

*Original Paper*

## An Exploration of the Ecological Wisdom in Kumazawa

### Banzan's Confucian Thought

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#### **Abstract**

*Against the backdrop of an increasingly serious global ecological crisis, scholars have turned their attention to Eastern Confucianism in an attempt to find ecological wisdom in traditional Confucianism in order to seek a path of harmonious development between human beings and nature. Kumazawa Banzan, as a Confucianist and a realist with environmental consciousness who emerged in the context of the severe environmental destruction in the early Edo period, is very representative. In this paper, we will take Kumazawa's Confucianism as an object of study and explore ecological wisdom in his Confucianism, taking his mountain and forestry thought as an example to understand its contemporary value.*

#### **Keywords**

*Kumazawa Banzan, all things are one, benevolent governance, mountain forest protection*

### **1. Ecological Wisdom in Kumazawa Banzan's Confucianism**

#### *1.1 All Things Are One*

“All Things Are One” and “Heaven and Man Are United as One” as ideological guidance has always been implemented in the environmental governance policy of Banzan.

Banzan's statement about All Things Are One is as follow: “All things are one, that is, all things in heaven and earth are born from the same Qi, so the benevolent person should not cut down a tree or grass without cause or at an unsuitable time. Not to mention flying, diving, running animals. Watching the plants wither in the strong light, my heart is like a wither. When I see the plants grow strong with the benefit of rain and dew, my heart is happy for it. Is a sign of one”.

The relationship here extends to plants and animals. It is intended to inform human beings that everything in the world is an organically connected whole and that there is a correlation between things and things. The mind and the mind are contained in the idea of all things being one. According to

Confucianism, although all things belong to different kinds, they are actually only different in appearance, and the root of their dependence is the same. Banzan also attributed the root of all things to too empty one Qi, the reason why heaven and earth are different is due to the result of gasification.

### *1.2 Benevolent Governance*

As for the first duty of monarch, he wrote: “Be kind to the parents of the people, and take the exercise of benevolent governance as the first duty. ... If you gain the crowd, you gain the country; if you lose the crowd, you lose the country. ... Although a benevolent king has a kind heart, he cannot govern with benevolence”.

Therefore, the monarch should not only have a kind heart, but also take the implementation of benevolent governance as the concrete action. The people-oriented thought here is the interpretation of the affinity for the people and love for the people. In contrast to the concept of the unity of all things, benevolence can be positioned as the guidance of practice. Banzan attaches great importance to the role of benevolent governance. Benevolent governance as an important pillar is rooted in his idea that “forest is the foundation of the country”. In other words, if there is no benevolent governance, there will be barren forests, frequent floods, wasteland, and suffering of farmers.

Benevolent governance, as a practice guide, is also carried out in the mountain management cause and environmental protection measures of Banzan, from beginning to end to guide the specific practice of “Have Love for the People, and Cherish All Things”.

## **2. Mountain Forest Revival Theory**

Banzan believes that mountains and rivers are the foundation of the country, and the country is in a state of great famine. For the revival of mountain forests, the negative and positive assumptions are put forward. On the negative side, it is hoped that the decline of population will bring the revival of mountain forests by entering the troubled times. On the positive side, the mountain protection measures based on benevolent governance can restore mountains and rivers within a hundred years. The following will discuss measures to revive mountain forests based on the idea of benevolent governance.

### *2.1 Stop Logging*

One solution proposed by banzan is to stop logging. The problems associated with the implementation of this method and the solutions are discussed below.

First, the life of lumberjacks. Lumberjacks, as the most threatened group, can be financially supported, the woodcutter was supported by giving him rice from all over the country. Rice as the first material element of survival, its position in the market is only second to real gold and silver.

Secondly, the fuel problem of ordinary farmers' daily life. One: the wild grass around the mountains and the skin of crops in the field as a fuel substitute, to prevent villagers from going into the mountains to cut down. Secondly, immigration policy can be adopted to reduce the number of peasant families in the land through immigration, so as to reallocate the land, and solve the fuel problem on the basis of the

protection of mountain forests.

Third, the supply of building materials for daily life. For the shrines, the timber problem can be solved by taking wood from the small shrines attached to them and by stopping the construction of new shrines. For Buddhist temples, the first step is to reduce the number of monks through the establishment of the order of monks and nuns. Secondly, the construction site of the Buddhist temple is set 15 miles away from the capital, and it is forbidden to mix in one place, so as to solve the problem of the quality and quantity of the Buddhist temple. As for the samurai mansions, the number of samurai mansions in the capital city was far less than one tenth of the current number under the implementation of the benevolent governance, and the empty houses were demolished to repair the remaining mansions. For the houses of ordinary people, the surrounding timber is sufficient and can be repaired by the ubiquitous pine trees.

In this part, banzan expressed its support for the implementation of the benevolent governance, and wanted to combine the forest as the foundation of the country with the benevolent governance as a national policy. For the people's lives affected by the implementation of the benevolent governance, direct and indirect measures were put forward, and the implementation of its people-oriented doctrine.

## 2.2 Afforestation

Banzan suggests another approach: afforestation. A hybrid forest is cultivated as follows: First, the size of the valley is measured, and a corresponding amount of tare seed is sown according to the width of the valley peak. Lay dead grass and day lilies on the seeds to prevent birds from overeating the seeds and increase the birds' stay. As the birds go back and forth in search of food, they can spread seeds around, expanding their planting area, and producing manure that provides fertilizer for the seeds to thrive in the future. Later, when the seeds germinate, the results also provide food for birds and attract more birds to disperse the seeds and provide fertilizer.

Banzan recognizes the organic connection between the forests and the animals that live in them. This is reflected in a cooperative relationship between the birds and the forests. While the birds expand the forests and help the forests grow, the forests attract the birds and provide them with shelter and food. Under the interaction of the two parties, the material circulation in the ecosystem is realized. In this way, Banzan hoped to turn the barren mountain into a mixed forest within 30 years, so as to provide firewood for the nearby villages and solve the living problems of the people.

Banzan also has some thoughts about the tree species for afforestation. "Now all countries together, good pine mountains. Because it grows easily". Pine trees were very popular at that time because of their easy and fast growth. The observation of the pine tree is described as follows: "Although the pine mountains are numerous and strong, they cannot be assisted by the Qi. But it is bad for Qi. Grass does not grow under pine forest. Water cannot dry up. The rain and dew on the pine trees are poisonous to the field". The "Qi" mentioned here can be understood as steam. Banzan believes that pine trees can

cause a loss of water vapor in the air, which can affect rainfall. And the fact that pine trees dry out so easily that other plants don't grow around them is mistaken for the fact that rain drops from pine trees are toxic and keep weeds from growing under them. While pointing out the shortcomings of pine tree, we also recognize the characteristics of pine tree that can grow on barren land and its advantages of extremely fast growth speed.

Banzan realized that mixed forest had better soil preservation function than mono-tree forest. "For the benefit of the moment, not for the future. If afforestation is carried out, small pines need to be uprooted. Now pine forest, should be a mixed forest". Banzan believed that pine trees were easy to cultivate and could grow even on granite land, but at the same time, he could analyze the shortcomings of pine trees just by observing them. He proposed that pine trees should be removed as a prerequisite for planting mixed wood forests, and that pine trees should not be only concerned with immediate benefits without knowing long-term harm, which implies a kind of ecological implication of sustainable development. At the same time, Banzan also suggested barren mountain cultivation can plant fir and cypress. The hills and valleys, cut down and almost barren, should be planted with fir and cypress seeds. Soon the hills were thick with fir, cypress, and miscellaneous trees, the mountains and trees were thick, and the Qi was strong. If it rains for a long time and there is no reservoir, there will be losses. If the mountains are lush and the sand does not flow out of the valley and the rivers converge, the sand will accumulate and raise the riverbed, which may cause floods. "Banzan tells the story of forest cultivation on barren mountains, not only planting pine, but should cultivate the complex forest shape of fir, cypress, shrubs, grass, and cultivate mixed wood forest". It is here that Bo Shan realizes that a forest system of fir, cypress and many other trees is more effective at controlling sand and stabilizing soil than a forest system of a single tree species like pine forest.

Regarding afforestation, many factors were considered, such as the interdependence and synergy between forest forests and surrounding animals, the advantages and disadvantages of planting tree species, the possibility of interaction between tree species, and the influence of tree species on water vapor in the air. But there are also cognitive limitations, such as the misconception that rain and dew on pine trees are toxic to fields and other plants by observing that shrubs and weeds fail to grow around them. However, even today, we can still see the wisdom of the theory of forestation. It is not a single focus on individual, but a macro observation and grasp of the ecosystem from a global perspective, so that each part of the ecosystem is closely connected and organically integrated, so that it can achieve sustainable development. Although there may be some deviations, it is a pioneer in ecological thinking in that one can learn a lot of basic knowledge just by observing it.

### 3. Conclusion

Ecological crisis has become a major issue of global concern. The holistic view of ecology in Confucianism, with its unique oriental wisdom, will provide a reference and mutual learning for the reconstruction of global ecology. The symbiosis between nature and man in banzan's thought tells us to take an interest in the natural environment in our own area of life and, through continuous insight, care for the natural environment as much as our bodies. The thought of "Have Love for the People, and Cherish All Things" guides us to reject anthropocentrism and turn to egalitarianism of life, respect nature, conform to nature, protect nature, and make people deeply introspective.

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