

Research on the Propagation and Fusion of Chinese Taoism in Japanese Edo Period Literature

Qingyang Liu

School of Foreign Languages, Northeast Dianli University, Jilin, Jilin 132012, China

Keywords: Taoism, Natural inaction, Japanese edo period, Matsuo basho

Abstract: The Taoism of “Tao follows nature” and “stillness and non-action” has great influences not only in Chinese culture, literature and art, but also on its neighbor Japan, especially the Japanese Edo period. The Edo period is the key period in Japanese cultural development, and it is also the mature period in the development of Japanese fusion on Taoism. Taoism has profound influences on Japanese Edo period culture, and literature, as an important part of culture, has great value. Matsuo Basho is an important writer in Japanese Edo period. This paper makes deep textual analysis on his works and compares it with the Taoism to investigate the propagation and fusion of Taoism in Japanese Edo period literature.

1. Introduction

As an important cultural region in the East Asian cultural circle, Japan is deeply influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism, as well as Taoism. The Edo period is a critical period for the development of Japanese culture, and it is also a mature period for Japan to accept Taoism. Taoism has had a profound impact on all aspects of Japanese Edo period culture, and literature, as an important part of culture, has considerable value.

This paper selects representative writers and works in Japanese Edo period literature, and deeply analyzes the propagation and fusion of Taoism in Edo period literature. Previous studies on Taoist thought mostly started from the perspective of philosophy and schools of thought, and most of the researchers are also experts in philosophy. In this paper, we start from the perspective of Japanese language and Japanese literature, based on textual analysis, combined with Japanese language research and Japanese literature review. Through the “internal research” of literary works, we deeply experience the language and emotional expression in Japanese literary works, and carry out an in-depth study of the relationship between Japanese literature and philosophical theories, as well as the actual situation in which ideas have entered literary works. This paper specifically takes Matsuo Basho's literary works as an example, and makes a comparative analysis with Taoism, so as to investigate the propagation and fusion of Taoism in Japanese Edo period literature.

2. Japanese Edo Period Literature and the Propagation of Taoism

Since Tokugawa Ieyasu established the shogunate in Edo in 1603, until 1868, the 15th generation general Tokugawa Yoshinobu, about 266 years, it is called Edo period in the history of Japanese literature. Japanese Edo period literature can be divided into two periods, that is, the early Edo period and the late Edo period. In Edo period, in terms of literature, the samurai class inherited the traditional literary forms, such as Chinese poetry, Waka, Liange, ballad and so on, while the emerging machinist class preferred entertainment oriented reading materials. As a result, the rise of various literary forms, coupled with the development of printing, made the rapid development of popular literature. In this period, the culture also changed from unitary to pluralistic, and more and more scholars engaged in the study of Taoism appeared in Japan.

Before Edo period, Taoism has been infiltrated and accumulated in Japanese culture for a long time. In the era of Prince Seidel in Japan, from the end of the 6th century to the early 7th century, The

Taoist literature has been spread in Japan, and the ruling class and intellectual class have absorbed the Taoist thought. At that time, the absorption of Taoism in Japan was extremely scattered and limited. In Kamakura and Murmachi era, Wushan Zen monks have already carried out special research on Taoism, mainly with the help of Taoism annotation books introduced from China. In the Edo era, a large number of Japanese annotated Taoism began to appear. The special research on Taoism was really started and prospered in the Edo period. In addition, some reclusive writers also have a special sense of closeness to Taoism, such as Matsuo Basho, Hattori Nankaku, Yosa Buson, Liangkuan, etc. Matsuo Basho was a famous haiku writer in Edo period, who expressed his passion for landscape and literary creation.⁽¹⁾

2.1 Matsuo Basho and Taoism

Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), is haiku in the early days of Edo period, who innovated the humor and formed a plantain style. Basho's haiku inherited the classical traditions of Japanese waka and Chinese poetry. Blending with the philosophical spirit of life as a journey and impermanence, classical haiku art was pushed to the top by him Basho. He traveled many times, and many of his masterpieces were inspired by the journey. In Japanese aesthetics, the famous "dry, quiet, lingering and mysterious" is perfectly reflected in Basho's haiku.

Basho was born in Ueno, after learning from Kitamura Jiyin, he was keen on Lin Feng's haiku, and then he broke away from those haikus and created the broke away from those haikus and created the banana-style haiku-style haiku. He lived in seclusion in the Basho Temple in Edo Shenchuan, and began to write haiku. However, the Basho Temple was burnt down by the fire, and he has gradually felt a lot about the impermanence of life since then, which has also strengthened his mood of putting his career on a wandering journey.

"Oku no Hosomichi" is a haiku essay in the mid-Edo period, which is believed to be created in the seventh year of Yuanlu (1694). Basho departed from Edo in March of the second year of Yuanlu and moved to Oshu and Hokuriku, and arrived at Ogaki in September. This trip across 23 countries of Kanto, Aoyu, Beilu and Donghai, with a journey of about 2400 km, is regarded as the best work in Basho's travel notes⁽²⁾. "Oku no Hosomichi" was not faithfully record of the journey, but some details are processed and polished by Basho, from which we can see the author's literary consciousness and creative spirit.

The preface part of "Oku no Hosomichi" tells the story of Basho's determination to embark on the journey⁽³⁾. Basho regards time as a traveler forever, and in a sense, the essence of life is the journey. After returning to Edo after a long journey, he could not restrain his wandering mood, and then he made the decision to cross the White River and set foot on the journey of Aoyu, rethought his life during the journey.

The first sentence in the preface "Time passes by like a hundred generations" is originated from the "Spring Festival Banquet" by Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai, who is a practitioner of Taoism and a great poet. Basho ever read Li Taibai's poetry anthology, and he was interested in Chinese classical poetry. Therefore, he quoted the poems of Du Fu, Li Bai and Su Shi many times in his literary creation. In addition, Basho's nickname Tao Qing is also inspired by Li Bai's literature

During the 12 years since he was 23 years old, he studied Sinology with Ito Tsutsu Shu in Kyoto. From then on, he became familiar with and loved Chinese literature. Basho first came into contact with the thought of Zhuangzi at the age of 38, and he was deeply affected by it. In contact with the thought of Zhuangzi, Basho didn't care too much about the rhetorical methods of the articles, but he was very interested in the thought reflected in Zhuangzi and was deeply infected. He was deeply attracted by lofty thoughts such as nothingness and openness. After that, he started the creation of Basho-style humorous works. That is, the content is free of humor, sarcasm, etc., and began to be depressed, painful, sad, solemn and realistic creation.

In Basho's creation, he has repeatedly quoted the article from the thought of Zhuangzi, such as "Xiaoyaoyou", "Qiwulun", "Grandmaster", etc. in "Oku no Hosomichi", many contents are influenced by Zhuangzi's thought. The fundamental ideas of Laozi are emptiness and tranquility, inaction and naturalness, purity and no desire. These thoughts are deeply loved by Basho and quoted

to his literary creation, but according to the records, there are not many quotations from Laozi in his literary works. Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu's nihilistic and natural moral thoughts not only influenced Basho's attitude towards life, but also were clearly reflected in their works and articles.

2.2 The Fusion of Taoism in Basho's Literary Works

Matsuo Basho has such a haiku in “Oku no Hosomichi”:

By the ancient pool, frogs jump into the water and make a loud noise.⁽⁴⁾ At the edge of the silent ancient pond, a frog jumped into the water. With the frog's jumping in, there was a sound of water in the clean pond. Once the sound of water stopped, the pond was silent again. This shows the author's understanding of the special state of leisure and silence. In the extremely quiet state, he suddenly hears the sound of water due to frog jumping in, and the author's psychological experience aroused by this special situation. Through the description of the movement and stillness, it shows the vitality of nature, the mystery of nature, and the author's inner feelings.

There is also such a haiku in “Oku no Hosomichi”:

Silent temple, Squilla cry broken through the rock.⁽⁵⁾

Squilla is a kind of cicada. Its short and instantaneous sound penetrates into the eternal rock, showing a wonderful artistic conception beyond the moment and eternity and beyond time and space. In Matsuo Basho's mind, animals and plants in nature have spirituality, flowers, trees, fish and birds are also confidants. Matsuo Basho is far away from the secular official way. After getting rid of the miscellaneous thoughts by wandering, he completely immerses himself in the changeable world and nature, and gets a sense of detachment. Nature made him relaxed and happy, and aroused his strong desire to return to nature⁽⁶⁾. In “Qi Wu Lun”, what Zhuangzi wants to express is exactly a kind of thought of respecting all things, and viewing the value and significance of all things from the perspective of their own.

Matsuo Basho wrote in his travel notes:

Consistent style, and friendship with the four seasons. Everything you see is like a flower, everything you think is like a moon. Once it feels non-flowering, it is really extreme, like a bird or a beast. Go away from the beast, follow creation, and return to creation.⁽⁷⁾

The “creation” here comes from the concept of Zhuangzi. In the thought of Zhuangzi, “creation” is also called “creator”, which refers to the basis for the creation and transformation of all things in the world, and is the master of all things. Man cannot go against nature, but can only exist in conformity with nature, quiet and tranquil.

“Lao Tzu's thought can be summarized as the concept of the unity of the world, which is the concept of the root, nature, norms, laws or trends of the unity of the universe, the world, society and life.”⁽⁸⁾ The word “Dao” is present in the inscription, the original meaning is road. The extended meanings of law, morality, ideals, guidance, etc. also appeared at that time⁽⁹⁾, but Lao Tzu refined it into the core category and the highest category in his philosophy. “Tao is not matter or spirit, it is the vitality and creativity inherent in the universe itself...the greatest power in the world is Tao, it is the power of nature's creation.”⁽¹⁰⁾

“Tao follows nature” and “pure inaction” are two core propositions of Taoism. “Nature” doesn't just mean “nature world” in modern Chinese, it also has the meaning of artificial modification and trace. The words “Tao follows nature” mentioned in Laozi, further explains that Tao imitates its own appearance and makes all things become themselves according to their own appearance. That is to say, we should respect the natural internal law and order of all things. There is a spontaneous and potential rule in the whole universe and human society, which is a harmonious whole. We should not disturb this spontaneous and potential great harmony and law easily by using our self-righteous viewpoint. We should comply with the internal development law and law of these things.

The “inaction” advocated by Taoism is not to do nothing, but to discover the characteristics of all things and let them grow according to their own characteristics. In the view of Taoism, it is called “assisting the nature of all things without daring to do it”. “Assisting the nature of all things” is to take care of it with a kind heart; “Dare not do it” means that they dare not “encourage the seedlings to grow”. This attitude towards all things, when used in personnel management, will naturally achieve a

quiet state. Therefore, in order to achieve the state of tranquility and inaction, the premise is to follow the Tao and guide virtue⁽¹¹⁾.

The chapter 25 of Lao Zi positively reveals the basic connotation of Tao:

Something is mixed, born innately. Lonely and quiet, it can be the mother of the world. I can't accurately describe its true face, I can only talk about it in general and barely describe it as "big". "Big" refers to continuous operation and change, that is, ubiquitous, distant, traversing the past and present, the eight wastes and six chaos, reaching the limit of distance, and returning to the essence of things.

Because the Tao is infinite and very large, so the world and the people who follow the Tao are very large. There are four "big" in the universe, and man is one of them. Man must follow the laws and characteristics of the earth; the principle of the earth is to obey heaven; heaven is based on the Tao, which is natural, not artificial.

As can be seen from the text above, the earth should follow the laws of the sky, the sky should follow the laws of the Tao, and the Tao should follow its own appearance. It is the endless, constantly producing everything, which also stipulates the infinite, moving universe itself, and it is moving in accordance with its own inherent laws.

3. Conclusion

In summary, this paper explains from the characteristics of Japanese Edo period literature, the main philosophical spirit of Taoism, through the analysis of Matsuo Basho's literary works and comparison with Taoism Philosophy, to reveal the propagation and fusion of Taoism in Japanese Edo period literature. We take the works of other Japanese writers in Edo period as future research topics in order to study the f of Taoism in Japanese Edo period literature more comprehensively and systematically.

Acknowledgement

This work is the periodical achievement of The 13th Five-Year Plan of Social Science Project of Education Department of Jilin Province in 2019 "Research on the Propagation and Fusion of Chinese Taoism in Japanese Edo Period" (JJKH20190719SK).

Annotate

(1) Liu QY. On the influence of Taoism on Japanese Edo period Literature. Young writers, 2009, 21, p.27.

(2) Ondaman. An Analysis of Literary Works of Middle Ages and Modern Times in Japan. Anhui University Press, 2015, 6, P264.

(3) Pan J, Pan JS. Selected Works of Ancient Japanese Classics. Peking University Press, 2018, 7, p145.

(4) Tanabe Seiko. Stroll Oku no Hosomichi. Kodansha, 1997, 10, p23.

(5) Same as (5)

(6) Same as (1)

(7) Matsuo Basho Anthology. Yanbo Bookstore, 1959, 19, p52.

(8) Liu XG. Laozi - a new era of examination and a new interpretation of ideas. Dongda Books Co., Ltd., 1997, p201.

(9) Textual Research on the Etymology of "Dao", reference to: Pan B. One divides into three - A textual research on Chinese traditional thought. Haitian Press, 1995, p241-243.

(10) Mou ZJ. Laozi's theory of Tao and Its Modern Significance. reference to: Chen GY. Research on Taoist Culture (Series 6). Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1995, p62.

(11) Wu GY. Taoism and its modern interpretation. Shanghai Jiaotong University Press, 2018, 2, p176.

References

- [1] Wu GY. Taoism and its modern interpretation. Shanghai Jiaotong University Press, 2018, 2.
- [2] Wang SJ. A study of Taoism thought of natural harmony. Beijing Normal University Press, 2018, 4.
- [3] Rene Wellek, Austin Warren. Theory of Literature. Translated by Liu Xiangyu, Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 2017, 2.
- [4] Ye WQ. History of Japanese Literature. Peking University Press, 2009.
- [5] Pan J, Pan JS. Selected Works of Ancient Japanese Classics. Peking University Press, 2018,7.
- [6] Kobayashi Zhiming. Impermanent literature. Hongwen Hall, 1965,6.
- [7] Akabane. Basho's haiku spirit. Qingshui Hongwen Hall, 1970, 11.
- [8] Matsuo Basho lecture (Volume V). Youjing Hall, 1985, 2.
- [9] Imao. Many problems of research on Matsuo Basho. Kasama College, 2004, 5.
- [10] Tanabe Seiko. Stroll Oku no Hosomichi. Kodansha, 1997,10.