

# “16+1”: ‘Hubei Roads’ of Jingchu

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**Abstract**—Occupying the central territory of the land of China Hubei with its ‘Roads’ is holding the central position in the realization of the *China Dream* and is leading the main role in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The realization of the idea for the creation of the “16+1” Mechanism in this 6th year of its growing since its birth in the *BRI* has opened doors of opportunities for different minds to create the reflection of the own innovation and contribute for the sooner realization of the *China Dream*. The very need of a “16+1” Research Centre in Wuhan is given in this work, has been elaborated the very reasons and foreseen the impacts of taking this challenge.

**Keywords**—Glass Road; Tea-Horse Road; Silk Road; “16+1”; Hubei; Jingchu; culture; research; center; need

## I. INTRODUCTION

Being the largest part of Central China, the so-called ‘Province of Lakes’ Hubei is continuously playing the central role in the 5000 and more years pace of China. Having its roots right there in Suizhou of Hubei, left by the first ancestor of the Chinese nation *Shennong Yandi* - *The Great Emperor* and forefather of the agriculture and medicine of China; holding the nucleus of the great culture of China by reaching the peak of the advanced development in bronze melting, lacquer works, silk embroiders, music, philosophy, science, literature since the *State of Chu* - the very first and oldest, longest existed country in the human history found in the deep deepness of the *Chu* peoples’ wisdom that reached its culmination in the time of the *Zhou Dynasty* by leaving its trails in its constant walk for more than 800 years of its innovations, openness, patriotic and integrative spirits, left by the *Chu* people for being the testimonies in the reflection of the soul of China all along the *Road of the Silk* that holds those spirit in its foundation; holding in the richness of its land the ‘unique treasure among the world wonders’ and the ‘Eighth Wonder of the Ancient World’ - *Bianzhong* or *The Imperial Bells of China*, slept intact under the ground for more than 2400 years, keeping buried with itself the story of a man that was contemporary of *Confucius*, known to history only as the *Marquis Yi of Zeng*, reflecting its glorious beauty on the daylight in 1978 in Hubei’s Suizhou, witnessing the wisdom of the Chinese people and their great achievements in bronze casting, music science and technology; holding the foreseeing of the *Road of the Silk* – *The Boli Dao* or *The Glass Road* – the earliest trade road from the very far East and the very far West four centuries before the silk took its way on its routes; holding the roots of the 13000 km north *Road of Tea and Horses* – *The China – Russia Tea Horse Road* in Hankow - *The Oriental Tea Port*; holding the

uprising of the frontiers in *The 1911 Revolution* under the leadership of *Sun Yat-sen* on the *Snake Hill* of *Wuchang* and its resulting in the end of the China’s feudal period and the establishing of *The Republic of China*; known as the birthplace of the China’s modern industry and its founder *Zhang Zhidong* with his modernizing reforms, creating Hubei and in particular its capital Wuhan – the ‘River City’ in a prosperous place of commerce and industry; being the owner of the first modern iron and steel complex in Asia built in 1980s, *The Hanyang Iron Factory* from the period of knowing Wuhan as ‘*Da Wuhan*’ or the ‘*Big/Great Wuhan*’ that after the 1900 was considered as the second most important Chinese city after Shanghai; being the most freshwater lake intensive province and the foundation of China’s hydropower as the source for presently the largest hydropower project in the world – *The Three Gorgeous Dam* in the middle reaches of *Yangtze River* in Hubei’s *Yichang*; holding the leading place of China’s R&D and optoelectronics and *Global Positioning Systems* and the automotive, iron and steel, petrochemical, food processing, equipment manufacturing, electronic information and textiles as its pillar industries along with its power in metallurgical industry, hydropower, shipbuilding and logistics; being the blood streaming in the heart of China - Hubei – the main aorta of China’s nine provinces and the largest transportation hub keeping connected east and west, north and south by boasting the largest river-port in China and the largest airport in Central China, Wuhan has awakened the ancient spirit of reviving ‘*Da Wuhan*’ with the construction of the *Yangtze Economic Belt* along the pace of *BRI* was shaped in the most important shipping center on the middle way of *Yangtze River* and the power source in the *Rise of Central China*; being the ‘River City’ as within is holding the stories of the world’s third largest river and one of the two mother-rivers of the Chinese people – *Yangtze River* and the home of nearly 200 lakes including the largest China’s lake within a city – the *East Lake*; being the mosaic completed in 1927 of the three towns, nowadays its industrial district *Hanyang*, the business and financial district *Hankou* and the cradle of the most universities and museums – the district of *Wuchang* is making it being the right metaphor for the China’s most important industrial, educational and research base and Hubei province the core of China’s education and scientific research the only place in the world with the most number of educational institutions with its possession of 85 colleges and universities, among two of the top ten between 2400 and more in China – *Wuhan University* and *Huazhong University of Science and Technology*; being the main China’s frequency for hearing the *China voice* of innovations in optoelectronic and information technology,

modern manufacturing, steel and new materials, bioengineering and new medicine, logistics, water, environmental technology and sustainable city development; being the thickest synthesis of the integrations of different minds from different walks of life from all over the world devoted to the walking of the 'Roads of Hubei', engaged in BRI and the cohesion of the spirits of *Jingchu* with the world linked by a silk of a thread in the shared future of mankind.

Occupying the central territory of the land of China Hubei as well is holding the central position in the realization of the *China Dream* and is leading the main role in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. As for any other region in the world its culture of *Jingchu* is its best reflection. Starting digging further in its long-age history that is spreading long back for more than three thousand years, searching deeper in its abundant connotation of the synthesis of the ten cultures that is embracing, analyzing its unique local characteristics and foreseeing its potential for economic and cultural exploitation from the perspective of 2013 onwards after the reanimating of *The Ancient Silk Road* is bringing the statement to the realization of the BRI as the nowadays metaphor of *Jingchu* culture spirits and a sublimation of innovations, inclusiveness, openness and creations of the shared future of the world. The realization of the idea for creation of the "16+1" Mechanism for collaboration of China with the sixteen Central and Eastern Europe countries in this 6th year of its growing an expanding and before since its birth in the BRI has opened doors of opportunities for different minds to create the reflection of the own innovation and contribute for the sooner realization of the *China Dream*. This work, based on the author's readings on the topics related to *Jingchu* culture, Hubei, BRI and "16+1", is giving the idea of the very need of a "16+1" Research Centre in Wuhan, elaborates the very reasons for "Why in Wuhan?", and is foreseeing the impacts of taking this challenge.

## II. JINGCHU BOLI DAO – THE GLASS ROUTE

The innovative spirit of the ancient Chinese people of *Chu* has left inerasable trails that have traced the routes to nowadays BRI that is keeping carrying on the spirit of innovations and mutual learning rooted back in thousands years by transmitting knowledge, ideas, beliefs, cultures and leaving profound impact as its consequence on the history and civilizations. Attracted by the trade and moreover of the encountering science, arts, literature, crafts, technologies along those routes, the travelers contributed in developing languages learning, religious understanding, cultural exchanges resulting in reflecting and influencing each other starting far back four hundred years before the general *Zhang Qian* opened up the first route of the *Road of the Silk*, somewhere in the 6 century BC when was made the first trade exchange between the *East* and the *West*, more specifically with the *Chu* people.

Among all the people, the people of *Chu* have been characterized with any ethnical superstition that have been promoting national integrity and have been paying so much of attention of the integration of the other people, including the one from south and west. A typical example of it is the *eleven eye beads* made of *soda-lime glass* originating from the *Mediterranean* – the earliest dated trade good found in a tomb in *Xinjingling* in Henan province from 500BC and that was the

origin of *The Boli Dao* or *The Glass Route*, as well the very root of the routes of the silk. "A few more such finds of *Western glass* are known from the tomb of *Marquis Yi* in Hubei and two more tombs from Henan." [3]

"Glass first appeared in China" [4], precisely in Central China. In the collection of the Chinese Innovations heritage of the culture of *Jingchu*, the glass has occupied it space since the very beginning of the *Zhou Dynasty* (1100 - 800BC) originating and developing from '*faience*' and *frit beads*. Dating from the period between 1000 -768 BC have been excavated hundreds of *faience beads*, deriving from five cemeteries, mainly in Shanxi province. Therefore it is considered that "the *soda-enriched faience* was made in Mesopotamia or between Mesopotamia and China". "Early glass found in China is mainly in the form of beads and jewellery" [4] where "the production relied mainly on two kinds of fluxing agents: *lead* and *potash*" [3] *Faience beads*, dating from the middle to late *Warring States Period* (475–221 BC), found in the *Chu* tombs at *Shenmingpu* in Henan province and *Leidugun* in Hubei province after being analyzed have shown a quantity of *potassium* in their content, indicating the possibility of using potassium nitrate as a flux. "*Potassium-rich faience glazes* (currently) predate *potash glasses* in China; it is likely that *faience* technology influenced and led to the emergence of *high-potassium glasses*. It is also likely that this was an independent invention in China, although from the 10th century BC *high-potassium glasses*, also with low *magnesia* levels, were being made in the *West*, probably in the southern *Mediterranean* area." [4]

The period around 500 - 400BC reveals the few early finds of *potassium alkali glass* from the regions of Central China, while the *Warriors States* and *Han Period* (400 - 200BC) is the period of the *lead-barium glass* characteristic for China *Yangzi River* valleys, where is considered have been probably made in Central China; as well has been found in Xinjiang, Central China, Jiangsu, Anhui, Shaanxi, Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian and Chongqing provinces, although large numbers of the *Warring States lead-barium glasses* have occurred in the *State of Chu*, mainly in Hubei and Hunan, where is supposed that have been its main production zone. On the other hand from this period in Jiangsu province, in the tomb of a *Western Han* princess have been found *lead-barium glass B* disks and *chimneys*, where is supposed that have been the second production zone; "results for 12 *lead-barium glass B* discs and *eye beads* from *Chu* tombs in Hunan province could suggest that they were made in Hunan province". Considering the fact that "no primary or secondary glass production sites for *lead-barium glasses* have been recorded" [4] the curiosity of their exact provenance still remains an open question.

Somewhere in the middle period of the *Warring States Period* in the burials of the nobles and some ordinary people, mostly in Hunan, Henan and Hubei provinces, has appeared large number of *glass eye beads* of *lead-barium* composition that look like *Western eye beads*. "Needham (1962) and Caley (1962, 90) suggested that glass with high *barium* and *lead* levels found in China could have been made there because high levels of *barium* had never been found in ancient *Western glasses*." [4]; and the *potash glass* prevailed in the southwestern and southern regions. "The origins of Chinese

glass were first addressed by *Seligman and Beck* (1938). Some of the beads that they examined differed compositionally from *Western* ones, containing high *barium* and *lead*, but were typologically similar.”[4] “*Needham* noted that the earliest Chinese *high-barium glass* may have emerged during *The Spring and Autumn* or *The Warring States Period*.”[4] wherein from 770 - 476BC as well can be traced the earliest forms of glasses that might be related with some of the earlier glass beads of *western Asian* composition found in the cemeteries of *Kizil* in Xinjiang in the areas of nomadic clans that have been trading *jade* with the Chinese because of its importance in their daily rituals. “The presence of *Western glass* could potentially have been one of the factors that stimulated the production of the first Chinese glasses.”[4]

The *Chu* people has also made great contributions in metallurgy and have built the firm foundation of the bronze melting in the mankind history. The bronze sword of king *Goujian* of the state of *Yue* (520 - 465BC) was one of the firsts forms of glasses found in Hubei province, inscribed with three pieces of blue glass. Such firsts inscriptions of colorless glass of *soda-lime* composition have been found also in Henan province on the sword that was possession of king *Fu Chai* of the state of *Wu* (528 - 473), for which is supposed that the origin of this glass has been brought from the far *West*. In his wife’s tomb in Henan, that was the sister of the king of the state of *Song*, have been found inscribed bronze vessel that indicates her origin. “One bead that has been analyzed is of a *soda-lime* composition and therefore of a probable *West Asian* origin.”[4] Similar beads from the end of *The Spring and Autumn Period* have been excavated in Shanxi and Henan province.

During the second century BC, in the times of the very roots of the *Road of the Silk*, after general *Zhang Qian*; credited for its founding, sent by the emperor *Wu* on a diplomatic mission to ensure alliances against the hereditary enemies of the Chinese people – the *Xiongnu* or it is supposed that is the people of *Huns*; was captured and imprisoned by them for thirteen years when he succeed to escape. After sharing his impressions of the wealth in details of Central Asia, he was sent on another mission in 119 BC that was at the same time one of the earliest routes from China to Central Asia. “In those early periods of the early trade connections have been documented definite imports of *Mediterranean* and *Western Asiatic* glass, along with the spreading of the Central Chinese *lead-barium glass* to the Xinjiang’s western parts.”[4] “Following the invention of glass-blowing in the first century BC, probably in the *Levantine* region, Roman glass vessels started to arrive in China. Ancient sources, including Greek ones, refer to the transport of glass across the Mediterranean to the East; a Chinese account of glass made in the *Roman Empire* states that it was of 10 colors.” [4]

### III. CHAMA DAO – THE TEA-HORSE ROAD AND HUBEI

“*Shennongjia* region in Hubei province is one of the first cradles of wild tea.”[5] According to the document record in the *Shi Jing* and *Er Ya*, originally being a food, and still, starting from the *Shen Nong Era*, China is the motherland of tea culture for more than 5000 years, which refers to the all cultural characteristics formed in the process of drinking tea

activities, including tea ceremonies, tea virtue, tea spirit, tea couplets, tea books, tea sets, tea paintings, tea science, tea art and reflects the courtesy and the longevity of the Chinese civilization. It has deeply integrated into the Chinese people’s life and has become an important carrier of the Chinese culture. From *The Ancient Silk Road*, *The Tea-Horse Road*, *The Tea-Boat Road* to today’s *Silk Economic Belt Road* and *The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road*, tea has been overpassing history, national boundaries by being the love shared by the people all over the world. “With the revival of past glories, arts and crafts, music, a return to the use of traditional characters, etc. as well as the rapid re-emergence of *Taoism*, *Confucianism*, *Buddhism*, and general traditional values”[7], tea has become one of the important parts in the ongoing process of the *Chinese Cultural Renaissance*.

“In the process of Chinese ancient civilization, *The Tea Road* is the most famous and important road as the cultural route that communicated extensively with other countries in the world”[5] since the *Han Dynasty*. “There are two reasons for the spread of Chinese tea, the first one was its medical function to refresh the brain and health protection, and the second reason was the combination of tea and *Buddhism* to create the *Sado* which had deeply affected countries around China. [5]” To the east, in the 9th century first tea has spread in Japan and the Korean Peninsula by the monks *Zuicheng* and *Konghai* that have been studying in the *Guoqing Temple* of *Tiantai Mountain*. To the south the famous *Cha Ma Road* was crossing through Sichuan and Yunnan province to Tibet, extending its way to Bhutan, Nepal, crossing West Asia and ending at the *Red Sea* coastline in West Africa. To the west the tea spread along *The Silk Road* through Xinjiang province where it become an indispensable drink in the evolution of the tea-horse trade and has been accepted as an integral part of the local people’s diet and culture. To the north *The Tea Horse Road* was holding the great channel *Hubei – Mongolia – Russia*, through Henan, Shanxi and Hebei province, that is one of the great parts of the culture of *Jingchu* and a main of the mediums for its promoting to the world and for creating friendships between nations through cultural exchanges. This channel of 13000 km stretching for 300 years was also known as the *China-Russia Tea Road* or *Hankow-Russia Tea Road* because of its start point in *Hankow* in the 18th century, one of the parts of the nowadays only metropolitan city in China – *Wuhan* - the capital of Hubei province, which port was holding 60 percent of the 86 percent of the world tea export and the 80 percent of all exported Chinese tea, therefore *Hankou* was known around the world as the ‘*Tea Port of the Orient*’, that after *The Silk Road* was another *Trans-Eurasia Channel* for international commerce and trade.

Along the pace of *The Silk Road*, *Wuhan* is retracing the *China-Russia Ancient Tea Road* by restoring itself as the future *Central China Tea Hub* and by building the biggest tea storage facility in the former *Oriental Tea Port* on the banks of the *Yangtse River* as an important platform for exchanges and cooperation between China and the world; is carrying forward the Chinese tea culture by using tea as a medium for building friendship between nations, is conducting exchanges and cooperation on the way of achieving mutual benefits and win-win results, so as to jointly promote the development of the



world tea industry and write a new chapter for the development of the tea industry and tea culture.

#### IV. 'HUBEI ROADS' ROAD TO "16+1"

The rebirth of *The Silk Road* has brought the birth of the "16+1" Mechanism and along with it has strengthened the relationships with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (hereinafter CEECs) which has yielded in countless fruitful results and has opened numberless opportunities to China and those countries of Europe. Along the pace of the China rejuvenation to the realization of the *Dream of China*, the 'Hubei Roads' has got new impetus that has initiated the reawakening of the 'Da Wuhan' spirits.

"16+1" after its celebration of its 6th birthday has expanded the collaboration range between those countries of its creation and in the process of looking forward to upgrade the cooperation between them has extended its channels to regional pedestal that has brought the creation of *CEECs-Hubei Channel* after the visit of the representative of "16+1" of Wuhan in December 2018 and has given apply of Wuhan as one of the main brick in the foundation of *BRI* by letting the spreading the spirits of *Jingchu* walk their way long far west to *CEECs*. The undertaking of this channel has realized it in a great challenge in terms of infrastructure investments, logistics and cooperation between the people of Hubei and *CEECs* participating in it. In its initial needs the educating of human resources and polishing talents for its support has become ones of the necessary priorities on the way to its compete realization. For the benefits of taking the right direction in its further development and improvement of the multi-field collaboration between Hubei and *CEECs*, Wuhan playing the role of the biggest metropolitan city of China has given itself as the rightest platform for the reflection of the joint projects of students and researchers from those countries engaged in the realization of this channel. As the unique place in the world with the biggest number of educational institutions Hubei and in particularly Wuhan has got the responsibility for the importance of shaping talents in solving the issues that can possibly come out along the way of its upgrading. The intensifying of the activities aiming at bringing the relations of Hubei with the sixteen *CEECs* to a closer distance besides the internalization of the educational institutions, students exchanges, launching *Confucius* institutes, intercultural programs instantly has triggered its need of improving the prospects of the both sides in order to see the whole picture of Hubei and *CEECs* in its clearest light by observing it from the all perspectives which is giving Wuhan the right of being the host of a "16+1"- *Hubei Research Centre* after being the main aorta of the China's heart by giving apply of the 'Hubei Roads' and the spirits of *Jingchu* to the bringing to light the shared future of Hubei and *CEECs* on their walks of their win-win cooperation and multi-field exchanges.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Located in the heart of China and holding the main role in the realization of its dream and the rejuvenation of its nation Hubei has let its long-age history's abundant connotation keep on telling its stories in order to foreseen its potential for economic and cultural exploitation and has let the spirits of *Jingchu* for innovations, inclusiveness, openness, integration prove themselves as the nowadays metaphor of the realization of *BRI*.

For the sooner realization of the China Dream "16+1" has opened new perspectives and doors of opportunities for the experts engaged in different fields to showcase the reflection of their works and give their contribution to it.

Wuhan as the biggest metropolitan city of China and the home of the biggest number of educational institution in the world has come to the moment of reawakening the 'Hubei Roads' and spread its 'Da Wuhan' spirit far west to the sixteen countries of *CEECs* by launching the Hubei-*CEECs* Channel after "16+1" has extended its network for the regional collaboration in its frame.

In the 6th year of "16+1" growing the signing agreements of cooperation between universities including exchanging of students and staff, organizing summer schools, scientific conferences, forums, seminars, joint development of teaching curricula, application of scientific and educational grants, developing and publishing joint research outcomes are becoming the main pillars for the realization of this idea so as to showcase the positive impacts of it for the Hubei and *CEECs* multi-field collaboration along their pace to upgrading their relationship to a higher perspective of its growing.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work is a part of the ongoing project 《荆楚文化在丝绸之路的传播：中东欧为例》(*Promoting of Jingchu Culture in the Frame of The Silk Road under the Platform "16+1": The Case of CEECs*) supported by the *China Postdoctoral Foundation*.

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