

Beauty of Handwork

On the Significance of the Workshop System and the Manual Production in the Contemporary Society

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Abstract—The workshop system is the concrete embodiment of the handicraft production in the contemporary society. The manual productions have highlighted its important value and significance in the modern society. This paper summarizes the four values of the manual production in the local social production, which is the supplement, the emotion, the harmony and the national character. It is pointed out that the value of handicraft production cannot be replaced in the contemporary society.

Keywords—workshop system; manual production; industrial manufacture; value

I. INTRODUCTION

What is the production? The earliest origins come from Records of the Grand Historian – HuoZhi Biography: "I am good at the management of agricultural production, just like Yi Yin and Lu Shang are good at using a trick, and Sun Quan is good at the art of war, Shang Yang is good at management of nation". Those refer to agricultural production, and create material and spiritual wealth in general; especially people use tools to create production and subsistence activities. What is the handicraft? The handicraft is refers to the use hand skills to make work, with hand (without a machine) operation, depend on manual work or manual process.

So the conclusion can be known: Manual production is the manual labor, the use of tools for small scale industrial production. In this we assume that the re interpretation of production and manual is useful to understand the core values of "hand".

II. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKSHOP SYSTEM

Chinese manual production has a long history; manual production is the early form of industrial production, later, derived out the master craftsman and manipulatory manufacture. The production marks the emergence of human civilization, and manual production as a kind of form of creation, created a brilliant ancient civilization. Kaogongji, Heavenly Creations, Xiushi recorded, Taoji are representative of the era of manual production. The Stone Age, Bronze Age,

Lacquer Ware Age and Porcelain Age are associated with artisanal production tools, with a mark of the manual production. We should be grateful to the person, who used the manual production tool to define the historical period; this means that they are not only accurately sum up the characteristics of the times; the most important is to highlight the value of manual production in that era. It can be said that the history of the development of human civilization, is the history of the development of hand tools. As Engels said, the fight against the stone will produce stone civilization; similarly, the Bronze Age also has a suitable bronze civilization.

Workshop is China's most ancient traditional manual mode, bearing the family's rise and fall, culture and art, both in rural and urban areas, regardless of their size, workshops are organized that based on a family. In general there is a family who holds a handicraft, and the other families help to product and sell the related products. Such as Tianjin clay figurine Zhang, Gaomi Niejiazhuang clay sculpture, Fengxiang Tai's Fengxiang paintings, embodied not only is craftsmanship of inheritance, it is the family from generation to generation of the cultural heritage. Therefore, the workshop is the best to reflect the manual culture, national culture and regional culture. And now this a era of machine industrial production, the manual workshop gradually can't meet needs of people and start to be dying, for example, the folk art New Year pictures, there are only a little of manual workshop of New Year pictures in Shanxi Fengxiang and Shandong Gaomi, and they are family workshops. They inherited the original ancestral stunt and constantly inject new vitality. These folk artists have played an important role in the development of the production of hand. However, with the development of modern society, industrialization and commercialization are becoming more and more serious, the manual workshop has only a small living space, workshop system is also facing the challenge that change and innovation in the new period. But it does not deny that the workshop system is still the indispensable manual production mode in the era of industrialization.

The workshop system is the concrete embodiment of the development of the handicraft industry in the present post-industry era. Hand workshop, the emphasis is a high degree of skill, art, personalized handmade products, with sophisticated

production, strong artistic effect and other characteristics, reflects the value of human life and the spiritual value of the process, and it undoubtedly has important significance in the contemporary social, especially the age of information and technology isolated life and personalized attention, calling on the manual workshop to come back, in fact, is called for regression of human society original pursuit of material and spiritual communion state. At present, gradually rises in the city of art, pottery, hand embroidered and the folk custom product creative bazaar verify the handcraft workshops has much vitality in the contemporary social production, the personal emotional implication in the manual process is not replaced by contemporary industry standardization and mass production.

III. THE HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE MANUAL PRODUCTION AND THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PRODUCTION

The coming of the era of industrialization is the inevitable development of history; it is an irresistible trend. It indicates that the world civilization has entered a new stage. From the mid nineteenth Century to the end of the nineteenth Century, the Art and craft movement initiated by William Maurice against the arrival of industrial civilization and advocates the use of traditional crafts instead of mechanized mass production. But ultimately in the irreversible tide of industrialization it is declining, even the New Art Movement is just the final struggle. In the modern design movement, it has become the leading of the mechanical age; Corbusier's idea of mechanical aesthetics has become the most dominant declaration in the industrial age.

Today, when the industrialization develops to the extreme, there will be a series of criticism. The proliferation of the internationalism style, "less is more" extreme, resulting in buildings around the world is single, apathy, lacking of human touch, and the direct consequence is that under the background of the "less is boring", bop design and Italy against the mainstream design and other postmodernism design boycott. When the material society develops to the extreme, people no longer pursue the enjoyment of material life; more is the pursuit of the spirit of the world. In short, the more developed the material; the spirit of the pursuit is stronger, spiritual level is more high-end. The global economy and culture rapidly develop; the high technology and information age is coming, and striving to achieve the balance between cultural consumption demand and material demand, has become a new demand for the survival and development of human society. Therefore, the manual or mechanical, become the new focus and new topics of the development of arts and crafts.

The author thinks that the handwork and machinery is a necessary means in the new era. With the protection of the intangible cultural heritage and the cultural and creative industries, people's need of the spirit and culture is more than ever before, and all of these are satisfied by manual operation. Manual production has a long history in ancient China, as an agricultural country, manual production has created a splendid civilization. That is to say, the history of the development of ancient Chinese culture is actually the history of the development of manual culture. But with the vigorous development of the industrialization of science and technology

and the modern mode of production, people gradually addicted to the convenience of the industry culture and further away from manual operation, even think the manual process is backward, the old-fashioned, regard industrial production as the only way of social production, and never think of the contradiction between modern industrial production standardization and the demand for social life. Therefore, from this point of view, it is very necessary to re-understand the value and significance of the manual operation in the contemporary society.

A. *Manual Production Is a Useful Supplement to the Contemporary Social Production.*

With the agricultural society into the industrial age, industrial products gradually replace the original manual products to serve for the people's production and life. The basic necessities of life gradually mark the machine production, and manual production has gradually ignored by people. The transformation of society, the mechanization of production means that the manual production seems to have to withdraw from the stage of history based on the farming civilization. However, manual production is closely related to the real life of people for thousands of years, it is an important part of people's lives, and it is associated with all areas of life. Now China is in a period of rapid transformation, the economic aggregate ranks the top in the world, but the development of the polarization is serious in general, one is the stage of development of industrial eastern coastal areas have entered the later stage, on the other hand the remote western region is still in pre-industrial stage. In some remote areas in the west of China, industrialization is still not completely universal, and the manual production is still playing an important role. Some of the rural areas of Western will make a manual production with raw materials that made by themselves or handy resource, such as the earthen cooking container, hand-woven rattan baskets, scarves, socks even the traffic apparatus. In these areas that cannot enjoy the convenience of industrial civilization, manual production is still an indispensable part of people's lives.

B. *Manual Production Is the Emotional Compensation of the Contemporary Social Production.*

Manual production has a temperature, it can be better to convey the feelings than the cold machine. British theorist John Ruskin once said that the product only touched by hands is a good product. He used to think that industrial production is not an ideal mode of production, and he also thought that the wise work should have three conditions, they are respectively honest, useful and cheerful, but the industrial production only emphasizes the "useful". At the same time, Ruskin believes that the machine does not reflect the value of people, because the people's hard work and labor is completely invisible. According to this, Ruskin believes that the production of machinery is the lack of honest, and full of "false". Therefore, he proposed to restore handicrafts, so that the product is full of people's impression. He thought the traditional handicraft product was the real work. So the importance of handcraft can be found, handcraft has a soul, a temperature, and is able to pass emotion. In the production of contemporary society, the emotion of production of the manual production has been

replaced by ruthless assembly line. On the one hand, people enjoy the convenience brought by industrialization; on the other hand, they have to lose the way of expression of manual production. The German scholar Adorno Horkheimer said in *Cultural Industry: The Enlightenment of Mass Deception*: "As long as a person has leisure time, he has to accept the products of culture manufacturer. Kant's formalism is still looking forward to the role of the individual. In his view, individuals can establish a certain relationship between a variety of emotional experience and the basic concept; however, the industry has robbed this effect of individual. If it first provides the service to consumers, it will be the schematization." Industrial production opened a new chapter for human history; however, people have to endure despotism that ignores consumer's psychological needs in the society, which only advocates science and efficiency. In the pre-industrial era, people used the warmth and the beauty of human nature of manual production to withstand indifference of industrial production; in the pre-industrial era, people's daily necessities are the combination of handicrafts and arts, there are so much the beauty of art, the beauty of human nature and the beauty of emotion, it reflects the perceptual thinking is more than rational thinking. After nineteenth Century, mechanical production gradually replaces manual production; the mode of production is no longer in the pursuit of a sense of originality, but turn to a combination with science. It embodies the beauty of science and the beauty of machinery. People's daily necessities begin to become unified and standardized industrial products. The contemporary industrial civilization has created the city culture. People living in the reinforced concrete buildings, using the standardized living goods, enjoying the convenience of industrial civilization, but at the same time they lose the way of emotional expression of handicraft culture. The natural emotion of human can't be placed, and the confusion and restlessness has become the pronoun of the urban life. The New Year pictures and paper-cut become the sustenance of life. There is an urgent need for a kind of emotional sustenance and expression to bring the peace of mind. The manual operation links people and nature, and the creation process is also the expression of the creator's emotion, it is a process of entertainment, and fully reflects the humanistic side. Manual production can be said to be a kind of emotional compensation for the people in the social production of the industrial age.

C. *The Manual Production Is the Adjustment of the Harmonious Relations in the Contemporary Society*

In information age, the blind pursuit of material leads to anxiety of an individual's spiritual life, cause the dual crisis of survival of the human spiritual life and the material life. The harmonious unification of man and nature embodied by Chinese traditional handicraft production is a kind of adjustment and rectification of the relationship between modern industrial civilization and the natural. In traditional hand industrial society, people control the tools; however, industrial production has upset the relationship: people must cooperate with the operation of the machine, and the relationship is separated between man and nature. Facing the industrial manufacture destroying the nature, the manual production opposes that and has an emphasis on respect for

nature and individual life. Therefore, manual production is the result of the harmonious development of social nature and human, and it is the ecological technology of dependence and blend in nature. Kaogongji defined the "manual workers" as that "the people who can fully understand the shape and performance of natural materials, and process it according to the characteristic of material for people", "the best manual production is that combine with the season, land, materials and manual workers". That emphasizes the tight relationship between human and nature, manual workers only the combine with the season and land to product an excellent production; The Heavenly Creations written by Song Yingxing in Ming Dynasty records a large number of technology, and involves the relationship between creation and nature. These ancient documents fully embody the unity of the opposites of the handicraft production and the natural ecology, the harmony is an important feature in the production of the modern society.

D. *Manual Production Is the Materialization Performance of the National Characteristics in the Contemporary Society*

The history of hand culture is as long as the history of the nation. Therefore, manual production is closely linked with the country and history; it is a materialization performance of national culture. Japanese folk art expert Liu Zongyue pointed out: "The task of handicraft is to show the national character, all implements must have the national character, the loss of national character will make the craft of the country tragic. The beauty of technology is one of the beauties of the nation. Only attaching the importance to national character can make a real peace and understanding; only material object with national character can find the common universality of many countries."

Clearly, the product of the manual operation has a national symbol; it reflects the national character and creativity of the whole nation. The nationality of manual production is closely related to life and human requirements, life attitude and life style, psychological characteristics and thinking, human and society, human and nature. And form the theme of handicraft culture in different countries. People can achieve a kind of cultural identity by knowing the handicraft that bears cultural tradition. An independent nation's identity is a kind of relationship which is constructed in the process of people interacting.

Manual production is a kind of collective embodiment of culture and aesthetic of a regional or a national, people's spiritual home will find a foothold by manual production. The nationality and continuity of manual production build a bridge of communication between the nation's history and traditional culture and the contemporary society.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MANUAL PRODUCTION IN THE CONTEMPORARY NATIONAL CULTURE

The manual production is a reflection of the national culture and aesthetic psychology, can meet the aesthetic demands of the nation. Manual production is created by people with their own hands, and there is an emotional connection between people and the productions, it is not only a kind of emotional expression and but also a kind of aesthetic

satisfaction. In the process of industrial production, the machine production is in the dominant position, and the relation between the hand and the natural material is cut off. The industrialization city is built by the deviating from the nature, the unity and cold industrial product makes it impossible to have a close feeling with them. Industrial production brings material prosperity in surface, but blocks the channels of people's emotional communication. The affection between people and nature, people and people has impacted by the modern social production mode. People trapped under the cramped machine production. So where is the human aesthetic feeling in the end? The manual production as a historical memory to reflect the culture of a region or a nation, whether it can treat the emotional anxiety that come from contemporary social production? Maybe we don't have to delve further into the exact meaning of manual production; we just enjoy real handmade products when we are leisure. The national art symbol can soothe people's minds, and it may also be based on its shape and color to perceive the history. Just as Forde Skou thought, the fundamental responsibility of the handicrafts in today's society is to repair and improve the artificial environment that had been abandoned by the industrial society, so that our material and spiritual life can be closer... At the same time, it will have an impact on the industrial production itself, and ultimately become a link between the traditional technology and modern technology. Therefore, the role and influence of the manual production in modern society is very important. The modern social production needs manual production to involve in, the inherent close relationship between people and nature, people and people will be established again. In today's society, with the transformation of the economy and the radical change of the mode of production, the manual production is facing the change of the environment. However the new change means a new opportunity to change, the supplement, emotion, nationality, harmonious of manual production will make people in modern society production feel the needs of the aesthetic, spiritual consolation and cultural belonging. I think this is what people want in today's society. The French enlightenment philosopher Rousseau said in *Emile*, in all jobs, the most able to make people close to the natural state of the occupation is manual labor, through the hand and the brain work; it helps the development of human mind. It is the most honest, the most beneficial to the people, and the most noble and most sacred occupation that human can engage in, but this idea is far from acceptable to society.

V. CONCLUSION

The author believes that the social production of any era will not be a single, unchanged, as long as the mode of production is suitable to the development of social production and the needs of life, as long as the mode of production can guide the richness and diversity of social economic, the mode of production is reasonable. It shouldn't be that one the mode of production simply replaces another mode. We should be more thinking: Under the new environment, how will we guide the transformation of the production and the development that is closely related to modern social production? Under the premise of not contrary to the laws of manual production and operation mode, how to make manual

production lead to the system of contemporary social production? I think these are the follow-up topics that we need to pay more attention to and concern.

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