

The Wine Culture of Ethnic Minorities and Moral Implications

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Abstract: China is a unified, multi-ethnic country with a long history. It is the hometown of wine and has a rich and colorful wine culture. The wine culture of ethnic minorities occupies a unique and important position in the Chinese culture. It has rich connotations, carries many moral implications, and plays an important role in moral cultivation. It is a valuable heritage of our country and the world.

1. Introduction

Wine is an important part of Chinese culture, as well as a cultural element shared by all nationalities of the world. A systematic research on wine cultures of ethnic minorities in China is not only conducive to cultural inheritance and innovation, but also facilitates cultural exchanges between China and the West. It can produce positive social and cultural impacts. However, among current researches at home and abroad, there are only a few studies on the wine culture of Chinese minorities. Relevant articles only point out its role of moral bearing and self-cultivation, but fail to provide specific discussion. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to sort out and summarize the connotation and category of minority wine culture, as well as the embodiment of moral connotation and the role of realistic moral cultivation.

2. Connotation and Category of the Wine Culture of Ethnic Minorities

2.1 Connotation of the wine culture of ethnic minorities

In the book *Zuo Zhuan*, there is the saying, “the great events of the country are sacrificing and fighting”. In ancient times, war and expansion determined the rise and fall of countries, nations and tribes. Warriors needed wine to enhance troop morale before the war; they also needed wine to celebrate their achievements in triumph. Wine embodies the spiritual connotation of motivation, enterprising and unity. Wine also plays a prominent role in important festivals. It is one of the necessary supplies in rituals praying for heaven and ancestors. In ceremonies, wine can represent the respect for heaven and ancestors, and reflect the spiritual connotation of revering heaven and ancestors. The customs continues today. The connotation of minority wine culture is not only reflected in sacrifices and wars, but also in its close relationship with the daily life of different people. The spiritual connotations of utilizing nature, seeking harmony and maintaining friendliness are embodied in the wine culture of ethnic minorities; the spirit of honesty and kindness, solidarity and mutual assistance, hospitality, the respect for the old and the love for the young are also embodied in wine customs. The characters of peaceful, brave, honest and trustworthy, as well as mutual caring are reflected in the narration of minority wine culture. With the development of history, the spiritual connotation of wine culture has been enriched.

2.2 Category of the wine culture of ethnic minorities

The category of wine culture in ethnic minorities is constantly enriching with the change of times. It has some differences in various historical periods.

In the primitive society, wine making was very popular in China. Fruit wine, medicine wine and grape wine came into being. At that time, the productivity was low. The content of minority wine culture was simple and the scope was small. With the development of the times, in the pre-Qin period, due to the rise of rites and music, strict rituals related to alcoholic beverages emerged. The

link between alcoholic beverages and morality was strongly advocated. According to Zhou Li, the elders were the best treated. In “the ritual of drinking in the countryside, the elderly who are sixty years old can drink three cups; seventy years old can drink four cups; eighty years old can drink five cups; ninety years old can drink six cups. The difference shows the respect for seniority “. ^[1] At that time, “virtue” and “rite” had blended with the minority wine culture.

By the Spring and Autumn Period as well as the Warring States Period, with the development of productive forces and the wide application of production tools, the wine culture further developed, and its rank became more stringent than that of the Zhou Dynasty. With the division of liquor sets, the wine culture of minority nationalities was integrated into the etiquette hierarchy system. In this period, the liquor culture of different nationalities and regions became richer and more diverse. By comparing the types of liquor sets, wine customs and wine culture narrations of different ethnic groups in different periods, we can find that the category of wine culture of ethnic minorities has been inheriting and developing with the interaction of ethnic minorities, and permeating into various fields of minority civilization development. With the development of the times, the economy, politics and culture of ethnic minority areas blend with each other. The content is constantly enriching; the scope is constantly expanding. The influence is becoming increasingly profound. It has become one of the comprehensive carriers of the moral thoughts and political cultures of all ethnic groups.

3. The Main Embodiment of Cultural and Moral Implications in the Wine Culture of Ethnic Minorities

3.1 Moral implications in wine culture

The wine culture of ethnic minorities reflects the creative thinking of people of all ethnic groups in utilizing and transforming the nature, and shows the different living environment and aesthetic taste of each nationality. Wine culture is the recognition of the living environment of each ethnic minority, and embodies the moral implications of frankness, friendship and harmonious coexistence of ethnic minorities.

First, the worship of nature is embodied in wooden wine sets. In our country, the Ewenki people lived in Great Khingan Mountains like making wine utensils with a kind of tree with high cold resistance. The utensils are called birch cups. In the eyes of local people, the making of birch cup is a long-standing handicraft. During the marriage period, the wedding hosts should pour wine into two delicate birch cups, and then the bride and groom need to pour the wine into the fire, so as to show respect to the god of fire. Then they need to toast to their parents. It is precisely because of this unique custom that birch and the Ewenki people have an indissoluble bond. The mountain forest has become the spiritual sustenance of Ewenki people; the harmonious coexistence between man and nature is achieved in the process of mutual respect. Compared with the Ewenki people, the Gaoshan nationality lived in Taiwan of China use another kind of wooden drinking utensil called “Nagale”. With two handles on the left and right, and two grooves in the middle, it can be used by two people. The wares have different colors, but are usually carved with mysterious figures and totems from different tribes. When the two tribes are allied, the delegates hold the drinking utensils on one side and drink off the wine. This ritual does not only verify the alliance and cooperation between the two tribes, but also represents the spirit of equal cooperation and mutual benefits. The wine culture of wood utensil embodies the moral implications of respecting elders, respecting the nature, as well as solidarity and mutual assistance. It is the manifestation of ethnic minorities’ spirit of constantly striving to become stronger.

Second, the warmth and hospitality are embodied in the wine set made of horn. Wine utensils made of animal horns have a very long history in various ethnic groups. Miao, Dong, Yi and other nationalities still use these utensils. In Northeast Yunnan, the Yi people use cups made of ox horns when the guests arrive. The host holds the cup full of wine with both hands, and then passes the cup to the visitor, expressing the respect for the guest. It is also the traditional custom of the Yi people to use the horn wine in “banquets” of weddings. In Guizhou, the Miao and Dong people also use ox

and sheep horns to make wine utensils and usually use them on weddings. Through the usage of wine utensils of Miao, Dong and Yi ethnic minorities, we can see that ethnic minorities also use animal materials to make wine sets. In this period, this kind of horn wine utensils has special cultural symbols and symbolizes the longing for seeking roots and the happy reunion.

3.2 Moral implications in wine customs

Ethnic minorities generally use alcohol to receive guests. In the long history of development, they have formed various drinking customs and habits. These customs are diversified, but generally show their sincere toward friends and guests, as well as their yearning for a better life.

Firstly, friendship and reunion are embodied in Huotang wine custom. Huotang is a kind of Chinese fireplace. Huotang wine is a unique kind of wine bred by the fireplace. It has extraordinary significance in the Yi and Dong minorities, and occupies the leading position in the various functions of the family. It is an important part of the life of the Yi and Dong minorities. Huotang is also an inseparable place for families in southwestern ethnic areas. It witnesses the colorful life fragments, various strange stories, as well as the happiness, anger and sorrow of a family. It is the main component of the Huotang culture, which contains rich moral implications such as family reunion, harmony and friendship.

Secondly, the harmony and perfection are embodied in the convention of drinking wine in turn. This custom is prevalent in the Dong, Zhuang, Yao, Yi, Miao and Maonan minorities in Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and Hunan provinces. In festivals, people gather together, pass on a bottle and drink wine in turn. The popularity of this custom in southwestern minority areas shows the friendship among minority nationalities, reflects their hospitality and friendliness, as well as their noble sentiments of harmony, solidarity and mutual assistance.

Thirdly, the custom of Tongxin (be of one mind) wine embodies the spirit of “mutual caring and mutual help”. Lisu, Nu and Dulong nationalities living on both sides of the Nujiang River often regard drinking “Tongxin wine” as the best way to eliminate estrangement and enhance friendship.^[2] When friends meet, the friendship becomes stronger when they drink the wine; suspicion and misunderstanding they had can be dissolved when they drink off the wine at once. The way of drinking “concentric wine” has special cultural symbols, expressing people’s good wishes of sincere friendship and mutual benefits.

3.3 Moral implication in the narration of wine culture

First, the spirit of unity and coexistence is embodied in the narrative of “Liu Li Nao Jiu” (using the spoon to stir the mash).^[3] During the Han Dynasty, there was a ritual of blood pledge through “a treasured sword” and “using the spoon” to stir the mash. It was said that it was used when making a covenant with Xiongnu (Hun) people. According to the History of the Han Dynasty: Xiongnu Biography, “Chang Meng, the chief of Xiongnu and his ministers climbed the East Mountain of Noshui. They killed a white horse. The chief used a treasured sword, leaved the spoon to stir the mash. They drank wine from the skull of the king of Yuezhi, a tribe which was defeated by the former chief of Xiongnu.” Later generations use “Liu Li Nao Jiu” to represent the peace treaty between the Han Dynasty and the rulers of ethnic minorities such as the Xiongnu. It is also the emotional exchanges between ethnic minorities, representing the mutual exchanges between them. Similar records can also be found in Guan Qin’s poem, To Ci-zhong Lin, the Ambassador in Qidan. Wine is the testimony of friendship among nations, representing harmonious coexistence, unity and friendship.

Secondly, the spirit of honesty and friendliness is embodied in the narration of the Yi-Hai alliance. On the morning of May 22, 1935, the advance troops of the Central Red Army set out from the bridge and marched towards Tuwu. The local Yi people impeded; they did not allow the army to move forward. Commander Bo-cheng Liu and political commissar Rong-zhen Nie immediately decided to publicize the party’s national policy to the Yi people. Xiaoyedan lives in Yangping; he can speak Chinese and is good at speech. After exploring the situation, he decided to form an alliance with the Red Army. Both sides replaced wine with water. They killed a chicken and dripped blood in the bowl. The simple ritual showed their honesty and friendliness, as well as

solidarity and mutual assistance. Then Xiaoyedan returned to the bridge with the Red Army advance troops to express his sincerity. It was with Xiaoyedan that the large Red Army troops successfully passed through the Yi area in northern Mianning and won the precious time of crossing the Dadu River and fighting for the Luding Bridge.

4. The Function of Moral Conservation of Ethnic Minority Wine Culture

In the long-term development, the wine culture of minority nationalities gradually forms similar cultural concepts and become an important part of Chinese civilization. At the same time, it also plays a role of moral education, that is, representing virtue and etiquette, warning and strengthening friendship and unity.

4.1 Representing virtue and etiquette

As the core elements of minority wine culture, “etiquette” and “virtue” regulate people’s morality and conduct. As the form of etiquette is constantly repeated and strengthened, a kind of inertia is formed, which ultimately produces significant impacts on people’s thinking and behaviors in life. The effect is like “boiling frogs in warm water”. Etiquette plays a huge role in educating people and regulating their living habits. As we all know, our country is a country of etiquette. Ritual has a long history in our country and its forms are complex and diverse. Regardless of the formation and forms of rituals, from ancient times to today, ritual occupies an extraordinary proportion in people’s daily life. It is not only a sign of hierarchical order, but also a code of conduct in daily communication. Etiquette is also a system with the function of national management, and it is manifested in all aspects of society. Generally speaking, “etiquette” and “virtue” are inseparable parts of wine culture; it will be passed on from generation to generation. ^[4]

4.2 Warning

Wine has its unique charm. But drinking too much is harmful to the body. People who get drunk are in confusion of consciousness. It can influence the trend of a war and determine the rise and fall of a country in a specific period. Therefore, drinking is not only about individuals, but also a social behavior. If the rulers are indulged in wine and neglect their duties, serious social problems will occur. In history, many monarchs were indulged in wine, which led to the disaster of national subjugation. Strategies of the Warring States records, the “Dinv, the daughter of the emperor of heaven, required Yidi to make wine. The good wine was served to emperor Yu. Yu drank the wine and found it was delicious. But then he alienated Yidi and forbidden drinking wine. He said that dynasties of later generations would be subjugated because of wine.” ^[5] Practices have proved that Yu’s prediction is correct. The late emperors of Xia and Shang dynasties were all addicted to wine, losing their striving spirit and neglecting politic affairs, which led to the disaster of national subjugation. Because of the tremendous role of wine, the ruling class established a strict management system for the production and consumption of wine in order to safeguard its interests. After gaining the state power, Zhou Gong draw lessons from the collapse of Xia and Shang Dynasties, formulated and issued the earliest alcohol prohibition law in China, Jiu Gao. The policy considered that alcohol was the root of the loss of virtue and the subjugation of the country. It constituted one of the leading ideas of alcohol prohibition in some eras of the Chinese history and became an example for later generations.

4.3 Promoting national unity

The rich moral connotation of minority wine culture is not only the witness of minority communication, but also the bridge of emotional communication. The rich and colorful wine customs become even more attractive with the exchange of ethnic minorities. Ancient and present examples prove that the minority wine culture plays an important role in strengthening national exchanges and promoting national unity. With the development of the times, the friendship of minorities becomes even more close, just like the aroma of alcohol which impresses people more deeply. In the Memoirs of the Long March, the famous writer Fang-wu Cheng wrote the following

sentence. “Because of the urgent military situation, we dared not drink much wine. The wine was mainly used to wipe our feet and relieve fatigue on the road. Wiping feet with the Maotai liquor is effective. Everyone praises it.”^[6] This is the record of 1935 when the Red Army passed Maotai Town. Maotai liquor played a special role in the Long March of the Red Army because of its unique medicinal and alcoholic functions. At the end of the Anti-Japanese War, Comrade En-lai Zhou said in a conversation with Chongqing writer Xue-yuan Yao: “Maotai temporarily solved a major problem of the Red Army: the lack of medical treatment and medicines at that time. The Red Army won the Long March; Maotai Liquor contributed a lot to the success.” The statement affirms the relationship between Maotai and the red revolution. At the Wine Evaluation Meeting in September 1952, Maotai became a national wine. This is the interaction between minority wine culture and Han culture. In the development of history, the exchanges between ethnic minorities and Han have provided the drinking customs and cultures of various ethnic minorities with common spiritual connotations of warmth and friendship, solidarity and mutual assistance, as well as sincere hospitality. In villages of Miao nationality, in the drum tower of Dong nationality, in the master-house of Yi nationality, and even in places where the Han people gather, we can feel the friendship of warm, hospitality, solidarity and enterprising of ethnic minorities. It is this national spirit of unity and friendliness that enables all Chinese people to devote themselves to the great cause of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

5. Conclusion

This paper sorts out and summarizes the connotation and category of minority wine culture, as well as the embodiments of moral connotation in wine culture and its role of moral cultivation. The wine culture of minority nationalities can represent virtue and etiquette, play the warning effect, and strengthen national friendship and unity. With the development of history, it has become an important part of Chinese civilization.

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