

## The Analysis of the Environmental Influence of Early Agricultural Culture on the Developmental of Native Ba Culture in East Sichuan

SHU Ying<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Institute of Historic Geology, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.  
\*Corresponding author.

Received 24 March 2015; accepted 19 May 2015  
Published online 26 June 2015

### Abstract

Natural geographical environment determines the emergence and development of basic industry, i.e. agriculture, of early human society. It is also a decisive factor on the emergence, development, propagation and formation of characteristics of social culture, which are established on the basis of agriculture. Even, the historical status of some certain areas and cities can be determined by this environment.

**Key words:** Agriculture; East Sichuan; Protogenesis; Ba culture; Environment

Shu, Y. (2015). The Analysis of the Environmental Influence of Early Agricultural Culture on the Developmental of Native Ba Culture in East Sichuan. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 11(6), 54-59. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/7204>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7204>

### INTRODUCTION

Natural environment has a decisive effect on the development of early urban social culture. This effect is, more often than not, realized by productive labor in the early society. Factors like geographical location, general atmospheric circulation, arid and wet climate, vegetation, mineral resources and flora and fauna will all affect people's production and living, and provide material support for the birth of civilization, thus generating differences among civilizations like agriculture civilization, industry civilization, desert civilization, maritime civilization. Natural geographical environment determines the emergence of urban

basic industries as well as the models of the cities to influence the development, transformation of spatial position and internal organization of the city after the city's foundation. And the traffic condition of the geographical environment affects the external expansion and vicinities' contact and radiation, and restricts the civilization propagation and dialogue to finally determine the historical status of the city in regional, or even, national civilization.

### 1. DEVELOPMENT HISTORY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GENERATED BY AGRICULTURAL CIVILIZATION IN EAST SICHUAN

According to the historical and geographical data, southwest region where early Ba people dwelled is much warmer and wetter than present. Up till Tang dynasty, the average temperature is 1.5 to 2 degree (Chinese Academy of Sciences, 1982, p.10; Lan, 1992, p.195) higher than present, which is suitable for the self-sow of flora and fauna as is said "the land grows all kinds of cereals, and the farm tames all kinds of domestic animals." The complex mountainous natural environment tremendously impairs the preponderance of the warmth. The distinctive parallel valley landform of Chongqing forms river valley climatic effects, so cloudy days are more than sunny days, rainy and foggy in winter, hot and drought in summer. The city is immersed in moisture and miasma. Meanwhile, the lineament directly determines the means of land and water transportation of Chongqing (Wei, 1991, pp.50-51).

Mountains and rivers divide the basin into numerous hills and flatlands, which have great difference in hydrothermal condition. Various land types, such as plough, forest, meadow, wasteland and water area, form a complex natural environment, causing the disparities

in economic development conditions in Ba region. Fishing and hunting is the principle production mode, together with farming, constitutes the main content of infant farming in Ba (Lan, 2003, p.112). Confluences of east-west-trend rivers like Yangzi River, Jialing River and some other tributaries are mostly flatlands, and are good for farming, fishing and hunting. Going upstream are the hills and low mountains in the middle, west and northwest. The vegetation is thick on the mountains. Evergreen broad-leaf forests, which are rich on the mountains, are favorable breeding ground for wild animals and plants. Crops and trees of economic value are abundant there.

There is fruit of Litchi, bulbs of konjak; fragrant konjac and tea, kumquat as well as hollyhock in the garden; precious herbs like *Radix morindae officinalis* and *Capsicum frutescens* var; rare wood like Taozhi bamboo and Lingshou bamboo. There are also some famous mountains, like Tuji, Lingtai and Shi Shu Kan.” (Jin dynasty·Changqu, 2006)

Fine climate provides a comfortable condition for animals and plants, which makes it the best place of fishing and hunting for the abundance of prey. In documented history, Ban Dun Man (ancient Ba people) make a living by hunting White Tiger, and Lin Jun Man (ancient Ba people) farm as well fishing for a living, mastering an expertise of building and paddling boats. Therefore, hunting and fishing as the main production model can be traced to many archaeological sites of Ba culture. For instance, tombs of winter bamboo shoots dam boat and Zhao Hua Bao Lun Temple are the living examples of this production mode. In those tombs, especially in the tombs of males, buried bronze weapons like swords, spears, dagger-axes and arrows, all of which are the hard proof of the production mode of Ba culture (Tong, 1998, p.24). In an extreme, some scholars even proclaim that culture of fishing and hunting is the Ba culture (Cai, 2006, p.3).

The process of laboring of Ba people who live in a mountainous region in East Sichuan keeps progressing. Traces of the tendency that Ba people engaged in fruit-picking, hunting and fishing activities are relatively plenty as have been confirmed by archaeological excavations. As they migrated into the Three Gorges area, and began to occupy the central flatland region, Ba people are apparently impacted by Shu, a rice agriculture production developed region close by. In the Spring and Autumn period, crops have become the norm in flatlands, not only for food consumption, but also for the wine-making. Besides salt manufacturing and cinnabar-collecting, bronze casting technology has developed to a relatively

high level, and some, even was requested as tribute.<sup>1</sup>

As for external traffic, as being impeded by mountains and gorges, land transportation is toilsome in Ba region. *History of the Kings in Shu, River Systems, the Records of Thirteen states and Exo-shu* have all documented the turtle spirit chisels through the Three Gorges: “Wu gorge inhibited the water flow of rivers in Shu, the emperor commanded the turtle spirit to chisel through it”<sup>2</sup>, “emperor of Shu commanded the turtle spirit to chisel through the Wu mountain to tame the river”<sup>3</sup>. This was the primitive manual exploitation of land and water transportation of the Three Gorges, challenging even today. One can perceive how hard it was the land transportation in ancient times. During the Spring and Autumn Period, Ba people established forts of Hanguan, Yangguan and Mianguan in succession to control a vantage point during the war with Chu State. And the primitive associated land transportation thus came into being. Just as described: “the narrow of the river has the relic of plank roads”<sup>4</sup>, as much as people want to travel via land, land transportation has not developed as expected—most land routes were available relatively late—for the troubles caused by the mountains. For instance, Chijia Mountain, Qutang Gorge, is described as “only Ma Mountain, which is relatively less meandering, can build some narrow passes for people.”<sup>5</sup> There were some through routes: “Zanggong and Cenpeng occupied Jinmen, and divided to Chuique Mountain, then pave the way out of Zigui to get to Jiangzhou,”<sup>6</sup> but that was well after Ba people’s attempts. Land transportation was underdeveloped until Tang dynasty. The whole Chuanjiang river area was “the least developed region concerning land transportation”, thus the communication between Ba State and the north states is not so expedite via such an arduous north-south traffic, hence inhibiting the influence of Huaxia culture on Ba.

Compared with land transportation, water

<sup>1</sup> “Chronicles of Huayang volume one • Chronicles of Ba”: The poem reads: “Sichuan is flat, crops of which is mostly millet. Jiagu liquor which is made from millet can provide for father. In Quqiu, there grows a lot of sorghum. To go to Jiagu to make liquor can provide for mother.” “Sang, silkworm, linen, ramie, fish, salt, copper, iron, lead, paint, tea, honey, spirit turtles, giant rhinoceros, pheasants, white pheasant, Huangren, fresh powder, all are the tributes. “One can have a insight of s salt and liquor manufacturing and copper smelting industry in Ba.

<sup>2</sup> Wang Mo, “*Han and Tang geography book notes*”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *The Record of Scenic Spots Across the Country (volume 174). Kuizhou road.*

<sup>5</sup> *Waterways (Volume 33). Rive*’.

<sup>6</sup> *History of Later Han Dynasty (Volume 18). Biography of Zang Gong.*

transportation has overt preponderance. “In Ba and Shu, big boats carrying grain set off from Wen mountain and go down the river...for miles without much efforts”<sup>7</sup>. “Going down the river, the boat can travel thousands of miles.”<sup>8</sup> Ba people are the beneficiary of waterways in Three Gorges, for not only they are the best travel methods, but an efficient fort to defend their territory from enemies. Though Ba State and Chu State mostly interact with each other by battles, they no doubt have influence on one another’s labor and life, hence the saying: “east of Jiangzhou, where dangerous mountains are located by the river, lives some people, half of who are the same as Chu people.” Ba and Chu are similar in exploitive production methods of waterfronts and mountains as well as city construction in the early phase (Zhang, 2002, p.30), exhibiting the similarity of development universals in similar natural social environment.

In general, Ba State was enclosed in the ridge valley region in East Sichuan by mountains and waters, impairing the influence on it from the external cultural environment. On the basis of suitable climate and growth conditions of relatively abundant flora and fauna, early humans gain the possibilities of independent existence and development. The birth of Ba culture, which has countless ties with cultures of Huaxia, Jinchu and ancient Shu, reflects more of some locality, highlighting the native characteristics.

## 2. PATTERNS OF NATIVE BA CULTURE NURTURED BY AGRICULTURAL CIVILIZATION TIMES

Ba-Yu Region has long been deemed to “have no silkworms or educated people”, i.e. not a place for culture. On the one hand, compared with ancient Shu, Ba-Yu Region has worse natural source for agriculture, and depressing social development vigor. On the other hand, the social customs and morals of Ba-Yu are simple and sincere: “though they are blunt and slow, their customs are unadorned, and their personalities are prudent and frank; no education of Confucius; trusting in spirits not medication; Shu cultivates prime ministers (in ancient China), Ba fosters generals.” Advocating violence is a seemingly significant feature of Ba-Yu at first glance, in fact, also a representative of lacking in education. Though the blood lines distance from Ba people after several times of migration, the cultural psychological traits created by environment persist. Even today, Chongqing people still label themselves with it. This long-standing ethnic civilization is tightly tied to the natural social environment of Ba-Yu Region in East Sichuan.

Residents in Three Gorges have been fighting against

the nature for their lives for over two million years, during which they eventually build their shelters, settlements, towns, and finally, establish their kingdom. Three Gorges Region is one of the most important early human living area, many human activity relics of Paleolithic age are discovered on the banks of Yangtze river, Jialing river and Fujiang river, which provide reliable information for the researches on the early human community activities in the vicinity of Chongqing to offer some crucial data of ancient human community activities along the riverbanks.

The discovery of Paleolithic human left mandibles and upper incisors in Dragonbone hill, Wushan mountain, the middle Paleolithic cultural sites, such as Jingshuiwan sites group (50,000 to 100,000 years from now) on the bank of Yangtze River, Fengdu, Late Paleolithic cultural relics (7,000 to 10,000 years from now), including stone artifacts like burnt stones, burnt bones and bone artifacts are all the representations of the traces of ancient human activities in Ba-Yu Region.

Neolithic archeological remains provide a wealth of materials for researches on the establishment of Ba settlements and towns. Villages at waterfronts around Three Gorges emerged at Neolithic age. Yuxiping remains (7,800 years from now), Nanmuyuan cultural remains (6,500 to 7,000 years from now), Daxi cultural remains (about 6,000 years from now) and Shaopengzui culture (4,000 to 5,500 years from now) all have manifested the developmental changes of ancestral culture at that time (Cai, 2011, pp.8-14). Yuxi relic site in Jingang village, Gaojia, Fengdu, the representative of early cultural sites and, Shaopengzui relic sites in Zhongxian town, the representative of local culture of Ba-Yu Region (National Heritage Board, 2010, pp.20-23), both have excavated numerous fossils of fish, vivipara, animal and kernel, verifying the fishing and hunting, collecting labor-based production mode of ancient humans living by the waters and on mountains, on the basis of which the ancient humans settled down and formed settlements, creating early civilization.

Based on Neolithic culture, local civilization of ancient Chongqing has further developed in Xia, Shang, Zhou dynasties. Though, in the meantime, cultures of Chengdu plain in upriver of Yangtze river and Jiangnan plain in the midstream have been prosperous parallel with the mainland civilization. In the closed and defensive mountains, local civilization, which has occupied Yangtze River and Jialing River drainage basin, among the central flatlands, west hills and valleys of the Three Gorges, vaguely contacts the surrounding areas with an independent stance, maintaining original features and vitality.

Early primitive ethnic groups have been active in local area, besides the famous Ba people and their sublines, there are native Pu people and Dan people. These natives of Jianling River drainage basin began primitive agricultural production around 3,000 to 4,000 years ago.

<sup>7</sup> *Three Kingdoms (Volume 58). Biography of Lu Kang*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

Minorities, namely, Pu, Cong, Gong, Nu, Yi, Dan have spread to places like Hechuan, Fuling, Quxian, Yunyang and Liangping. By the application of stone artifacts, agriculture and animal husbandry have eventually replaced fishing and hunting and collecting labor-based production model of the natives. Riverbanks of Yangtze river and Jialing river, which are all located near the mountain and by the river, and platforms along the river, which are above the flood line, have become settlements of natives of Chongqing (Wei, 1991, p52, 55), hence the rudiment of villages. Early ethnic groups, like Pu people, who spread in drainage basins of Qujiang, Jialing River and Yangtze River before Ba people immigrated to the Three Gorges in East Sichuan, are the earliest habitants, who are assimilated into Ba clan<sup>9</sup>. Dan clan<sup>10</sup>, in *Shuowen*, is the minority in the south. Dan people are the ancient habitants in the Three Gorges before Lin sovereign, and “the people of the water who are used to take the boat”<sup>11</sup>, and “living with numerous mountains and dangerous waters, people there are all brave” (Jin dynasty· Changqu, 2006). These early groups have long been laboring in ancient Chongqing region, forming an inherent production and living habits, fighting against nature. Fishing and hunting activities forged their traditional psychological features: adamancy and bravery, which later have become the mental profile of Ba and Ba clan cultures after they assimilated into Ba ethnic group.

Ba people came on the historical stage with the image of brave and battle-wise. Fuhao who expedited Bafang, soldiers of eight kingdoms who assisted Zhou fighting Emperor Zhou, both take White Tiger as their totem. With the excavation of weapons engraved “Soldiers avoid Tai Sui”, the fierce characteristic of this tribe has been represented in multi-dimension. Ba constantly waged war against the northern civilizations and Jinchu, was also pointed as a vassal state of the Zhou Dynasty due to its battle achievement at the end of Shang Dynasty, and established a clear relationship between the Central Plains vassals after the establishment of Zhou Dynasty, “the emperor pointed his family member to govern Ba, and viscounted him.” (Ibid.) Ba people have been strong till the Qin and Han Dynasties, even the Central Plains kingdoms have to take a more conciliatory approach to

them<sup>12</sup>, which shows that their powerful cultural base cannot be ignored.

In addition to sturdy and ruthless psychological and cultural characteristics of ethnic groups, the Ba-Yu Region also gave birth to another culture from the local environment - witch ghost culture. Natural geographical unit of ancient Ba-Yu is surrounded by the mountains and wet, although it can nourish plants, it has also become the breeding grounds for germs and the source of disease-induced. Rainy days have caused water loggings; gloomy weather often inserts mental depression in the people. These unfavorable environmental factors urge people appeal for physical and mental health. Since medicine, science and technology conditions were underdeveloped in primitive times, people often turned to witch doctors, traditionally blamed the supernatural for difficulties that would not be able to overcome and dominate, hence established the surreal pursuit of lifting themselves from the dismal environment by becoming immortal. The prevalence of witch ghost worship and Witchcraft religion in the Three Gorges area in East Sichuan has a long history: “worshipping Wugui when one is sick and using tile instead of turtle shell in divination”<sup>13</sup>.

Generally speaking, dangerous living environment builds the combative and unyielding personality in people on the one hand and pushes them to embed their hopes in witchcraft and immortality to relieve the shackles of reality on the other. The former has a positive significance for regional economic development, and the latter gives people spiritual comfort in dangerous environment, which plays an important role in maintaining social stability in the long term. Two relatively local cultures are being rooted in local soil, which is reflected later in the settlement and in urban civilization.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF URBAN CIVILIZATION BETWEEN BA AND SHU SOCIETY IN EARLY AGRICULTURAL CIVILIZATION

Ba is hard to get a clear sign of the birth of urban civilization in terms of basic aspects of the birth of urban construction. In the present archaeological excavations, one can see some adjacent rice civilization developed Shu states, namely, Sanxingdui, a large-scale city, large palaces, early housing, which shows that the architectural technology has been unprecedentedly developed. There were tall and thick walls, altars. In contrast, the ancient

<sup>9</sup> According to Dengshao Qin “Ba history exploration” (Chongqing City Museum “History and Archaeology Collection”), and “The Record of Scenic Spots Across the Country” (volume 158), Introduction of Diaoyu Mountain, Hechuan, Li Wenchang quoted in “Map and Record”: Kings of Ba and Pu will come here and fight to the death drunken, and will be buried together. It shows that Ba and Pu, as two different peoples, are fighting against each other.

<sup>10</sup> “History of Later Han Dynasty· Biography of Minorities of south and north” annotation cited “Shi Ben”: “To follow King Lin, it gave birth to witchcraft.”

<sup>11</sup> Deng Shao Qin: “Exploration of Ba History”, Chongqing City Museum “History and Archaeology Collection”

<sup>12</sup> Qin and Han Dynasty often make policies to win over Ba, like “the tradition to marry Qin girls”, the warriors can “keep their knighthood”, “Carving the promise on a stone...If Qin invaded Ba, Qin should give Ba two gold dragons; if Ba invaded Qin, Ba should only give Qin a cup of liquor”, so one can see that Qin and Han dynasties would rather appease Ba people than defeat them.

<sup>13</sup> Tang dynasty· Yuan Zhen: “To thank official Bai for writing one hundred rhymes-written after arriving at Jiangling”.



Ba could not even find a large ceremonial earth station similar to sheep Phnom or Chengdu Twelve Bridge large wooden palace buildings, much less any bottommost building site, within the same period, associated with early city. Or, one can say that it has never been existed. As for the reasons, one, presumably, is the lack of wide area for large ancient city construction; the other is very likely the weak material base resulting in underdeveloped traditional agricultural civilization, which fails to provide the construction of large buildings with adequate techniques and human resources. Furthermore, the agricultural civilization, on which the birth of the ancient city in Ba state is dependent, has not reached the point that it is advanced enough to support large-scale construction needs. In other words, the basis of early agriculture civilization has significant influence on the differences of the birth of urban civilization.

With further analysis, one can notice that “Shu state was founded by the king of human, and it is in the same area with Ba state.” (Jin dynasty· Changqu, 2006) From this description, the differences presented by the tracks of the development of historical civilization are objectively displayed in front of reality. Shu has a rich geographical advantage. Plain flat terrain, excellent soil, water conservancy and favorable climatic conditions of Chengdu, in ancient times, attracted northwest tribe, Cancong, who were living in the mountains and canyons, immigrated into the plains to carry out early agriculture as well as early development (Duan, 1999, pp.7-9). Here “soil is the loose soil, where cropland is the seventh, the tax is the eighth, but also in the seventh and ninth miscellaneous. Tribute here is jade, iron, silver, just iron, stone for arrowheads, chime, woven leather of bear, brown bear, fox and wild cat”<sup>14</sup>, which not only demonstrates the superior material conditions of farming civilization, but also provide a solid material support for the birth of splendid Sanxingdui culture. So from early polis era, Baodun town, Twins village, old village, Yufu village sites to Sanxingdui, Yangzi Hill and Twelve Brige, a large number of ancient sites excavation shed light on how the early Shu culture is more brilliant than the contemporary urban civilization. Therefore, after entering the era of feudalism, booming agricultural civilization has maintained a good agriculture economic development momentum. The sayings like “the heaven on earth” and “Yizhou is only inferior to Yangzhou” have been passed on for thousands of years. Chengdu has cultural and economic superior status among the cities in the past. Even after entering into modern society, it also maintains a steady development on the material basis built by a good natural environment and favorable regional traffic condition, which cannot be ignored in the southwestern region for its political, economic and cultural importance.

<sup>14</sup> “Tribute of Yu”

Ba-Yu Region is also located in the Sichuan Basin. East Sichuan lies more than thirty north-to-east trend mountains, ridge valleys and rivers scatter around, but mostly not suitable for early development of primitive agricultural economy. Models of two ridges and one valley in one mountain and three ridges and two valleys in one mountain scatter in the East Sichuan area where the ancient Ba-Yu Region is located, resulting in the dispersion of a number of groups, together with the separation caused by the closure and dangerous mountains to take away material support for the feasibility of a powerful civilization and disable the timely dialogue. Therefore, in early Ba culture, besides universals of living customs revealed on fishing and hunting, the ethnic psychology is not unified:

In the east of Jiangzhou, where dangerous mountains are located by the river, live some people, half of who are Chu people. They are honest and serious. But in the west of Diangjaing River, land is flat, and people there are agile but frivolous. They are different in customs and personalities.” (Jin dynasty· Changqu, 2006)

Under such a state is not likely to cultivate a powerful centripetal force of civilization to radiate the vicinity, so almost the beginning of the birth of the Ba culture is in a dispersed state, showing the basic characteristics of cultural survival, lacking a higher level of cultural self-promotion and surpass. Boat casket funeral, Cliff casket, combat weapons (soldiers avoid Tai Sui) and daily life appliances are the most common archaeological discoveries in excavations of ancient Ba-Yu. The performance of this symbol of civilization is far behind the brilliant achievements of Shu culture. So for a long time in history, there is no wonder that the barren areas of Ba-Yu have long been ignored by central sovereigns. As affiliation of Shu state, ancient Chongqing has no civilization preponderance over other cities. It is not until the traditional agricultural production is broken by the development of business community did the social culture of Ba-Yu Region change.

## CONCLUSION

Deep-rooted influence of differences in agricultural civilization caused by natural environment on the native civilization of early human societies not only is the material basis of early social groups civilization, but also a profound impact on the traditional psychological characteristics of ethnic cultures, creating a long-term culture community traits. Valour and superstition Ba people have cultivated in the relatively hysteretic era of agricultural civilization still tenaciously exist now, from which one can see their continuous impact on all levels of formation and development of its society. And this impact will constrain the developmental direction of culture-affected areas for a long period, which is especially prominent in the early era of isolated and

closed traditional agriculture. It is not changed until the agricultural economy is broken, but its effect on cultural psychological level will persist for a long time.

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Cai, J. Q. (2006). The socio-economic and cultural development of Chengdu plain before Qin reflected by archaeological discoveries. *Jiangnan Archaeology* (p.3)
- Cai, J. Y. (2011). Morphological study of ancient settlement in three gorges (pp.8-14). China: Science Press.
- Chinese Academy of Sciences. (1982). *China natural geography • history physical geography* (p.10). China: Academic Press.
- Duan, Y. (1999). *Political structure and cultural patterns—Research on ancient civilization of Ba and Shu* (pp.7-9). Shanghai: Academia Press.
- Jin Dynasty·Changqu. (2006). *Chronicles of Huayang • Chronicles of Ba*. In L. Liu (Annotated). Chengdu: Times Press
- Lan, Y. (1992). *Economic development and ecological changes in history of Southwest* (p.195). Yunnan Education Publishing House.
- Lan, Y. (2003). *Three Gorges history and geography* ( p.112). China: Sichuan People’s Publishing House.
- National Heritage Board. (Ed.). (2010). *China cultural relics atlas • Chongqing volume (a) • overview* ( pp.20-23). China: Cultural Relics Publishing House
- Tong, E. Z. (1998). *Ancient bashu* (p.24). China: Chongqing Publishing House
- Wei, Y. T. (Ed.). (1991). *Modern history of Chongqing city*. China: Sichuan University Press.
- Zhang, L.G. (2002). *Seven theories of craftsman* (p.30). China Building Industry Press.