

Ecological Civilization in Bamboo Culture of Ya'an

Case Study on Bamboo in Classical Poems and Yingjing Bamboo Horn

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Abstract—Bamboo culture plays a very important role in China for bamboo stands for a strong will of life and agrees with Chinese people's understanding and admiration for modesty. All these are best shown in the classical poems. Surrounded by bamboo, Yingjing county of Ya'an prefecture again proves the importance of bamboo culture corresponding to that in classical works, especially with the evidences in one of its typical instrument, Yingjing folk bamboo horn. All the stages from the origin of the horn to its playing and popularity to its inheritance well speak of the ecological civilization in bamboo culture.

Keywords—ecological civilization; Bamboo culture; Yingjing folk bamboo horn; classical poems

I. INTRODUCTION

Ever since the Qin Dynasty, Ya'an has been established as a part of Shu County in China. From then on, it has taken the burden of inheriting Shu culture. It still locates in the west border of Sichuan province (main part of Shu County in the ancient times) nowadays. Ya'an is always famous for its "green" and "black and white" culture, the former one being the green plants and the latter being those lovely pandas. Ya'an is always called the "rainy city" for its large amount of rainfall all through the year, thus there's a wet and moderate climate here. Because of such a temperate environment, there are full of green plants such as tea trees, bamboos, phoebes etc. and animals living on them such as panda, gold monkey, elks etc. In the ancient times, people in Ya'an should offer their tea leaves and other plants as Sichuan pepper as tributes to the king, and Ya'an is called the "birthplace of pandas" for the first panda recorded was found here. Plants and animals live a harmonious life and then human beings here also enjoy their civilizations all through the history. Ya'an is a sedate and comfortable place for people to live in. All these here offer a very suitable evidence to prove the significant role ecology plays in forming a special civilization.

Among so many representative cultural symbols of Ya'an, bamboo culture stands out with certainty. People can really taste bamboo culture of Ya'an as long as they really have the experience of living a life in this prefecture, even just staying here for a very short time or passing through it by chance. Bamboo is seen everywhere in Ya'an: people live in zones surrounded by bamboo plants; they live on foods, tools and furniture made from bamboo; they talk about bamboo in their leisure time, imprint bamboo image on their clothing,

doors, windows as decorations, and directly write about bamboo in their works and they also have created so many musical instruments with bamboo, among which Yingjing bamboo horn is a best representative with its specific characteristics. Every process of producing and playing Yingjing bamboo horn would speak of the great enjoyment led by ecological civilization coming with bamboo culture in Ya'an.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

In the Oxford dictionary, civilization is explained as "a state of human society that is very developed and organized". It sounds like something modern, but for anyone in his special times, the "modern" would be used to refer to "that right moment one is just in". Then, compared with the past, any moment is a developed one as long as the world is developing in peace and order. Therefore, the very special and important word in the definition would be "organized". Ecological civilization emphasizes the part of civilization concerned with the ecology. On a low level, it is about the orderly organization in the natural ecology, which are the chains formed among life circles of the living creatures. On a high level, it is about the organized conceptions accepted, practiced and enjoyed in a society with civilized people who show great respect to mutual respect and affection. The meaning concerned with the words "balance" and "harmony" can be quite well conclusion drawn from the analysis. Civilization is a social state that shows the balance between members concerned and to a high level, it will react to them with that sense of fulfillment, that is, harmony.

It's commonly accepted that in the Paleolithic Period, people began to recognize the importance of living in groups, otherwise, they couldn't resist against the cruel outside. Thus, they organized their lives together and dealt the community business with rules gradually formed, during which the age of primitive civilization came into being. Later on, it went into the age of agricultural civilization and when iron appeared and machines were made, it went into the age of industrial civilization. Not until 1866 did the German scientist Ernst Haeckel initiate the talking about "ecology". He regarded it as a term about the relationships between different communities of living creatures. Then in the 1920s, it triggered off interest of more and more people, such ideas as ecological system, humanistic ecology and natural ecology began to be more and more popular. In 1972, the

United States held the first meeting on human and environment in Stockholm and passed The United National Declaration on Human and Environment, which launched the campaign to protect the environment together for all human beings.[1] And then, the age of ecological civilization came onto the stage, which put much emphasis on the protection of the balance between the natural ecological environment and the fast developing human society.

As one of the greatest civilizations in the history of human beings lasting for the longest time, Chinese civilization successfully proves its great magic and charm. Keeping the same pace with the world, modern Chinese people cares much for the ecological civilization. In 1987, Ye Qianjie, a great Chinese ecologist, initiated the discussion about ecological civilization in China. He regarded ecological civilization as a way to keep a harmonious and unified balance between the human beings and the nature, which would benefit both of them. Thus, the significance of both the ecological civilization and the harmonious balance were highlighted.

In fact, in Chinese culture, the value of great balance between the nature and the human beings has never been neglected, both in the ancient times and in the modern age. Although it has seldom been directly mentioned before, all the essential values contained in Chinese culture reflect how deep a feeling the Chinese hold for the harmony coming together with the balance. No matter in which corner of China and for which single individual Chinese, they just follow the rule of obeying nature and ever try their best to keep the balance. It is embodied in any conception they hold: the balance between Yin and Yang in Taoism; the harmony reached through the balance between two ends in Confucius; the balance between life and death in Buddhism... Harmony goes through all Chinese culture all through the history. In the early ages, the harmony was usually reflected in a relatively superficial level, that is the correspondence among objects or at the most, the living creatures, in the physical environment; and nowadays, it is lifted to the high level of being in accordance with each other between the objective outside nature and the subjective inside feelings, not only the physical life itself but also the thoughts, values and inner feelings of the subjects, especially human beings concerned.

Only when there's a good compromise between human beings and the outside world can real ecological civilization be reached. Civilization is closely concerned with peace and calmness. Only when there's no conflict can it be regarded as being in a state of civilization. The adjective "ecological" gives the strong sense of life to the term "civilization", which successfully gets the "dry" physical world connected with the vivid spiritual and even psychological worlds, indicating that the living creatures' existence, thoughts and even feelings are all taken into account. Ecological civilization is really in a very high level above there and can only be established with the hardworking of all human beings. In turn, a well-established ecological civilization will surely promote the life quality and well-being of all concerned living creatures.

In the 18th national congress of the CPC, the construction of ecological civilization has been clearly deemed as an ambitious goal for the development of China, which actually proves how significant it is. Chairman Xi emphasizes that man and nature are a community of life. Mankind must respect nature, conform to it and protect it. [2] Understanding the significance of ecological civilization, develop and promote it has become an unavoidable task for all people.

III. BAMBOO CULTURE IN CLASSICAL POEMS AND YINGJING BAMBOO HORN OF YA'AN

In terms of the nature in Ya'an, bamboo can be listed as one of the most popular and wide-spreading representatives. As the highest and biggest grass in the world, bamboo grows widely in China. It's easy for human beings to get philosophical sense connected with materials that they usually meet with in their ordinary life, which holds true for bamboo in China. It is commonly accepted in Chinese culture that bamboo is one member of the top four noblest flowers, which all embody the strong will of life for their persistence in growing up under severe seasons and situations, never giving in to all the barriers on their way. Chinese scholars always put bamboo in their works to embody their admiration and longing for that strong will of life. At the same time, because bamboo grows fast, never showing itself off with flashy and colorful flowers and being empty in the middle, Chinese people regard it as one who holds a modest attitude towards life. Chinese culture attaches great importance to that virtue of being plain and modest outside while with profound and compact thoughts in mind, thus bamboo is naturally selected as the symbol of modesty.

Literary works are best media to deliver culture and cultural connotations. All through the long history in China, quite a lot of great literary writers all put bamboo into their works, commonly with a strong positive sense, among which classical poems are best examples. While talking about the beautiful scenery of nature, many poets will write about the bamboo forests, the color green of the bamboo will enforce the sense of life in the poems. While talking about the persistence, resolution and modesty in one's mind, the strong will of bamboo obtained by people from the bamboo would also be shown with images of bamboo itself or things concerned with it. Li Bai writes about bamboo in quite a lot of his works. In his poems, people can see bamboo here and there: "along the secluded path, there is green bamboo"¹; [3] P³⁵⁶ "in the water of streams reflects the green color of the bamboo"; [4] "the bamboo outside the window shakes out the sound of autumn at night" [3] ³⁸⁰... No matter it is in the peaceful spring or energetic summer, it is in the noisy summer night or the silent forest, there is always bamboo, even when the poet tries to look for the Taoist priest in the deep mountain, he talks about his seeing of the bamboo along the way and endows it with a very strong sense of magic touch usually coming together with the gods and fairies. Du Fu is also quite interested in talking about

¹ All the poems in the essay were originally in Chinese. The author translated them into English all by herself.

bamboo in his works. It's obvious that there was bamboo around his house, he talks about planting bamboo, the choice of the planting time, the effect of the plants and the thoughts for memorizing the past caused by the plants; when he goes to his friend's house, he talks about his seeing of the new sprout just springing out — "half of the green sprout still hides in the bamboo shell, the branch has just reaches the top of the wall";[5] when he goes to the wild, he sees the bamboo and says "guarding itself in the green and deep mountain, supporting others with fragile and weak strength"[6]... Not only the great poets, many other famous or unknown writers all write about bamboo in their works, praising it highly. Shu Shi even says that he can live without food but can't live without bamboo around his house. Bamboo is really connected with Chinese special aesthetic about life. Bamboo plays a quite significant role in Chinese culture. Therefore, bamboo culture would be an important part of Chinese culture forever.

In terms of the inheritance of the culture's connotation and value, literary works act as the best media. However, they are not in actual forms, and it's not realistic for everyone to get the profound connotations inside the literal information for all have their own growing and learning background and experience. Poetry is a special genre of literary work, which is more concise and includes more indirect information, thus it is one of the most complicated literary works, less people can understand them well even compared with those who can understand other literary works, not to say those who know a little about literature. Even though not everyone can understand the poems well, there are still so many repetitions of the bamboo images and reflections of bamboo culture here and there in them, which really proves how commonly bamboo culture is recognized as so important a factor in China. When these demonstrations are shown directly in actual forms, the admiration for bamboo culture in China can be better demonstrated. Yingjing county of Ya'an, a place full of historic relics and legends, offers quite persuasive evidences of the high status of bamboo culture in traditional Bashu culture and Chinese culture. That is, there are foods, tools and even instruments directly connected with bamboo and they well display the spirit and values hidden in Chinese understanding of bamboo.

Not only those places filled with bamboo, even in zones lack of real bamboo plant, bamboo culture can be felt in China anywhere anytime. Then, for Ya'an city, where bamboo covers all the mountains and cottages around, where images of bamboo can be seen around any building and constructions, and where both animals and human beings food upon different bamboo foods, bamboo culture would never skip the eyes of all people. In Yingjing, one of the main counties in Ya'an prefecture, the city with a long history, the bamboo culture is so well demonstrated. Entering the county, bamboo plants can be seen in crowds everywhere. Among those three most well-known intangible cultural heritages originating from the famous county for cultural relics in Sichuan, Yingjing sanders, Yingjing bonbon chicken and Yingjing folk bamboo horn, there are at least obvious relations between bamboo and the last two: the

tender bamboo shoot is an indispensable ingredient for the bonbon chicken and the bamboo horn is made from mature bamboo shoot.

Just judging from the name, the direct relationship between Yingjing folk bamboo horn and the bamboo can be clearly shown. The horn appeared in the countryside of Yingjing where bamboo has always been wide-spreading ever since the old ages. It is ever said in China that "since people are born in the mountains, they will live on them", which indicates that people would live their life according to the environment that they are in. Yingjing produces so many bamboo plants, and thus people would surely combine bamboo culture in their life. The horn is made from bamboo and there's not too much a difference between the chosen bamboo material and the made-up horn, which even looks like the original plant just with no leaves on.

The limitation of the imagination would be one's own experience, one can never think out something that has never showed up any trail itself in one's real life. Just because there were so many bamboo plants in Yingjing, there began the application of it to human being's ordinary life. According to the legend, Yingjing bamboo horn first appeared for the communication of those youth's love to each other, as long as they want to propose someone, they would blow the horn. Another one is that the bamboo horn is used as a tool to inform people the invasion of the enemy, especially in the time of the three kingdoms when Master Zhuge Liang captured Meng Huo and released him seven times. No one can prove which one is correct or whether there are other sayings more accurate than these ones. However, it can be clearly seen that all these prove the harmony between the nature and people live with it. Without bamboo, there would never be the bamboo horn. If not for communicating information, there would also be no bamboo horn. The bamboo horn well absorbs the advantages of the mature bamboo shoot, and meanwhile, all through the process of its origin, processing and playing, the sense of ecological civilization is ever excellently displayed.

IV. ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION IN YINGJING BAMBOO HORN

Yingjing bamboo horn has been there in Yingjing for quite a long time. People before all heard more or less about it. In the past few years, it had almost been forgotten for it seldom appeared and even less used in people's ordinary life. However, because such great ones as Mr. Li Dexiang² and others, who are so deeply in love with their local culture and who never want to face the reality of losing it someday in their lives, have tried their best to dig up the value of the bamboo horn and develop and spread it. Led by Mr. Li, people in Yingjing applied to the concerned offices, and the bamboo horn became one of the provincial intangible cultural heritage in 2011. Ever since then on, more and more people have again called back their memory and interest in the bamboo horn and tried to learn about it and spread it.

² Mr. Li Dexiang is the ex-director of the Art & Sports Bureau of Yingjing county. He is the one who applied for Yingjing folk bamboo horn to be intangible cultural heritage.

Though it would be difficult for bamboo horn to go back to its prevailing status in the old times, it's lucky that it would not disappear from Chinese culture now.

Now that the significance of ecological civilization for the development of the society has been discussed about, it's no denying that it is also important for the development of the Yingjing folk bamboo horn. Especially in this fast-developing society both for the physical enjoyment for the invention of so many high techs but also for the spiritual and psychological fulfillment for the improvement of human being's mindset, the harmony led by ecological civilization is really such an important thing. No matter in which stage concerned with the bamboo horn, either for its origin, development, processing or playing, the mutual demonstration and influence between the ecological civilization and the bamboo horn would be so obviously seen and never be denied.

It's magical for the world to hold both the plants and the animals as members of its ecological circles. They should exist and develop together, thus there must be a balance between them, which may be the original reason for the existence of the aboriginal ecological civilization, indicating that all living creatures in the ecology should co-exist well and develop harmoniously. In the ancient times, when human beings can't even satisfy their hunger, they would not spend time thinking about other things apart from food, of course, not any possibility about developing instruments for amusement. All tools and instruments are developed because there are certain groups of people who are relatively free and who hold the desire for a higher and broader life than that of making a living to survive. When human civilization goes to a higher degree, when people begin to hold other desires after they can eat enough and they hold the basic health and sheltering, there would be their pursuit of the advanced civilization, which is not only for physical satisfaction but also for spiritual and psychological fulfillment. Thus, it's not strange to say that when such an instrument as bamboo horn was invented, Yingjing people should be in a period living a relatively peaceful, satisfactory and rich life.

There's no official recording for the origin of Yingjing folk bamboo horn, but among those two most popular legends about its origin, the one concerned with the youth's communication of their mutual feelings could be more persuasive and reliable and then acceptable. The bamboo horn is directly made from bamboo. It well makes use of the emptiness of the bamboo branch in the middle and the solidity of the bamboo shoot surrounding outside. No one would think of using the bamboo to make such an instrument if there's no bamboo around. The growing of bamboo plants in all the surroundings of Yingjing paves the way for the existence of the bamboo horn, which shows the balance between the nature and human beings' desire in ordinary life. People are born on the earth and they live on materials from the earth. To a certain degree, it can be said that what one is seeing and experiencing is the limitation of what one can make and invent. The appearance of bamboo horn is a natural result of the counterbalance between the naturally growing bamboo in Yingjing and the desire of transiting information by people there.

In the legend about the seven captures of Menghuo, it is said that the bamboo horn was created to inform Master Zhuge Liang and others of the approaching of the enemy and Menghuo himself. Then it should be in the time of the Three Kingdoms, which was an age for wars and conflicts. No one exactly knows whether Master Zhuge Liang had really been in Ya'an, not to say Yingjing, even though there are a lot of legends about his being here to control the minorities then, there's no specific written proof. Even nowadays, Ya'an is still the border between those minority people in such mountainous places as Aba, Liangshan and Han people in such plain zones as Chengdu, it's obvious that hundreds of years ago, Yingjing, the more remote county than Ya'an city should be a place with few residents. For such few people in such wild mountains in such a turbulent age, invention of such an instrument as bamboo horn would be in a low possibility for if it were just to inform others, the bamboo horn couldn't send out too loud a voice, then what is the difference between other more easily made horns or speakers and the bamboo horn? Meanwhile, the horn looks simple in its structure but it is really a delicate work to get usually 24 sections of the bamboo shoot together, there being no possibility for a good combination of them as long as there's a larger/ smaller size of any specific section or even a corner, not to say some leakage or detriment on the main body of the bamboo shoot, not possible for just a very very small one, no mistake of shortcoming is allowed. While for the second legend about communicating their feelings, it is understandable. When people have free time to enjoy their life, when there's a good balance between their actual life and the nature around them, they would try their best to enjoy their life with the assistance of different ways and tools available from the nature. The original bamboo horn can just send out the sound like "purr, toot, toot". Though it's a simple sound, when it is given by some plant that people are familiar with but never knowing it can "speak", it will be given a special connotation, especially when the making of the horn actually contains so delicate skills. The agreement between the plant and the human beings' desires really shows the meaning and value of ecological civilization. Only when there are no conflicts and arguments and when there's a harmonious atmosphere, people's enjoyment of life can be lifted from the physical level to the spiritual and psychological level. In fact, no matter which one is more true to the reality, both of these legends show that there's a long history for Yingjing folk bamboo horn and it comes together with a sense of harmony needed a lot in the ecological civilization to a certain degree.

Besides the origin of Yingjing folk bamboo horn, its way of making and its development and even its influence also speak of the significance of ecological civilization and their mutual influence and embodiment more or less. While making the horn, there are special requirement for the original material, the bamboo. Generally speaking, no one can decide how strong and which form the bamboo will grow into except the nature. While looking for the material suitable for making the horn, the first rule is to go to the ones originally grow well and almost agree with the maker's imagination for the potential horn. Actually, one kind of bamboo, *sinocalamus affinis*, would be the best choice. It

would never be a coincidence that it grows most in Yingjing and then the bamboo horn is born there in Yingjing. It means that living creatures will always evolve according to the natural conditions around. While making the horn, it is required that the number for the sections should be 24, when they are connected into a line, from the top to the bottom, it will be longer and larger. The requirement agrees with the 24 in the 24 solar terms accepted by Chinese ever since the ancient times and the natural growing state of the bamboo plant. For the whole process, the horn maker should observe the texture and formation of the original material carefully and obey it cautiously. All these are the basis for the maker to make a good bamboo horn. Taking the balance and harmony between the nature and human being's desires into account, respecting the nature and the reward of enjoying one's life further all are demonstrated in the process of the making of the bamboo horn, which is the basis for reaching the ecological civilization but also the reflection of the influence of ecological civilization in the social life.

When the making process is done, it goes to the playing of the horn. It is known that the Yingjing folk bamboo horn can only give out the simple sound "purr, toot, toot" at first. So, the more "purr, toot, toot" the player can blow out, the more powerful and stronger he would be regarded as, and the more attractive he is to the girls they want to propose. It reached the balance between the nature and the human beings bridged by the horn at that time. The criteria for judging whether someone is the strong and attractive one is more equal to the one with a good physical health and then with a good lung capacity. With more and more advanced technologies appearing, there's no need for people to try so hard to create a bamboo horn that can only send out such simple sounds. In terms of its function as a tool for communication, the advanced phones and PCs can do a much better work. But now, when people enter this new modern age, they begin to recognize the importance of the cultural connotation and value these traditional folk instruments contain. They begin to care about it more and more and they are in pursuit of a spiritual and even psychological satisfaction brought about by the rebirth of those traditional culture. There is innovation for the bamboo horn, and after years' researches and promotions, it can give out the sound like bird's chirping now. It speaks of the advanced harmony between the nature and human beings, which will surely reflect the influence and significance of a better ecological civilization.

V. CONCLUSION

Ecological civilization attaches much importance to the state of being harmonious, that is the balance between all living creatures in the ecological circles. Chinese bamboo culture well represents the connotation and meaning of ecological civilization for as a kind of ordinary plant easily seen all over China, especially in such provinces as Sichuan, bamboo stands for strong will of life for Chinese people because it can be evergreen before its death and bamboo also stands for the great value of being modest that Chinese people admire so much because in Chinese people's mind, no matter how strong they are as the highest grass, they never

show off and they never put their proudness in their body and just keep it empty there. For Yingjing county of Ya'an prefecture, the bamboo culture is even better displayed in the visible instrument made from bamboo, the Yingjing folk bamboo horn. Taking all the process of its origin, making process, playing and influence into account, it's no doubt that the bamboo horn so perfectly shows the significance of ecological civilization and it is also a good representative of the ecological civilization.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As achievement of the projects "Study of Folk Culture and Its Translation and Introduction Based on English and Chinese Versions of Classics: case study on Ba-shu culture reflected in classics and its translation and introduction"(SCWY17-14) supported by Foreign language and Literature Research Center in Sichuan Province and Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press; "Field Investigation and Collation on Yingjing Folk Bamboo Horn and Its Multi-lingual Inheritance" (MJ19-69) supported by The Research Center of Folk Culture; "Study of Allusions Concerned with Ya'an in Literary Canons and Their Translation Under the Big Data Background"(YA2019059) supported by Ya'an Social Sciences Association.

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