

Original Paper

On Sorting, Translation and Dissemination of Suqian Baijiu Culture

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Abstract

Baijiu culture is an important part of traditional Chinese culture and plays an important role in inheriting and carrying forward the excellent culture. At present, there are a large number of documents on Baijiu/ Liquor culture, but only a few of them are related to a particular local culture. This research deeply explores the long history of Suqian Baijiu culture, aiming to sort out and translate the brewing process of Suqian Baijiu, etc., which helps to understand the rich connotation and enhance the relative intrinsic value of Suqian Baijiu culture. However, due to barriers of language and cultural background, there are often various irregularities and errors in translation from Chinese to English, which makes it even difficult for foreigners to understand unique liquor culture of China. The purposes of this research and related translation of Suqian Baijiu culture are to bring Suqian liquor to the international market and let more people feel the charm of Suqian local Baijiu culture.

Keywords

Suqian Baijiu, inheritance and development, Yanghe, translation

1. History and Legends about Suqian Baijiu

Suqian is the hometown of Xiang Yu, the overlord of Western Chu Dynasty. Being a famous water town of liquor city with fantastic scenery, it was praised by Emperor Qianlong as “DI YI JIANG SHAN CHUN HAO CHU” (which means Suqian has the most enchanting scenery he had ever seen). The wetland ecological environment gives Suqian the natural advantage of “Soft and Sweet Liquor”, from which, some famous Baijiu brands, Yanghe and Shuanggou as examples, enjoy worldwide fame.

As you enter Suqian, you can smell the aroma of liquor everywhere. Legend has it, the sparrows in Suqian can drink three Liang (Weight unit; one Liang is equal to 50 milliliters). In August 2012, Suqian was awarded the title of “One of Chinese Liquor Capitals”. In March 2019, Suqian successfully passed the reassessment of “China (Suqian) Liquor Capital” and became a veritable liquor capital. There are

not many cities in China known as the “liquor capital”.

Suqian produces Luzhou flavor liquor, which is world-renowned as a representative of Yanghe. Yanghe liquor was once selected as an archaic term for a wine given as tribute, known as “FU QUAN JIU HAI QING XIANG MEI, WEI ZHAN JIANG HUAI DI YI JIA (Sweet and clean spring water in Suqian produces high-yield and delicious baijiu, which is ranked first in Jianghuai area).” According to related research, liquor making in Yanghe area began in Han dynasty and flourished in the Tang and Song dynasties. During the Han Dynasty, Yanghe town in Suqian, Jiangsu Province was already a famous place for liquor making. As the saying goes, “Where famous wine is produced, there must be a good spring”, Yanghe liquor is also derived from the cool and sweet Yanghe “Beauty Spring”.

According to historical records, the Ming Dynasty poet Zou Ji traveled to the Baiyang River area and saw the banks of the Baiyang River being lined with baijiu shops, with the aroma of baijiu in the air, so he created “Ode to the Baiyang River”. In the Qing Dynasty, Kangxi praised Yanghe liquor after making his southern tour to Suqian to taste Yanghe Daqu. By the reign of Daoguang in the Qing Dynasty, Yanghe Wine and Yanghe Daqu had become the best gifts and the first choice between officials and literati. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Yanghe has won the title of “Chinese Famous Liquor” in three Chinese liquor fairs, which is now one of the “eight old famous liquors”. In the long history, another Suqian Baijiu brand, Shuanggou, also has a profound cultural heritage, and has the quality of being known as “worthy of the world’s first class”.

2. Production Technology of Baijiu Liquor

Yanghe liquor brewing technology began in the Tang Dynasty, developed in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and has a verifiable history of more than 400 years, and is a traditional Chinese distilled spirit. For hundreds of years, Yanghe liquor brewing technology has been unique, which has been continuously improved in inheritance and development, and is still fully used today. The koji process is made of wheat, barley and peas. It is made manually and inoculated naturally in the koji room. In 1915, Yanghe liquor (Daqu series) won the gold medal of the Panama Universal Exposition, and in 1979, Yanghe liquor ranked among the eight famous liquors in China at the third national liquor appraisal, and won the title of national famous liquor for three consecutive times, with its unique style of “sweet, dense, soft, clean and fragrant”, it became the authentic representative of Chinese “Jianghuai” fragrant liquor. Yanghe liquor brewing technology is a traditional winemaking technique, it’s exquisite, because of transmission of hundreds of years and formed a unique regional style, with a wide range of folk base market consumption prospects.

Yanghe distillery - one of the three wine-making wetlands ranked in the world, is located in the south-east of Suqian Province, with 34°00’ - 34°14’ north latitude and 118°06’ - 118°16’ east longitude. Yanghe, known as the capital of Chinese Baijiu, has been making liquor for thousands of years. Generations of Yanghe people have reformed and innovated here, giving new meaning to Chinese Baijiu. Unique natural ecology and hundreds of years of skill inheritance contribute to the softness and

sweetness of Yanghe baijiu. Yanghe people follow the natural laws of solar terms and only brew wine between September and May each year. For hundreds of years, the unique Yanghe liquor brewing technology has been continuously improved in the process of inheritance and development, is still used today. The koji-making process adopts wheat, barley and peas as raw materials, according to a certain proportion, manually stepped on, naturally inoculated in the koji room, fermentation top fire temperature of about 60-63 degrees Celsius, and after about 60 days of fermentation and 4-6 months of long-term storage, it can be used. The winemaking process uses sorghum as the main raw material, rice husk as auxiliary material, medium and high temperature koji as saccharifying agents, leaven and aroma-producing agents. It is made by the perfect combination and refinement of traditional technology and modern technology, such as solid fermentation in the old cellar, low-temperature entry into the pool, slow fermentation, continuous fork blending, steaming and mixing, layered distillation, quantity and quality reception, graded storage, long-term aging of pottery jars, and careful blending.

Yanghe liquor adheres to the millennial brewing technology, inherits the spirit of craftsmanship, and the sophisticated wine-making techniques are controlled by senior winemakers. With a wide range of resources and great preparation and concentration, Yanghe baijiu accurately grasps more than 100 processes, which make the liquor dense and soft. The unique environment of the wetland and the production technology passed down for thousands of years have created its unique style of “Sweet, dense, soft, clean and fragrant”, making it the authentic representative of Luzhou-flavor Daqu liquor.

3. Characteristics and Effects of Baijiu

The main characteristics of baijiu can be summarized in four words “dense, sweet, clean and refreshing”, and the first characteristic “dense” refers to the thick feeling in the taste of baijiu. Good liquor can quickly integrate into our digestive system, quickly spreading like a warm mass of water. The second characteristic sweetness refers to the fine tasting of baijiu, which can perceive sweetness, just like a meal with new harvested rice, it doesn’t take long to taste the sweetness of rice. If you want to feel the sweetness of liquor, you need to taste it first. The third characteristic is neatness, which means that the liquor enters the throat smoothly and is not sticky at all. The fourth characteristic is coolness, which refers to the psychological feeling in the process of liquor and drinking, good liquor can often bring people a feeling of physical and mental pleasure.

Yanghe liquor is colorless and transparent, mellow, and has a particularly prominent taste, which has both a strong flavor and a unique style. It is a representative of the strong aroma type of Daqu liquor. Yanghe baijiu, one of the famous liquors of Suqian, also has different effects in many ways.

As an authentic representative of the aromatic Daqu wine, Yanghe baijiu plays its role in many ways, bringing positive emotional value to people.

4. Cultural Connotation of Baijiu

China's baijiu culture contains a long history of Yanghe liquor. Through the unremitting efforts of generations of ancestors, the Yanghe baijiu culture has thoroughly integrated the spirit of Chinese baijiu into our lives. In Yanghe liquor culture, Baijiu is not merely a beverage, liquor drinking has been an indispensable ritual of wedding and funeral ceremonies.

Liquor culture is an important part of Chinese national food culture. Liquor is one of the oldest foods of mankind, and its history begins almost all the time with the history of human culture. Since the emergence of liquor, as a material culture, it has a variety of forms, and its development process is synchronized with the history of economic development. And liquor is not only a food, but also has spiritual and cultural value. As a spiritual culture, it is reflected in social and political life, literature and art, and even people's attitude to life, aesthetic taste and many other aspects. In this sense, drinking is not drinking itself, it is culture.

First of all, Yanghe liquor culture embodies a high-level material or spiritual need. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, humans pursue alcohol consumption only if their survival needs are guaranteed. Therefore, alcohol consumption contains a high level of material or spiritual enjoyment, and is a "sentimental commodity" based on cultural values. Secondly, Yanghe liquor has a wide cultural connotation and various forms of expression. Thousands of years of liquor making technology and craft exploration have formed a unique scientific and technological category, as well as the historical and cultural accumulation of winemaking technology. Yanghe liquor culture also includes the concept of moderate drinking. Due to the influence of Confucian ethics and morality, Yanghe liquor culture has formed a Confucian liquor culture with "drinking ceremony" and "drinking virtue" as the main content, with liquor being a symbol of etiquette, drinking activities are an important way for people to learn to interact with others.

However, Chinese liquor culture is actually a social culture. Dealing with Chinese, no matter what the occasion, real drinking, even if it is formal drinking, needs to express the spiritual connotation -- guests who come from afar, liquor drinking is a must to express feelings. At festive season, joy and comfort are in liquor drinking; on bad days, liquor drinking helps eliminate loneliness and sadness.

Chinese liquor culture is both a social culture and a political culture. Since ancient China, ancient Chinese monarchs, famous ministers, military generals, and literati loved liquor, and many stories were inseparable from liquor, and without liquor, it felt like there was no soul. Liquor industry can build a country and prosper, liquor can help ambitious people build up their careers, enable politicians to make wise decisions, and saints are inseparable from liquor as well which proves that liquor culture is also a political culture.

There are many brands of baijiu or liquors in China, and they have different aroma types, in addition to the traditional strong aroma, sauce aroma, clear fragrance, and phoenix aroma, there are also wine with both aroma and sesame aroma. Chinese wine has such a rich and distinctive variety, which is inseparable from the ingenious brewing culture. Wine, although brewed in things but made in the heart,

is the crystallization of the wisdom of “heaven and earth people”, and only by allowing the unique “ingenuity” to truly spread can it add luster and fragrance.

As a typical example of Suqian baijiu culture, Yanghe liquor has the characteristics of “being dense and soft when drinking, being soft but mellow after drinking”, and the long-standing cultural connotation prolongs the mellow aroma of Yanghe liquor. The famous poet Wang Xijian has the inscription “Life is bitter, Yanghe baijiu is sweet.”, praising the elegant quality of the Yanghe series.

5. Baijiu and Wine

China is the homeland of baijiu, and also the birthplace of baijiu culture, and one of the earliest brewing countries in the world. China has a long history of liquor making and is famous for its wide variety. Among the many liquors in China, baijiu has a long history and craftsmanship, and it is still the world’s largest distilled spirit. Baijiu has permeated the entire history of China’s 5,000-year civilization, and occupies an important position in the life of Chinese from the aspects of literary and artistic creation, cultural entertainment, catering and cooking, and health care.

Liquor culture exists in every country and people in the world all show preference for liquor. However, the cultural differences between the East and the West have caused the difference between the Chinese and the Westerners’ appreciation of liquor, and also derived the difference between the Eastern and Western wine cultures.

When it comes to liquor, each country has its own representative work. Li Bai expressed the love of oriental people for liquor with beautiful poetry, and Pasteur, the father of Portugal, compared wine to the sunshine that gives life to all things.

Germany is famous all over the world for its beer -- Berlin White Beer, Kosh Beer, Ayr Wheat Beer, Munich Beer and more. When we think of wine, the first country that comes to mind is France. Internationally, wine is usually divided into four major wines: red wine, white wine, rosé wine, and sparkling wine. According to France’s own classification standards, according to excellent quality, wine can be divided into four levels: legal wine appellation, excellent regional table wine, regional table wine, and daily table wine. France is a world-renowned wine producer with a long history of wine production. The reason why, “French wine” is unique among the many red wines is that France not only produces the largest number of wine varieties in the world, but also produces countless world-famous high-end wines.

French adults drink red wine at every meal. The French often say: “People drink red wine, ducks drink water.” In China, the occasions for drinking baijiu are relatively formal, with the “respect for the elder” table etiquette as the core, China is a country of etiquette, the baijiu culture has a long history, and China’s baijiu has a wine path. Table etiquette represented by Wine pays the most attention to the “taste”. It’s shown that wine culture is closely related to western religious culture, inherits chivalry, and is a manifestation of aristocratic culture.

In the meaning of trademarks, baijiu is very different from red wine. For example, on the “Yanghe” brand trademark pattern of Yanghe Daqu, there is a white goat standing in the middle, surrounded by two ears of rice, which means “auspicious and prosperous”. The years are like a shuttle, the ancient town of Yanghe under the protection of the gods and sheep and the wine that is hard to find in the sky have not been forgotten with the passage of time, and the times have given the light wine fragrance a more timeless connotation. The bottle of German wine has a lot of words on it, indicating the name of the winery or winery, the year of grape harvest, the grape variety, the ripeness of the grapes at harvest, the taste (dry or semi-dry), the name of the vineyard, the legal appellation, the winery bottling, the quality grade, and the quality control test code. The former is euphemistic, the latter is direct.

6. Reflection and Conclusion

China, as a hometown of baijiu, is the first country to brew baijiu in the world. Liquor, as a substance, is more a cultural icon than an objective reality throughout history, including material and spiritual culture. We took Suqian Yanghe Baijiu as an example to sort out, translate, and disseminate baijiu culture.

The cultural differences between China and the West and the different language structure systems require translators to pay attention to the methods and strategies of translation in the translation process. And the ultimate purpose of translation is cultural output. To translate the local baijiu culture, it is necessary to follow its cultural background and let the spiritual culture get to the foreigners’ mind.

There are poems, sayings, proper nouns, four-character idioms and others involved in translation. We employ literal translation, paraphrasing, ellipsis, additives, ect. For example, “YANG YANG YI HE SHUI, YUAN CHU MEI RE QUAN”, a poem created by the famous poet Wang Xijian. Among it, “MEI RE QUAN” comes from illusions. According to legend, Yanghe Baijiu is brewed with this fountain, and “Beauty Spring” cannot reflect its cultural connotation. As a result, we use an additional translation for supplement “Beauty Spring (From the Chinese legend, where the spring water does not dry all the year around, the spring water is clear.)” When using Chinese for language expression activities, idioms, proverbs, and post-break language are involved, but lacking in the English language system. Therefore, we must make appropriate additions according to different cultural contexts to help readers better understand the cultural connotations.

Nowadays, baijiu has become a live signboard advertised by Suqian. With its promotion, it allows more people to know this small city in northern JiangsuIn, helps them comprehend the long history of liquor making, and lets people feel the charm of liquor.

In addition to being popularity, Suqian baijiu has its own characteristics as well. In the last century, domestic liquor was mainly divided into two types according to its aroma: “Sauce-flavored liquor” (which is mainly sauce-fragrant, with slightly caramelized aroma) and “Aromatic-flavored liquor” (which has the characteristic of rich aroma). In 2002, Yanghe launched “Mianrou” liquor (with the qualities of denseness and softness), which solved the two problems that related to people’s concern

about drinking -- “health” and “drinking capacity”. Suqian Baijiu is widely popular in China because of its unique taste, which also leads to its gradual entry into the international market. Sorting and translating Suqian Baijiu culture is conducted to inherit excellent local traditional culture and promote the development of local tourism through cultural communication.

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