

Traditional agriculture and traditional culture

Ni Kai¹

1 College of Humanity and Law, Zhejiang Agriculture and Forest University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang 310000, China

ABSTRACT. *Agriculture is regarded as the mother of civilization. Chinese civilization has gradually evolved into the unique traditional culture of China in the long development process of agricultural social. Therefore, Chinese civilization could be called agricultural civilization in some aspects. In order to better understand Chinese traditional culture, it is necessary to further explore it from the perspective of agricultural culture.*

KEYWORDS: *Chinese civilization; Agricultural civilization; Relation*

1. Introduction

It was widely believed that Chinese traditional culture is an agricultural culture (Ye et al., 1993). Most Chinese scholars who study Chinese traditional culture took traditional agriculture as their research basis and carried out many explorations. In the European language, the original meaning of “culture” is “cultivate”. Hence, the medieval culture of Western Europe was also an agricultural culture in a sense. However, it is apparently inappropriate to say that agricultural culture is traditional culture. Therefore, in order to clarify the relationship between Chinese traditional agriculture and traditional culture, we should correctly understand Chinese traditional agricultural culture and further explore what influences traditional agriculture produced in the process of traditional culture breeding and development.

2. Ancient Chinese agricultural culture

2.1 Types of ancient Chinese agricultural culture

Traditional agricultural culture is the basis of traditional culture, Chinese traditional culture belongs to agricultural culture type (Zou, 2006). Since Qin and Han dynasties, China's four agricultural culture areas have been established, namely the plain farming culture, the grassland livestock culture, the forest hunting culture and the lake fishing culture. Plain farming culture areas possessed flat fertile land, mild climate, and plentiful water supply. In plain farming culture areas, land was the

basis of farming areas, crop cultivation was the main activity, moreover, there had a certain amount of animal husbandry, forestry, fisheries and handicrafts. Grassland livestock culture was distributed in the remote desert grassland areas of China, which were generally inhabited by ethnic minorities. During the Qin and Han dynasties, the ethnic minorities in the northern grassland areas were xiongnu, donghu, loufan, wusun, and the ethnic groups in the western regions and the northeast. They created the animal husbandry culture in the animal husbandry production. Besides, China was a mountainous country, the forest hunting culture distributed in the vast mountainous areas, where cultivated land was little, but wild animal and plant, mineral resources were rich. Due to the inconvenient traffic in the mountain areas, the forest residents mainly lived by planting small plots of farmland, gathering, hunting, wood cutting, and charcoal burning. The lake fishing culture was very popular in the neolithic age. At that time, water, net and fish patterns were common on potteries. People fished and ate fish, decorated with fish bones. All kinds of fish pictures, such as conjoined fish, variant fish, mermaid, bird fish, etc., had rich cultural meanings. After entering the agricultural society, the fishery was mainly concentrated on the banks of big rivers, around lakes and coastal areas.

From the south to the north, from the east to the west, there are different types of agricultural culture in the boundless expanse of the Chinese territory. Due to the compatibility and individuality of different cultures, Chinese traditional agricultural culture still retains strong heterogeneity in the system of multiple intersection, and thus has vigorous vitality.

2.2 Agriculture-oriented thoughts

Ancient China was a typical agricultural society with a profound history of agriculture-oriented thoughts. In the middle of the warring states period, Shang Yang and others first put forward the idea of “agriculture-oriented”. Shang Yang believed that agriculture was the source of food and clothing for the people and the foundation of social stability, and only by developing agriculture could we enrich the country and strengthen the army, and then unified the country (Zhu, 2008). In the aspect of governing the country, Confucianism represented by Confucius and Mencius also advocated the idea of taking agriculture as the foundation, taking the people as the foundation, and the people were more important than the ruler. Han dynasty inherited the system of Qin dynasty, and also insisted on the emphasis on agriculture and restraint of commerce. This view of agriculture as the foundation of a country was the agriculture-oriented thoughts. The agriculture-oriented thoughts passed down from generation to generation through the education of educators, which constituted the important content of the political education.

2.3 The idea of “setting officials to teach the people”

As early as 4000 years ago, China established the system of “agricultural teachers”. It was recorded by Records of the Historian that Houji knew the

properties of soil and the habits of crops and all the people learned from him. The leader of the tribal alliance Yao heard about this thing, so he made Houji to take charge of agriculture (Wei, 2010). The agricultural teachers that in charge of tribal farming activities were the world's first government-appointed official to host agricultural extension education. Before the Zhou dynasty, Chinese agricultural development was remarkable (Yin and Zhang, 2006). At the same time, officials lost their original superior position and scattered among the people. After that, they recruited students in a private capacity to impart knowledge. At this time they were no longer “officials”, but become “teachers”. Emperor Wu appointed agronomist Zhaoguo as the official in charge of army grain, which was a typical example of “setting officials to teach the people” in the history of ancient agricultural science and technology education, indicating that an agricultural education system led by the government had been established in BC to demonstrate, train and popularize new technologies and fine varieties. Xuxing, a representative figure of the ancient agriculture and a thinker in the warring states period, advocated that “everyone must work, even the king is no exception”, which had an irreconcilable contradiction with Confucianism, whom advocated that “those who work with the mind govern others, and those who work with labor govern by others”. On the basis of fully affirming the division of labor and mutual assistance, Xu advocated equal exchange of goods and self-sufficiency, which represented the earliest ideal social pursuit of Chinese peasants. Due to years of war, the agricultural production was seriously damaged and needed to resume production after the mongols entered the central plains. Kublai khan attached great importance to agricultural mulberry after he ascended the throne. In 1261 AD, he advised the department of agriculture specialized in teaching people to till the land and water conservancy. Then in 1271 AD, Kublai khan established “social schools”, and choose the classics as the teachers and the senior as the master of the school to teach farmers to do things. This was a school with both cultural education and agricultural education in ancient China, providing a good power and nutrition for the development of agriculture and the breeding of our traditional culture.

3. Effects of traditional agriculture on traditional culture

3.1 Effects of traditional agriculture of different civilizations on culture

Traditional agriculture has a profound influence on Chinese traditional material civilization. The core of culture is ideology, among which values and ways of thinking optimally reflect the deep characteristics of a nation and this is where traditional agriculture has the most profound influence on Chinese culture. Since ancient times, Chinese people had attached great importance to the unity of humanity and heaven, that was the harmony between man and nature. On the contrary, western countries paid more attention to the transcendence and conquest of nature. The root of this difference lied in the difference of traditional production mode between China and the West. China has a continental geographical environment and a self-sufficient natural economy. Compared with Roman industry

and commerce, Chinese agricultural production was more restricted by natural phenomena. Farmers felt the vitality of nature in the long process of agricultural production and formed a close relationship with nature. Compared with China, the agriculture of ancient Greece was in decline. Because of the poor land and the unpredictable sea, people were so disappointed with agricultural production that they were forced to leave the land. The result was fear and alienation from the land and sea. After a long time, a kind of antagonistic relationship was formed between human and nature and people's greatest desire was to control and conquer nature. The cultural differences between China and the West are neither good nor bad. Chinese value of "things and people are one" is compatible with the civilization development before Song and Yuan dynasties and can successfully cope with the challenges of nature. After Yuan and Ming dynasties, they lost the ability to cope with the challenges of nature and western culture, because this concept was lack of scientific spirit of exploration, making China had been in an agricultural society for a long time. Meanwhile, the western industrial society had made great achievements in conquering nature. However, it only paid attention to human needs for nature rather than the peaceful coexistence between human and nature, resulting in the shortage of resources and the deterioration of ecological environment.

3.2 Effects of Chinese traditional agriculture on culture

The characteristics of Chinese traditional agricultural culture were determined by the characteristics of agricultural production activities (Wang and Jing, 2013). First of all, the first characteristic of agriculture was that it depended on both nature and manpower. Pragmatic was the basic characteristics of farmers, not pragmatic, no harvest (Han, 2005). In terms of culture, more emphasis was placed on practicality, and subjects that directly related to production and life were naturally valued, such as agriculture, astronomy, medicine and so on. Secondly, as a product of the agricultural economy, the doctrine of mean has been regarded as a characteristic of Chinese wisdom all the time. The mean advocated reconciliation, balance, and opposing extremes, reflected in culture, which was to seek common ground while reserving differences when various cultures meet. Finally, agriculture was characterized by making friends with nature. As can be seen from the "unity of all things", which often said by the ancient Chinese, the Chinese traditional thinking mode was comprehensive, regarding man and nature as a whole. This was consistent with Needham's concept of "organic unified view of nature". This idea of thinking comes from traditional agriculture, and the theory of "The Three Elements" was the crystallization of this kind of thinking. The Three Elements referred to favorable climatic, geographical and human conditions, its essence was that the natural philosophy of the universe summed up by ancient Chinese in the long-term agricultural production and natural struggle. It was the most core content in the knowledge system of Chinese ancient agricultural production. These theories were not so much transplanted from ancient Chinese philosophy to agricultural production, but rather the sublimation of long-term production practice.

4. Conclusion

Chinese culture has been going on for thousands of years. The reason is that Chinese agricultural society has a strong cohesive force. The highly developed agricultural civilization conforms to the development of nature and society, making Chinese culture constantly adjust its development path and absorb other essences. Therefore, Chinese culture has unparalleled advantages and continuity.

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