

On the Origin of the Symbol “Dragon” from the Zoonym “Crocodile” in the Cultures of Ancient Southern China and Vietnam

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Abstract. The author explores the origin of the symbol “dragon” in the cultures of ancient Southern China and Vietnam from the “crocodile”, puts forward the hypothesis that the ancient ethnonym and toponym “Yue” 越, (modern Vietnam) come from the Chinese zoonym ‘crocodile’ 鳄鱼 èyú. Other sources are the words “yue” 岳 ‘mountain’, “yue” 钺 ‘great battle axe’ and “yue” 月 ‘moon’. The Vietnamese word âu ‘seagull’, isomorphic to the Chinese word 鸥 ‘ōu’, is also involved in the semiotic analysis. Correlation of the Chinese letter from “jiaguwen” to “kaishu” (with the mention of the Vietnamese “ty-nom” and the letter of the state “Dian”) with historical and modern reality contributes to the objectification of the Chinese-Vietnamese world, the possibility of studying it using philological knowledge. The article also provides a comparison of the Chinese classification of nature by Zhou Qu-fei with the system of Carl Linnaeus and the earlier classification of Conrad Gesner, and develops the idea of the economy of nature.

Keywords: tsaghveri, crocodile 鳄鱼 èyú (vietn. – ngac ngư – 鱷魚, cá sấu), Yue 岳 ‘mountain’, Yue 钺 ‘large battle axe’ Huang Yue, Yue 月 ‘Moon’, ‘the Seagull’ 鸥 ōu (vietn. – âu), Yue (viets), classification of nature, the economy of nature

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Introduction

The relevance of the topic and the purpose of the study are determined by the possibility of including the toponym "Vietnam" ("Yue") in the context of similar toponyms of the ancient world.

The author carried out an analysis of the transformation of the cult zoonym "crocodile" into the public and state symbol "dragon", a comparison of the European and Chinese systems of nature, for the latter the basis of classification is the utilitarian usefulness of various fauna objects.

Materials and methods

The theoretical basis of the study was the works of Zhou Qu-fei, Xu Hui, Yu.N.Mikhailova, I.Zhao, V.V.Stupnikova, A.B.Solomonik. The author addresses issues of Eastern cultural studies, symbolism and cultural semantics.

The author has chosen interdisciplinary and comparative methods in toponymy, zoology, history and semiotics. In relation to Chinese sources, the method of selecting the relevant "crocodile fish" sign of the Jiaguwen letter was used, as well as quotations on the history of the large battle ax "Huang Yue" as a symbol of power.

Results

Natural and socio-historical conditions for the formation of the toponym "Vietnam"

Derived from the word "crocodile"¹ The symbol "dragon" historically combines a variety of meanings; it came to the Viet and Han along the path of Tao, that is a divine, but not a social metaphor. From a philosophical point of view, both natural science and theological approaches are legitimate. Religiously, it is inseparable from Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and exists in the minds of Christians, carrying within itself a theocratic and human beginning.

For thousands of years, the dragon has been and remains in the public consciousness in Vietnam, as in China, as an imperial symbol; as the main cultural archetype of these countries, it lives on for centuries, overshadowing with its presence all the hopes, aspirations and successes of the two great peoples. The origins of this phenomenon lie in ancient times, in the cohabitation of the Han and Yue peoples, when this name arose due to man's mastery and comprehension of nature in the struggle and identification of himself with its gigantic

¹ How do you say "crocodile" in Chinese? Available from: <https://www.toboapp.com/word/chinese/russian/eyu-2222/>

and other inhabitants, endowed with reason and magical qualities by man. Evidence of this is the vast pantheons of mythical and real animals, as well as sacred concepts – the dragon, mountains and rivers, which were originally recorded thanks to such a technical invention as writing and writing of the Shang-Yin era.

"According to legend, Lak-laung kuan (ruler Dragon Lak) was a water dragon – the son of Kinh-duong vuong and the daughter of the sovereign of Lake Dongting. Thus, both the name Giaoti and the names of the first two Vietnamese legendary sovereigns, according to Dao Huy An, reflect the totemistic and animalistic ideas of the proto-Vietians who lived in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze" [7:27–30].

That is why today we can carry out some reconstruction of the origin of the modern geographical name "Vietnam". This material is a continuation of the study "Symbolism in Vietnam: hypotheses of formation"².

In addition to "crocodile," the concept of "Yue" could later also include the geological term "yue" 岳 "mountain" and the technical term "yue" 钺 the large battle ax "Huang Yue" (a symbol of power in ancient China)³, from him, according to Xu Hui, came the scientific term denoted by the hieroglyph jinwen "scientist, official" [10:3–6]. And then, thanks to the "lunar poet" Li Bo (701–762/763), also the word 月 Moon ⁴ (key 74):

In a spoken way from the Heavenly Mother
Would like to wade, trusting in sleep,
The Mirror Lake Moon
And get to Yue and Wu.⁵

With this we complement the research of Vietnamese scientists in explaining the origin of the name of the Vietnamese nation, when the Yues could have participated in the creation of Han hieroglyphs⁶.

We see how Li Bo's poetry reaches the lands of Yue, pacifying the thought when they, perhaps, are seen as his likeness or the Moon itself. Therefore, this particular meaning can

² The invention of writing in the Shang-Yin era was a cardinal milestone in the knowledge of the world, making it possible to establish the isomorphism "signified – sign", when the name "Yue" from the phenomenon "crocodile" had to submit to the development of civilization in the spirit of Fan Cheng-da: "Beyond the ridges there is also hares, but very few," thereby speaking about brushes made of hare hair and Zhu Yu, speaking about rooster feathers for writing. Zhou Qu-fei. Behind the ridges instead of answers. Introduction by M. Yu. Ulyanov: 51. The image of a rooster is known to be present on the bronze tablet of the state of Dian. Larin V.P. Symbolism in Vietnam. Vietnam Studies. Vol.6. Moscow: IFES RAS. 2016:244–261.

³ Novakova O.V. "The Cross and the Dragon". Moscow: Klyuch-S, 2012:304. Since then 133. "Huang Yue" 钺 "big battle axe". Internet. Xu Hui. "Scientist, official." Etymology of Chinese characters. Moscow: Chance, 2022:3–6.

⁴ Hieroglyphic Key 74 (trad. and sire.) is a Kangxi key with the meaning "moon". Available from: https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ключ_74

⁵ Li Bo (701-762) 李白, 李太白 Tang Dynasty. I sing about parting with the Mother of Heaven Mountain, along which I walked in a dream. Available from: https://chinese-poetry.ru/poems.php?action=show&poem_id=5720 (дата обращения: 31.08.2023)

⁶ Explanation of the source of origin of the Vietnamese nation. (Giải thích nguồn gốc dân tộc Việt) Available from: <https://hoc247.net/hoi-dap/ngu-van-6/giai-thich-nguon-goc-dan-toc-viet-faq353623.html> (Date of access: 10.08.2023)

be recognized as the main one when the meanings "crocodile" and others lose their role in the meaning formation of the name of the Yue people and the understanding of their life. However, let us repeat, it is with the "crocodile" that, in an objective sense, the phenomena we are considering here are initially associated.

This weapon is used exclusively by emperors, and others will die if they touch it in private. King Wu used it to slash Zhou, and Qianlong used it to slash tigers. <...>Yellow Yue [because it is decorated with gold] is a weapon used by the emperor to indicate military order during conquest, it has the power to kill and conquer⁷.

We can here quote Professor Pham Dinh Phong about the weapon scenes depicted on Dong Son drums:

There is also an image of a man cutting off the head of a buffalo with an oblique bronze Ax at the festival of slaughtering a buffalo, brave men compete, demonstrate wrestling, a scene of fighters in ambush, clutching combat daggers in their hands, preparing to attack the enemy...

and also about the struggle of the Viet with wild animals in relatively recent times:

By the era of the Ly Dynasty [家李 1009–1225], tigers, panthers, lions were still circling around Zam Dam (today West Lake), people are still talking about this, in Thai Bin and in many other places in the country in the land as well many bones of tigers, water snakes, crocodiles, rhinoceroses were discovered [11:45, 49.].

In support of our hypothesis, it should be said that the "dragon" symbol, in particular, in the Ming era [大明朝 1368–1644] crowned the entire civil and military bureaucratic hierarchy of both countries [10: 331–334.]. The "crocodile" symbol is not among them, however, in our opinion, precisely because it turned into a "dragon".

It was only during the Ming Dynasty that classical texts with evidence of miraculous animals began to be collected in order to finally establish the names of the nine sons of the dragon and their abilities, -

Xu Hui reports and further gives the names and properties of all 9 dragons. This number, as is known, corresponds to the number of branches of the "Nine Dragon River" delta located in southern Vietnam (Vietnamese "Sông Cửu Long", chữ Nôm: 九龍河), that is Mekong. It was at the end of the Ming era that the migration of the southern Chinese population began simultaneously with the Vietnamese Qilin people to the south

⁷ 这兵器帝王专用，别人私自摸都得死，武王用它劈纣，乾隆用它劈虎 14.10.2018. Available from: https://www.sohu.com/a/259371462_455939

of Vietnam, which meant the development of new lands by the "dragon". As a symbolic creature, he cannot feed except symbolically, unlike the crocodile. Xu Hui places the story of nine dragons in an article about the hieroglyph tào "gluttonous" [10:419–422], which is another confirmation of the origin of the symbolic creature "dragon" from the zoonym "crocodile".

To compare the origin of ethnonyms and toponyms from zoonyms, we can refer to the discussion about the name Italy, which apparently comes from the Greek ιταλός – "bull"⁸, whereas the name Rus' could originally come from the Latin ursus – "bear"⁹.

The letter "Jiaguwen" and the name "Yue"

Presumably, the ethnonym and toponym "Yue" come from the Chinese word for "crocodile" 鳄鱼 èyú – Alligator sinensis, Yangtze basin ¹⁰, or saltwater Crocodylus porosus, Vietnam¹¹, when the systems of nature did not yet exist. Ancient Vietnamese word for "crocodile" – ngac ngư (鱷魚)¹², modern – cá sấu.

Whereas the Vietnamese word "âu - seagull" is from the Chinese word 鸥 ōu. Initially, the three real ideograms belong to the "Jiaguwen" – a fortune-telling writing on turtle shells (from the Yin inscriptions of the Zhou Bronze Age to the Kaishu style).

Since every new written sign "does not appear out of nowhere," but as a reflection of a new concept, the pictophonic fortune-telling signs "crocodile" and "egg" were naturally included in the process of development of writing and writing within the chronological framework of the civilizations of this region that we are considering¹³.

The Vietnamese live in river valleys, so in addition to birds, since ancient times they have worshiped crocodiles as a sacred animal, personifying wealth and strength. They deified the crocodile, turning it into Giao Long (Water Dragon), which the Chinese later called 蛟龍 –

⁸ Italy – comes from the name of the Italic tribe, in turn, possibly arising from the abundance of cattle in the region (Greek ιταλός, "bull", from Latin vitulus, "calf"). What is the officially accepted etymology of the names of countries in the world? 30.04.2016. Available from: <https://ss69100.livejournal.com/2771496.html>

⁹ A.N.Afanasyev, in the course of his research, came to the conclusion that the name of the bear among many peoples is associated with the attitude towards it not only as a wild animal with a terrible roar, but also with destructive tendencies. In Sanskrit this understanding corresponds to ksha – literally "tormentor", and in Latin - ursus. Hence in French – ours, in Italian – orso, in the Russian parent language – urs, rus. 08.03.2019. Available from: https://vk.com/@remeslo_rodimich-kak-v-starinu-nazyvali-medvedya

¹⁰ Permyakov E. Crocodiles of the Yangtze. Available from: <https://litresp.ru/chitat/ru/%D0%9F/permyakov-e/krokodili-yanczi>

¹¹ RepFocus – A Survey of the Reptiles of the World. © Rune Midtgaard. Available from: <https://repfocus.dk/>

¹² Crocodile. "In Han Tuyen's crocodile sacrifice there is a phrase: "Another fish, you are good." Dictionary of Nguyen Quoc Hung (Từ điển Nguyễn Quốc Hùng). Available from: <https://hvdic.thivien.net/hv/ngac%20ngu>

¹³ Let us note the existence of signs that are random, i.e. arising for natural reasons (by divine will), such as cracks in a stone from heat and cold, lightning strikes, etc. And also for such reasons as natural fire and artificial fire, which form numerous cracks in the wood. At the same time, the figures of people themselves, petroglyphs, forms of wooden and stone tools, stars, clouds, animals, birds and their traces, fish, plants, snowflakes, rain circles have external isomorphism. Probably, such observations prompted man to create the "Jiaguwen" writing system. – V.L.

jiaolong) to decorate the appearance of the crocodile with creative and meaningful details¹⁴.

Chinese medicine highly values the crocodile, calling it with a special term: "guito." Medicine from guyto saves from mosquito and wasp bites, heals bones, stomach, and brings longevity. There are many legends about crocodiles. They say that crocodiles are a cross between a dragon and a turtle, that they breathe with their ears, fly through the water, leaving behind steam and fire...

Crocodiles are considered not only close relatives of dinosaurs that inhabited our planet several million years ago, but also close relatives of all birds¹⁵.

In our evidence, we proceed from the ideographic nature of Chinese writing, taking into account the need to establish the scientific etymology of these characters¹⁶.

According to an article in CASE PRESS, the table contains the ideogram "crocodile fish", which corresponds to the hieroglyph 鱷魚 (trad.), Vietnamese. – ngac ngư, cá sấu¹⁷.

To confirm this, we also refer to Han Yu's work "Prayer and Sacrificial Appeal to the Crocodile" [3:191–193], dating back to the Tang era (618–907). We also mention that "The first work in Vietnamese was created in 1282, when the Minister of Justice Nguyen Thuyen composed a spell in verse, which was thrown into the Red River to drive away crocodiles [14. J. de Francis].

Obviously, the sign for "snake" – 蛇 [shé] – could also participate in the formation of the collective image of "dragon". Thus, it cannot be ruled out that the transformation of a crocodile into a dragon occurred as described in the Vietnamese myth "Rectification of Animals"¹⁸.

Classifications of nature and philology

Existing Chinese ancient sources (we do not have Vietnamese ones) demonstrate different principles for constructing fauna classifications compared to Linnaeus' "System of Nature," although they have some similarities with Conrad Gessner's "History of Animals" classification¹⁹. In particular, a similar system is presented by Zhou Qu-fei in his work "Beyond the Ridges Instead of Answers," chapter 10 of which is called "Insects and Fish," which includes the "tan" crocodile. This chapter can also be compared with European bestiaries.

14 Vietnamese dragon. (Rồng Việt Nam). Available from: https://translated.turbopages.org/proxy_u/en-ru.ru.8935fe5d-64db4155-9ae8624f-74722d776562/https://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%E1%BB%93ng_Vi%E1%BB%87t_Nam

15 Available from: <https://faunistics.com/krokodily/>

16 How to recognize incorrect etymology of a Chinese character? An introduction to the science of (ancient) Chinese writing. 24.06.2022 Available from: <https://vk.com/@randomkj-etymol?anchor=kakoy-dolzha-byt-etimologia>

17 Deciphering the inscriptions on the oracle bones: detection, properties and characteristic features. May 23, 2022 CASE PRESS. Six Books, Shang Dynasty, Structural Elements, Oracle Bone Inscriptions, Symbol Variations (解密甲骨文：發現、性質與文字特點 2022 年 05 月 23 日 CASE PRESS 六書, 商代, 構形元素, 甲骨文, 異體字) Available from: <https://case.ntu.edu.tw/blog/?p=39924>

18 Correction of animals. Available from: <http://www.nhat-nam.ru/mif.html>

19 In contrast to European-Byzantine anthropocentrism, the idea of the unity of man and nature prevailed in China. Chinese sailors traveled not only to the countries of Southeast Asia and India, but at the beginning of the 15th century (before Vasco de Gama) sailed to the shores of Africa. Vorontsov N. N. Development of evolutionary ideas in biology. Available from: <https://bio.wikireading.ru/h7UqfdblGR>

This illustration of the classification of fauna into three forms of degeneration "animals" (tai-sheng-lei), "birds" (luan-sheng-lei) and "insects, amphibians, reptiles, fish" (hua-sheng-lei) is given by I.G. Baranov in his book "The Afterlife Court in the View of the Chinese People" [1:17]. There is also a dragon here. So, based on the context, most likely in the third detachment we see a mythologized crocodile.

There is a lengthy article dedicated to Jiaolong, which allows our post to add some additional information to this topic. We should note that "a number of scholars point to a non-Chinese southern origin for the legendary creature, and ancient texts say that the Yue people once tattooed their bodies to protect themselves from these monsters"²⁰.

Our hypothesis manifests itself very clearly in terms of "the signified is a sign, both sound and written" (pictophonetic symbols), which, to a certain extent, is confirmed by the historical context of the settlement of ancient Han and Vietnamese tribes in the adjacent regions of modern southern China and northern Vietnam²¹.

The mixing of ethnic groups that took place here in the process of economic management, migration, and wars objectively entailed the convergence of various local civilizations and cultures. We find some confirmation of this in the book by Chou Qu-fei "Behind the Ridges Instead of Answers" (in the Introduction by M.Yu. Ulyanov):

Extremely important, although very few in number, are references to Vietnamese hieroglyphs that are different from Han. The author considers it as a matter of course, and it was apparently used at that time much more widely than we are accustomed to think [12; 13].

Naturally, all objects, incl. representatives of the fauna were subjected to human study, to the extent possible at that time, for safe coexistence, hunting, nutrition and other natural uses, as well as totemism, which is reflected in their pictorial and hieroglyphic images, which have retained external and internal isomorphism to this day. Therefore, the original meanings of jiaguwen have survived to this day, which also applies to "kuok ngyi". In our opinion [5], the modern Latin letter Y as a glyph can have the conventional meaning of "crocodile", since it corresponds to the right glyph of the hieroglyph "crocodile".

This corresponds to the information provided by V.V. Stupnikova:

Another common version at the beginning of the 20th century. became a hypothesis according to which the dragon was the totem of a certain primitive tribe. In 1934, archaeologist Wei Juxian suggested that the dragon could be a crocodile totem²². Historian and anthropologist Wang Dayu believed that the prototypes of the dragon are, in particular, the Chinese alligator and the saltwater crocodile. In 1986–1989 researcher He Xin considered the theory that the dragon is

20 Jiaolong. Available from: https://translated.turbopages.org/proxy_u/en-ru.ru.69c5612b-6452843d-569b6042-74722d776562/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jiaolong

21 Laquettes. Available from:

22 Totemism. Available from: https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dic_new_philosophy/1236/ТО-ТЕМИЗМ

a type of saltwater crocodile, huge in size and called jiao. He Xin provided many arguments to support this theory, drawing on both archaeological discoveries and written sources. He also suggested that dragon could be a unified name for all reptiles: crocodiles, pythons, salamanders, lizards [9].

The fact that the ancient figurine of a crocodile is present among other zoomorphic mythological Han creatures is demonstrated in one of the showcases of the exhibition "Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang" (VDNH, pavilion 21) in the form of a small wooden figurine "Rain Dragon" from the funds of the State Museum of Oriental Art (that is Jiaolong) at №4.

Thus, the cultural exchange, first between the various Han and non-Han peoples of Yue, and then the Han and the Vietnamese as such, led to the birth of the worldwide phenomenon of the Chinese and Vietnamese dragons, which today have some different pictorial features from each other, maintaining the life-giving, victorious and eternal essence this grandiose creature.

The following message from E.Permakov helps confirm our hypothesis:

Archaeologists once found a petrified skeleton twenty meters long in India. It was a fossil crocodile that appeared on Earth two and a half million years ago. At that time, crocodiles settled throughout the Earth. Now they live in tropical and subtropical countries – in rivers, lakes, and sea coasts. There are especially many of them in the waters of the Indus, Amazon, Ganges, Mississippi, in the rivers of Burma, off the coast of Australia²³.

Thus, the crocodile, regardless of species, was a well-known animal from the ancient world (Egyptian Sebek)²⁴.

In ancient times, crocodiles, due to their numbers, could be dangerous for the Yues; in the process of urbanization, agricultural development and hunting, they were forced into wild areas and continue to exist there today or on crocodile farms.

The Han and Vietnamese, who coexisted for a long time, sought to attract various natural forces, for example, an elephant, to their aid, which further suggests the presence of some real prototype of the Chinese dragon in the Pleistocene. Paleontologists' answer to this question may be the well-known data that fortune-telling writings were found on the bones of stegodonts and other primitive lizards and that these bones themselves were used as medicines.

At the same time, another interpretation of the ethnonym Yue (toponym Baiyue) is also possible, namely 岳 "mountain", since southern China and northern Vietnam abound in mountains, where various small peoples live – Yao, Lao, Muong, Nung, Miao and others, collectively with the Vietnamese – "Yue".

²³ Permyakov E. Crocodiles of the Yangtze. Essay. Available from: <https://litresp.ru/chitat/ru/%D0%9F/permyakov-e/krokodili-yanczi>

²⁴ Dragons – from formidable predators to gods. 21.03.2020. Available from: <https://spletnik.ru/user/nadezhdavorontcova170898>

Xu Hui gives a brief dossier of the character yuè "mountain", speaking about the five sacred peaks of China [10:180–183]. The pronunciation of the hieroglyph "Moon" is also correlated with the toponym and ethnonym "Yue"²⁵.

Economy of Nature

The initial comparison of Chinese and European natural systems undertaken here makes it possible to speak both about their general economic significance and about the significance of individual representatives of the fauna and flora.

As examples, we can cite the bee (Chinese trad. – 蜜蜂 mǐfēng) – a spring of health and the silkworm (Chinese trad. – 蚕蛾 jiǎn'é) – a weaver of beauty, bringing great income and endorphins since prehistoric times. But not only they, but also other species of animals and plants, wild, domesticated and cultivated, successfully fulfill this role in constant social and natural circulation. True, between the first two and, in fact, most of the others, there is a huge difference, which lies in a person's attitude to their biological life and death, relatively speaking, a person does not destroy, but cherishes the first for the sake of obtaining a marketable product.

In addition, thanks to writing, they constitute a great international lexicon based on ancient Chinese characters and signs of other writing systems. When a cloud-dragon irrigates the earth for the sake of harvest, the hieroglyph becomes a metaphor... The dragon is generally the personification of natural resources – mountain, sea and all others; it was he who endowed the emperors with the mandate of Heaven. And now we see how this ubiquitous phenomenon manifests itself over the centuries in the spirit of Eastern philosophy of mathematics, cybernetics and alchemy, contributing to the extraction of value in terms of classical political economy.

The Chinese and, presumably, Vietnamese definition of the usefulness of fauna remains a key idea that can be considered in the context of European natural classifications²⁶. Speaking about the evolution of nature, we always deal with physical and chemical processes, so here it is appropriate to recall the isomorphism that is inherent in both chemical elements²⁷, and sign systems.

²⁵ Moon. Available from: <https://ru.wiktionary.org/wiki/月>

²⁶ Among living systems, that is, among systems that have the property of self-reproduction, such as intracellular structures - chromosomes, mitochondria, etc., cells themselves, individuals and species, there is only one isomorphic system - the species. Isomorphism of animal groups. Available from: <http://www.zoofirma.ru/knigi/genetika-i-evoljutsija/5606-izomorfizm-grupp-zhivotnyh.html>

²⁷ Some elements, despite all their differences, behaved in crystals in a similar way. They were given a name, usually composed of two Greek words: "isos", which means "different", and "morphe" – "type", "form", and the phenomenon itself received the name "isomorphism". Piszhevsky O. Mendeleev deals with isomorphism. Available from: <https://biography.wikireading.ru/113109>;

Discussion

The warm climate at the mouth of the Yangtze and on the coast of the East China Sea led to the habitat of a large number of alligators in the kingdom of Yue, which was the reason for both this geographical name and the ethnonym as a totem "crocodile".

Even earlier than the Han state, there was the state of Xích Quỷ, Ti-nom 赤鬼, "red demon"), founded by Kinh Duong Vuong (Vietnamese Kinh Dương Vương, Ti-nom 涇陽王) – the mythical ruler of the Vietnamese, the first of Hung Vuong, founder of the Hong Bang dynasty. Considered to be the first ruler in Vietnamese history. According to the Complete Historical Records of Dai Viet, Kinh Duong Vuong is the father of Lac Long Quan. The color red, according to Chinese views, was associated with the "south"²⁸.

It is worth pointing out the orthographic and phonetic difference between the Vietnamese name Sit Kui and the Chinese, most likely chixiàn "red county" [10: 107–110]. This phenomenon is characteristic of many Vietnamese words derived from Chinese.

We find the presence of the hieroglyph jiaguwen "dragon" in the name of the Hong Bang dynasty [t'u-nom 鴻龐], accordingly it became possible to correlate this toponym with the toponym Xih Quy (Vietnamese Xích Quỷ, t'u-nom 赤鬼, "red demon"), except meaning "demon", the hieroglyph guǐ has, for example, the meanings: 1) soul of the deceased, 2) soul of an ancestor, local deity, 5) genius, etc., although "red" here is the hieroglyph chì.

Xu Hui discusses in detail the meaning and context of this ideogram, which means a person being burned in a fire, as well as a bright red newborn baby (赤子–chìdì) [10:107–110]. Thus, we can assume a semantic transition from the jiaguwen "snake" glyph [shé] to the xiaozhuan "red baby" and "crocodile" glyphs. It cannot be excluded that the ideogram chì also demonstrates the meaning "cremation", which is related to Laotian jars, respectively, to the myth of the birth of the Viet, as well as to similar Indian and Indonesian artifacts²⁹.

Red can represent the color of clay, either raw or baked.

The approximate correlation of the name "Sitkui" (赤鬼 "Red Devil") suggests ancestor cult as its source. The geography of this state corresponds to the territory of the Han Empire, and now the province of Guangdong, where the Yue language exists.

It should be noted that the events described do not correspond to the chronology of the Han Empire or even the Qin that preceded it, but to the "Period before Qin (2100 BC – 221 BC), covering more than 1800 years. <...> In the history of China, these are 3 historical stages, namely: Xia Dynasty (2070 BC – 1600 BC), Shang Dynasty (1600 BC – 1046 BC), Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC – 221 BC), during which the great ancient Chinese created a great civilization with their intelligence and hard work, including inscriptions on oracle bones Xia-Shan and bronzes of the Shang-Zhou dynasty, and these cultural relics became historical symbols of ancient Chinese civilization."³⁰.

²⁸ Sitkui. Available from: <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ситькуи>

²⁹ AccheDin. Mysterious "jars of the dead" have been discovered in Laos. May 19, 2019. Available from: <https://fishki.net/2982884-v-laose-obnaruzheny-zagadochnye-kuvshiny-mertvecov.html>

³⁰ Pre-Qin period in Chinese history. Available from: <https://chinese.bhb.ru/2022/08/04/dotsinskij-period-v-istorii-kitaya/>

We point out this in comparison with the chronology of the Dong Son bronze culture, which developed at the beginning of the 1st millennium BC. The Dong Son culture was destroyed in the 2nd century. BC. at the first northern conquest (111 BC), which corresponds to the beginning of the Han Dynasty (206 BC Pre-Qin period in Chinese history 220 AD).

So, a vast territory, let's call it conventionally the "Land of Crocodiles," was developed in the process of wars and resettlement by a conglomerate of tribes of South Chinese and other origins, among which we can assume, in particular, representatives of the state of Dian (Yunnan, 滇國diān), also belonging to bronze culture.

In the process of confrontation with the Han Empire, the southern kingdoms of Minyue, Nanyue, Wanglang and Aulak were successively formed here, the general chronology of whose existence, which is important now, can be estimated from the 7th century. 2 in. BC, as corresponding to the Zhou Bronze period (XI–III centuries BC).

According to legend, Lak Laung Kuan (ruler Dragon Lak) was a "water dragon" Pre-Qin period in Chinese history the son of Kinh Duong Vuong and the daughter of the sovereign of Lake Dongting. Thus, both the name Giaoti and the names of the first two Vietnamese legendary sovereigns, according to Dao Huy Anh, reflect the totemistic and animalistic ideas of the proto-Vietians who lived in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze [8:27 Pre-Qin period in Chinese history 30].

Over the course of 4 thousand years, the collective image of a crocodile in China and Vietnam acquired new features, because even a carp that has overcome a river rapids "can turn" into a dragon. Yu.N.Mikhailova and Zhao Yi note,

The motivating feature for the formation of the meaning of phraseological units with the "dragon" component in the Chinese language is the ability to fly attributed to the referent of the name, which is metaphorically projected onto a various range of natural and artifactual objects: from the movement of clouds to the movements of a pen in Chinese calligraphy. The strength, power, and majesty that the dragon is endowed with in Chinese mythology become the basis for attributing these valuable properties to a person [7].

The myth of the birth of the Viets is actually built on the totems of the crocodile and the seagull, a collective dragon image-symbol due to the proximity to the sea from the lower reaches of the "Red River". The revival of this symbol is reported in the article "Fighting Stigma – The Unique History of Vietnamese Tattoo Culture"³¹.

Some classification series are reflected in the Jiaguwen drawings we referred to above³². In this context, we can assume that the birds depicted on the Dong Son drums are

³¹ Fighting stigma. 25.02.2020. Available from: <https://vietnews.ru/culture/borba-so-stigmatizaciej-unikalnaja-istorija-vetnamskoj-kultury-tatuirovok>

³² Deciphering the inscriptions. 22.05.2023. Available from: <https://case.ntu.edu.tw/blog/?p=39924>

magpie herons (Bái jīng hēi lù 白頸斑鸕)³³ or other crested herons that live on Lake Dongting, but not gulls that do not have crests on their heads.

So, over time, the Vietnamese worldview has changed dramatically in geographical, linguistic, religious, political, historical, and biological terms. The context for understanding this process is the information presented in the "Complete Academic History of Vietnam" (vol.1) and in the work of Chou Qu-fei "Beyond the Ridges Instead of Answers." The Chinese classifications of fauna we mentioned obviously correlate with the semantic groups of keys in the Chinese language³⁴.

It is symbolic that the surname Linnaeus comes from the name of the linden tree³⁵, although, according to the data we found, he studied the crocodile caiman (Caiman crocodilus), living in America³⁶.

So, the ancient region of southern China and northern Vietnam we are considering does not correspond to the modern range of this representative of the fauna³⁷.

At that time, on the cover of Le Nguyen's book "The Land of Saigon and the Life of the Ancient Saigon People", it should be assumed that a giant sea serpent is depicted³⁸, namely "Giao Long".

As you know, alligators can live in salt water for some time. South Vietnam is still included in the area when the Viet, Cham, and Khmer were and remain known to the giant inhabitants of the ocean.

The Latin designation for dragon in scientific systems of nature is present in the cases of ray-finned fish (Trachinidae), as well as the genus of agamid lizards (Draco), which has the name "flying dragons" in Russian-language literature³⁹.

The Latin word for dragon, draco, also means snake, emphasizing the common ancient European association of dragons with snakes rather than lizards or dinosaurs as is commonly accepted today. The medieval biblical interpretation of the Devil, who appeared in the form of a serpent who seduced Adam and Eve, served as a reason for identifying the dragon with evil⁴⁰.

33 Magpie Heron / Egretta picata. Available from: <https://dibird.com/ru/species/sorochja-tsaplja/>

34 Shurovan Czechi. Available from: https://translated.turbopages.org/proxy_u/en-ru.ru.55f4c23f-64e344e7-1b6e8b95-74722d776562/https/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shuowen_Jiezi

35 Proceedings of the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Application №1, 2009:9-78. Available from: <https://studylib.ru/doc/2073454/karl-linnej--1707%E2%80%93931778--kak-zoolog>

36 Crocodile caiman. 18.05.2014. Available from: <https://zooclub.org.ua/krokodily/1854-krokodilovyy-kayman.html>

37 Modern range Crocodylus porosus [RepFocus]. Available from: https://www.repfocus.dk/maps1/TAX/Crocodylia/Crocodylidae/Crocodylus_porosus_map.html

38 Le Nguyen. The land of Saigon and the life of the ancient Saigon people (Lê Nguyễn. Đất Sài Gòn và sinh hoạt của người Sài Gòn xưa. NXB Hội nhà văn, TP HCM, 2016) Nepomnyashchiy N. N. Giant sea serpent. 03.10.2013. Available from: <https://iknigi.net/avtor-nikolay-nepomnyashchiy/5578-gigantskiy-morskoy-zmey-nikolay-nepomnyashchiy/read/page-2.html>

39 Bobrov V. V. Review. 17.07.2023.

40 Dragons - from formidable predators to gods. 21.03.2020. Available from: <https://spletnik.ru/177930-drakony-ot-groznykh-khishchnikov-do-bogov-282807>

While the divine origin of the dragon in East Asia is not questioned, Paul Henri Holbach's 1770 materialist system of nature a priori disproves the existence of such creatures. Holbach writes: "Therefore, there are neither miracles nor disorder in nature. The concept of disorder, chance, as well as of reason acting purposefully, we draw solely from ourselves. We call actions random, the connection of which we do not see with causes"⁴¹. But already in the 20th century the neo-Kantian E. Cassirer generalized the concept of symbol and classified as "symbolic forms" a wide class of cultural phenomena, such as language, myth, religion, art and science, through which a person organizes the chaos around him⁴².

Correlation with the reality of Chinese writing systems – from "jiaguwen" to "kaishu" (with the mention of the Vietnamese "ty-nom" and the "dian" script) made it possible to discover the previously implicit (eidons), thereby contributing to the historical objectification of the Sino-Vietnamese world, the possibility of studying it using philological knowledge, in particular the research of A. Solomonik "Semiotics and Linguistics" [8].

Conclusion

Our conclusions include:

- reconstruction of the transformation of the zoonym "crocodile" into the traditional Chinese and Vietnamese social and state symbol "dragon"; identifying signs of this evolution;
- confirmation of the high probability of origin from the zoonym "crocodile" of the ethnonym and toponym "Yue" ("Vietnam") with the subsequent development of this concept thanks to natural and social phenomena recorded in Vietnamese and Han hieroglyphs: "Yue" – "mountain", "Moon", large the battle ax "Huang Yue" as a symbol of power, including the effect of natural and artificial isomorphism in this process;
- an indication, in comparison with Western systems of nature, of such a characteristic of traditional Chinese systems of nature as the utilitarian usefulness of fauna representatives;
- correlation of the Vietnamese toponym "Sit Quy" (赤鬼 "Red Devil") according to such a form of polytheism as the cult of ancestors.

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