2013 by Zhejiang Literature and Art Publishing House. I quote the scholarly ideas from this book.

Results

Frog Festivals are held by the Zhuang ethnic group in Guangxi every year during the first month of the lunar calendar. They were celebrated by the ancestors of the Zhuang ethnic group in order to promote reproduction and sustain the population. Their objective was that they would be able to reproduce as well as frogs to which end they held frog-worship ceremonies. Modern frog-worship ceremonies of the Zhuang transformed into a ceremony to invoke rainfall and pray for bountiful harvests.

Definitions and Meanings of 'Reproduction Worship'

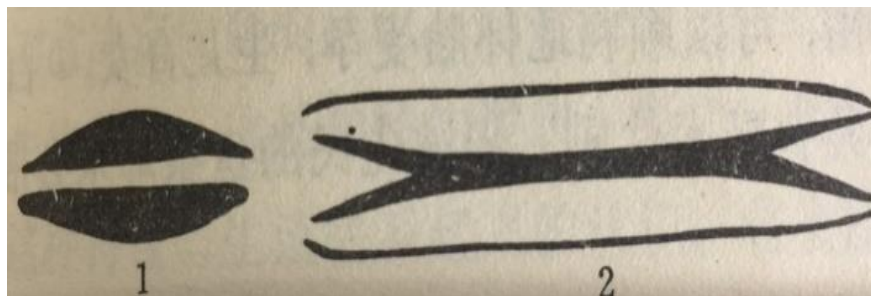
Reproduction worship is found in many parts of the world, typically in indigenous societies. The rituals of reproduction worship are passed from generation to generation. Animals and nature are worshiped in a call for fertility to be transferred to people so that ethnic groups may continue and prosper.

In the 1950s pottery bearing drawings of fish was excavated at the Banpo neolithic site in Xi'an, China; fish patterns, amongst others, are associated with matriarchal ethnic groups. Zhao Guohua, a member of the Chinese Social Science Academy Institute states: "The ancestors of the Banpo ethnic group created refined colored pottery, and specifically drew fish drawings on them in order to conduct fish worship. It may be inferred upon inspection, that the Banpo ancestors worshiped fish, however, after closer analysis it may be found that the fish are implemented as a symbolization of yoni [female reproductive organs], and reproduction worship, with the intention of praying for the prosperity of repopulation" (Zhao, 1990, p. 107). Each item of pottery bears an outline drawing of two fish; for Zhao Guohua, the drawings also resemble yoni; the meaning is that fish can have many offspring; hunter gatherer societies were thus able to use fish to symbolize the womb. This was convenient for the ancestors of the hunting and gathering societies as they could utilize fish to symbolize the female womb. Under the influence of panpsychism [plurality of individual psychic beings], the Banpo people's beliefs and practices are describes thus: "They worshiped fish in the hope of increasing reproduction through the transfer of the potent reproduction of fish to themselves; fish worship was one kind ceremony employed to invoke increased fertility. To aid their fish worship, the Banpo utilised meticulously refined, coloured, devotional pottery." (Zhao, 1990, p. 140).



Source Zhao Guohua, Discussions on reproduction worship and culture (生殖崇拜文化论), p. 46

Figure 1 Fish patterns as abstract symbolisation of female yoni



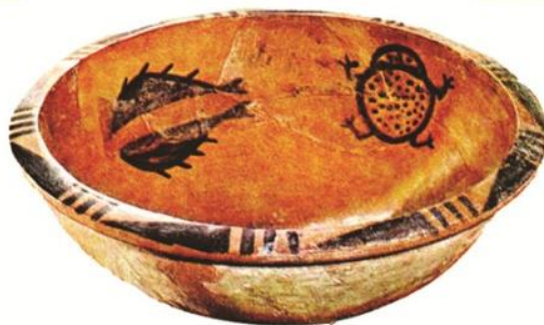
Source Zhao Guohua, Discussions on reproduction worship and culture (生殖崇拜文化论), p.169

Figure 2 Fish patterns as abstract symbolisation of female yoni

Fish drawings were the first type of drawing created by ancient matriarchal societies; frog and toad drawings came later. Coloured pottery excavated at Miaodigou, Shan county, Henan in 1956-7 is decorated with drawings of frogs with round bellies covered in black dots; coloured pottery bowls excavated at Jiangzhai, Lintong county, Shaanxi are illustrated with drawings of symmetrical fish and frogs with round bellies covered in black dots (Blog.sina.com.cn).

“The frogs’ bellies appears to indicate that the frogs are pregnant; by extension, the frogs’ reproductive capabilities are very potent and they will produce many offspring; during a single night of spring rain they are able to give birth to many eggs. The black dots found on the patterns excavated at Jiangzhai and Miaodigou both indicate many offspring. The frog was utilized by Neolithic societies to symbolise reproductive organs and pregnancy (the belly).” (Zhao, 1990, pp. 181-182) Drawing on philology, folklore, and archaeology for analysis, Professor Yi Zhongtian states: “Nuwa is the frog goddess of reproduction [in Chinese culture]. The moonlight

represents the female and her reproductive capability; thus, the first appearance of a female culture code comprises fish, frogs, the moon and the earth" (Yi, 2013, pp. 37, 42).



Source blog.com.cn/s/blog_5lec9abf0102wq8m.html

Figure 3 Symetrical fish and frog patterns found on pottery excavated from Jiangzhai, Lintong, Shaanxi.



Source blog.com.cn/s/blog_5lec9abf0102wq8m.html

Figure 4 Frog with large belly and round dotted patterns found on pottery excavated from Miaodigou, Shaanxi County, Henan Province.

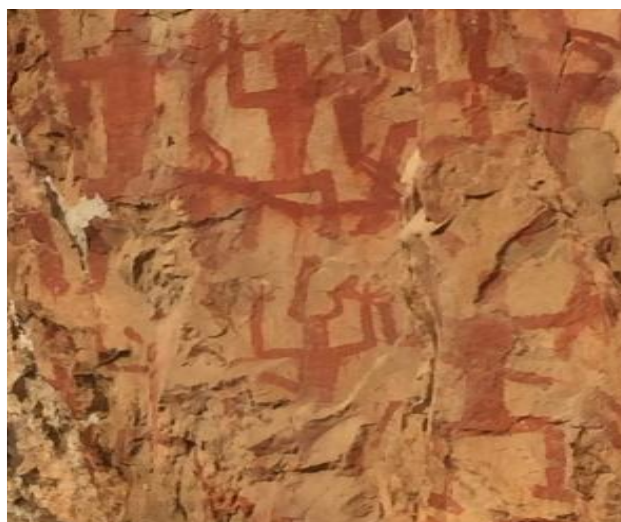
Fertility worship can be shown to be present in all indigenous societies. Worship of plants and animals with high rates of fertility was believed to promote reproduction.

The fish decorations found at Banpo are amongst the earliest evidence of a matriarchal society; likewise, frog and toad patterns on Jiangzhai pottery are a later manifestation of reproduction worship in a matriarchal society. Fish predate frog drawings on ancient pottery illustrating that worship of yoni focuses on pregnancy and the womb and extended understanding of the functions and processes of reproduction in women in ancient societies (Zhao, 1990, p. 182).

Guangxi Zhuang Frog Worship Culture: Significance of Reproduction

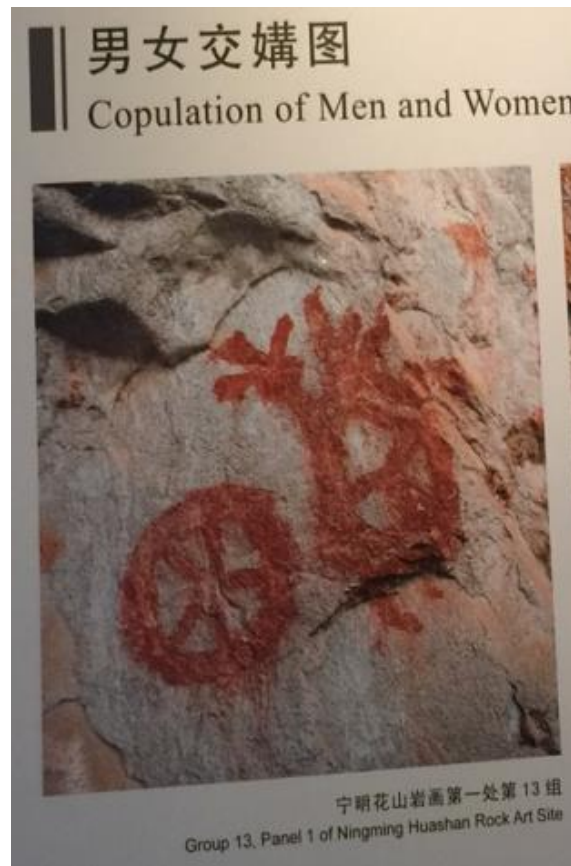
Ancient societies were initially matriarchal, gradually transforming to patriarchal. “The gods and people depicted in legends are cultural icons and symbols, and are the pictographs of ancient history” (Yi, 2013, p. 158). In ancient Chinese culture, both fish and frogs are generally accepted by specialists and academics as symbolization of female fertility worship. The Frog Festival otherwise known as the Maguai Festival is still celebrated in areas near the Hongshui river basin such as Guangxi’s Nandan, Tian’e, Bama, Fengshan, Hechi; and remains a major location where reproductive worship culture and heritage continues to exist.

There are also mural paintings on the cliffs near the Zuojiang River in southern Guangxi; amongst the best known are those Mt. Mingjiang in Ningming County which are 50 metres tall, 170 metres wide, and have up to 1,300 images. Most of the human figures are naked, and virtually all of them are posed like frogs jumping and leaping with joy. It can be seen that “The mural paintings on the Zuojiang cliff illustrate the fertility worship and frog sacrifice of the ancient Zhuang people. The fertility worship of the ancient Zhuang gradually disappeared as civilization encroached; however, derivatives of fertility worship still exist.” (Zhao, 1990, p. 207). Fertility worship was performed by the ancient Zhuang people when reproductive capabilities were extremely low, and the natural conditions for survivability and racial reproduction were harsh. Guangxi’s climate is subtropical with high of rainfall; however, due to environmental factors such as the monsoon and mountainous terrain, such areas were often prone to natural hazards, namely low temperatures and waterlogging. Historically the population and reproduction of the Zhuang people has been low, and the increase in population has been slow. We are able to derive such data from the statistics provided by various dynasties dating back to the second year of Emperor Hanping up until the second year of the Xuanton era of the Qing Dynasty.



Note Photographed by Norachat Wang

Figure 5 Huashan Murals by the ancestors of the Zhuang people posing as frogs



Note Figure retrieved from the Zhuang Museum, Chongzuo, Guangxi

Figure 6 Copulation of Men and Women

Table 1 The Zhuang population and number of households in Guangxi from the second year of the Han dynasty to the second year of the Xuanton era of the Qing dynasty

Date in relation to Chinese dynasties	Year in western calendar	Population	Number of households
2nd year of the Western Han dynasty	AD2	241,387	40,831
8th year of the Southern Dynasty, Liusong Daming	646	108,655	17,442
1st of Tianbao, Tang Dynasty	741	140,266	127,572
26th year of Hongwu, Ming Dynasty	1369	1,382,671	211,263
18th year of the Qianlong, Qing Dynasty	1753	1,975,619	no records
2nd year of the Xuanton era of the Qing Dynasty	1910	8,234,350	no records

Because Guangxi is mountainous, development in has been slow. During a period of approximately 1900 years, from the second year of the Western Han Dynasty (2 AD) until the second year of the Xuantong era of the Qing Dynasty (1910), the Zhuang population increased by 8,234,350; the average annual increase in population is 4,200 (Huang et al., 1988, pp. 51-52); the above table charts these changes. During the second year of the Western Han Dynasty (2 AD), there were 40,831 households; the population was 241,387; by the 8th year of the Southern Dynasty, Liusong Daming (646), the Guangxi population had fallen to 108,655 in 17,442 households; during the first year of Tianbao, Tang Dynasty (741), the population was 140,266 in 127,572 households; during the 26th year of Hongwu, Ming Dynasty (1396), there were 211,263 households and the population was 1,382,671; in the 18th year of the Qianlong, Qing Dynasty (1753), the Guangxi population was 1,975,619; by the second year of the Xuantong era of the Qing Dynasty (1910), the Guangxi population had risen to 8,234,350.

As can be seen from the above statistics, the population of Guangxi increased slowly: likewise with the Zhuang. The Zhuang population increased slowly primarily because they inhabited a harsh environment. Any disaster, natural or manmade reduces a population. Throughout history, the factors which determined Zhuang population growth were a high birth rate countered by a high mortality rate resulting in a low population growth rate.

Oppression and discrimination by their rulers also contributed to low population growth. High infant mortality and a low population growth rate were countered by the Zhuang in Guangxi through the rituals of frog sacrifice and worship because of the high fertility of frogs. The Zhuang sought to transfer the reproduction rate of frogs to themselves whilst praying for their ethnic group to increase its population and, by extension, its prosperity.

In order to survive, an ethnic group must increase productive labour and, therefore, propagate through reproduction, a feature common to traditional societies. Origins of the Zhuang's frog worship can be traced in their poem describing the creation of the earth, "The Epic of Buluotuo".

The second chapter of the "The Epic of Buluotuo", the Creation of Humans, documents the challenges of reproduction and survival that the Zhuang had to face; the god Buluotuo advises the Zhuang on how to ameliorate their suffering. The following are extracts are from "The Epic of Buluotuo", Chapter II "The Creation of Humans":


Buluotuo is our grand ancestor god, he comes down to earth to exercise magic, he makes a supernatural seal to give an order: "Firstly chickens are given to the world, secondly dogs are bestowed to the earth, thirdly pigs are bestowed to the world, fourthly goats are given to the earth, fifthly cattle are bestowed to the world, sixthly horses are given to the earth, seventhly humans are bestowed to the world".

[Those born at the time were incomplete implying reproductive problems and high mortality.] “Human beings are far from perfect: their heads have not grown yet, nor have their muscles developed well, they have no respiratory organs, neither have they parotids or chins, together with their feet or breasts. They would hit trees while taking a walk, and they would roll about while on the move.”

“Buluotuo sees this all clearly, then he makes a decision in the heaven, and makes a seal to give an order: a four-legged god is dispatched, down to earth to remake human beings”. [The “four-legged god” is the frog worshipped by the Zhuang; the god Buluotuo sent the frog to save the ancient Zhuang and help them procreate.

[The following section of “The Epic of Buluotuo” describes ...] “...a four-legged god is dispatched, down to earth to remake human beings, the god collects the grass and the wood, to burn clay figurines having been kneaded, and they all turn into human beings with smiles. The men all grow beards by the mouths, and the women have big breasts on their chests. After he finishes making the young and the old, he also makes the kids and the adults. There are human beings on the earth ever since, and they live and multiply here and there” (Han, 2012, pp. 21-23).

The poem describes how, after the Zhuang had worshiped frogs, their population began to rise, child mortality fell and children grew into adults; humans multiplied and covered the earth. The poem celebrates fertility in nature and in man; secondly, the poem prays for unhindered wind and rain and abundant grain because fertility worship and sex promote growth.

The god of the Zhuang, Buluotuo is first depicted in the second chapter of “The epic of Baeuqloxdoh”, providing domestic animals – chickens, dogs, pigs, mountain goats, cattle, and horses, thus introducing another aspect of fertility – breeding of domestic animals. Frog and fertility worship were integral to the Zhuang’s agricultural practices and their intimate relationship with their livestock. Advances in breeding livestock were also dependent on improving crops for feedstuff; evidence of this is provided by the character “” (家Jia) found on oracle bones dating from 17th century BC at a site where Yue and Zhuang cultures were combined; the pictogram depicts a house on stilts.

Pigs were the first animals to be domesticated. Excavations at Peiligang have revealed a Neolithic site dating from 7,800 years ago near Zhengzhou city, Henan and a Hemudu Neolithic site at Yuyao County, Zhejiang, China, dating from between 6,900 and 7,000 years ago. Both sites yielded pig bones and pottery pigs. In contrast, Zhuang artifacts from Zengpiyan cave, Guilin, Guangxi also include pig bones determined, by carbon dating, to be 9,000 years old providing evidence of some of the earliest domestication in China (Li & Han, 1978, pp. 247-248).

Conclusions and Suggestions

The study show that, the Frog Worship Festival of the Zhuang people in ancient times were held for promote reproduction, to increase and inherit the Zhuang ethnic group. Because fertility worship was conducted by the Zhuang ancestors in ancient times where reproductive capabilities were extremely low, and the natural conditions for survivability and racial reproduction were harsh. The Zhuang population increased slowly primarily because they inhabited a harsh environment and reducing social productivity. The major characteristics of current population growth are high birth rate, high mortality rate, and extremely low growth rate. High infant mortality and low population growth rate were countered by the Zhuang in Guangxi through the rituals of frog sacrifice and worship because of the high fertility of frogs.

The purpose of frog worship is to hope that the Zhuang ethnic group may have the same astonishing reproductive abilities as the frog, to pray for increase in the ethnic groups population, and also for its continuation and prosperity.

The second meaning behind the frog sacrifice ceremony is to pray for unhindered wind and rain so that they may have abundant amounts of grain, because another important function of fertility worship and ethnic group reproduction is to utilize human sexual intercourse to promote the proliferation of natural grains.

Some researches in China and internationally demonstrates that the Zhuang of China and the Tai of Thailand have shared origins, and have same rooted culture. It have appeared that; Tai in the northeast Thailand also have rain praying rituals, called in Thai “Hae Nang Meaw” (the parade of a female cat). And there is a folk literature in the northeast of Thailand that appears widely in their perception, known as “Phaya Kankak of toad”. Phaya Kankak fough with Phaya Thaen (the elves) until they won, and then Phaya Thaen let the rain down to the human world.

Apart from this, in both Cambodia and Thailand, we can find the remains of frogs carved on the walls of the cave. People believe that frogs or toads can ask for rain, at the same time, it is also praying for the growth of the population.

Today mostly countries all over the world are the multicultural societies. There have been calls for states to respect cultural identities and expressions, as well as allow ethnically diverse people to shape their own way of life.

Research on ancient Chinese documents and archaeological excavations and a study of Zhuang people made us open up to other cultures that may be different from ourselves. Furthermore we can preserve the local culture by trying to understand, accept, respect and reduce prejudice. For the study of the history of the Zhuang people, and as well as the discussion of the relationship between the Zhuang and Thai cultural origins, it is of great significance. I think that the National Research Council should increase its support for research projects related to the ethnic groups' culture.

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