
Analysis on the Morality Among the Officials and the Culture of Morality in Chu State

Huibin Xiang¹, Chuyun Wang²

¹Yangtze University, Jingzhou 434023, China;

²Zhengzhou Institute of Science and Technology, Zhengzhou 450064, China.

Abstract

Chu is an ancient state that has a history of more than 800 years. Dating back to Chu's time, there are many rulers and officials who are benevolent, self-disciplined and righteous. They became the cornerstone and gear wheel of Chu state. The morality refers to the moral-oriented notion of the officials, the notion of ruling by law and the notion of diligent and hard-working. These notions together became the core value of Chu state.

Keywords

Chu State, Moral Officials, Morality Culture.

1. Introduction

In history, Chu expanded from a small state locating in Jingshan mountain area to the biggest state in southern china. This achievement is ascribed to the following reasons: ruler's diligence, wide expansion of the notion of incorruptibility among the officials, education of incorruptibility and legislating on anti-corruption. There are many righteous, self-disciplined officials such as Prime Minister Ziwen, Sunshuao, zigao. They are hard-working, corruption-resistant, law-abiding, benevolent and faithful to the state. To analyze their actions and making summaries can not only deepen our understanding of morality culture of Chu state but also can provide examples for China's building of moral culture. Helping us foster a responsible, faithful and righteous official team.

2. Cultivating Morality from Righteousness

The King is the key to decide whether a state is in great order or not. [1] In Chu's time, kings are required to have the morality that required by the heaven. This "heaven morality" has become the basis for the governance of a king. All kings pay attention to the cultivation of "heaven morality" in himself and uphold righteousness and self discipline.

For example, Wuwang of Chu is active and aggressive. He Conquered Quan State and founded Quan County. He appointed Dou Min as the County Magistrate and Chu's territory expanded rapidly.

Besides, Zhuangwang of Chu is also benevolent and tolerate. According to the 14th chapter of 7th volume of The Unauthorized biography of Han Poem, Zhuangwang of Chu is benevolent to his subordinate. One day, after a fierce battle, Zhuangwang of Chu held a banquet to celebrate the victory. When everyone is drunk and the sky was dimmed, suddenly a gust of wind blew out all the candles. In the darkness someone held the queen's sleeve and the queen picked off his tassel on the hat. The queen quickly told the zhuangwang of Chu about this and hoped to find out the man who held her sleeve. In the darkness zhuangwang of Chu stopped servant from lighting candles and said:"drinking with a tassel on the hat is inconvenient, please pick off our tassels and let's drink." hearing this, the man knew zhuangwang of Chu protected him. Several years later, when the army of Wu invaded Chu, a warrior dashed into battle array of Wu and crumbled the attack. In the celebrating ceremony, zhuangwang of

Chu asked the warrior: "I don't know you, why you combated with all your bravery and strength?" the warrior answered: "I am the one who held the queen's sleeve, the king pardoned me so I must pay back with all my effort." This is an example of how tolerance touched Zhuangwang's subordinate.

There is another example about the moral of Chu's officials. In 664BC, Ziwen was the prime minister of Chu State and at that time, Chu suffered from the disasters. In order to cope with the difficulties of Chu, Ziwen took out all his belongings and donated them to Chu. Because of his treasure, Chu was able to survive the difficulties and became thrift again. This is also an example of moral.

The famous official Sunshuao was named the "first official who are diligent and corruption-resistant in Simaqian's Historical Records of Official Biography. In 601BC, Sunshuao became the prime minister of Chu state and helped Chu's governor to rule morally. He himself is fair, just and corruption-resistant. Although he was recalled for three times, he was calm and assured. This was highly praised by the Master Qisong: "Sunshuao is a mature guy who doesn't worry about his appointment and recall." [3] Sunshuao is strictly self-disciplined and under his governance the officials and the governor are in harmony. There are praises everywhere. There are no corruptions among officials and there are no burglary among people.

Zigao was the county magistrate of Ye. He is diligent and caring for people. Hanyingshao praised him in his book Folk Legends that zigao is "faithful to the state and care for people. People loved him very much." [3] The most remarkable achievement of zigao is that he successfully frustrated the insurrection of Baigongsheng. After the insurrection, zigao acclaimed Huiwang to crown. At that time he was the prime minister and the senior general. Although he led Chu successfully at that time, he still resigned and give the seat to Zining and Zikuan. He was a civilian when he was old.

There are many officials who have the morality: The warrior, Ziwen, Sunshuao, Zigao are all the examples.

3. Enacting Moral by Law

There is an old Chinese saying: "everything in the world should obey some rules, when you want to become someone, you should obey some rules, when you want to achieve something, you should obey some rules and when you want to govern the country, you should obey some rules. There is nothing that can be achieved without some rules" [4]. Chu's king governed the state with rule and himself also obeyed the rule. Any offense of the rule will be punished accordingly.

When Wenwang of Chu was young, he was addicted to hunting and neglected the affairs of the state. Baoshen, a lawman wanted to whip him according to the law legislated by Chu's ancestors. Wenwang said: "I was the governor of Chu so please don't whip me." Baoshen reiterated: "the laws are inviolable, so please come and accept the whipping." [5] finally, Baoshen whipped the Wenwang and hereafter Wenwang broke the arrows, set free the dogs and made Chu even stronger again.

Another example is Zhuangwang of Chu. Zhuangwang made Law of Palace Gate. It stipulated that any official who came to meet the king should stop his carriage before the palace gate. If the horse step on the ditch in front of the gate, the lawman should chop the shaft and kill the wagoner. One day, the prince has something emergent to report to the Zhuangwang. Because he was too fast when he reach the palace gate, his horse stepped on the ditch. the lawman carried out the law accordingly, which irritated the prince. The prince came to Zhuangwang and asked Zhuangwang to kill the lawman. However, in order to maintain the seriousness of the law, Zhuangwang pardoned the lawman [6].

Two prime ministers Ziwen and Sunshuao also respected the seriousness of law. When Ziwen was prime minister, one day one of his relative violated the law and caught by the criminal officer. Hearing that the man is a relative of Ziwen, the criminal officer released him. Hearing this, Ziwen called in the criminal officer and blamed him. He asked the criminal officer to catch the relative again and punish him accordingly.

Sunshuao was once a magistrate of a small county and nominated by the former prime minister yuqiuzi. One day, a relative of yuqiuzi broke the law. Sunshuao also punished him according to the law.

There is another example of Chu's official protecting the law. Jici Code is the first criminal law of Chu and it was protected in the worship shrine. In 506BC, the army of Wu occupied Chu's capital Yin. A senior official named menggu sneaked into the shrine and protected the Jici Code. After retreat of Wu's army, Chu occupied its capital Yin again. This time Menggu offered the king Jici Code. Everyone followed the code and everything was in good order. Zhaowang of chu (the king) decided to investiture him and give him land. Menggu refused and became a hermit in Moshan.

Chu's famous patriotic poet Qu Yuan also wrote the Decree, he is also a protector and promoter of law. In the warring state period, Daowang of Chu nominated Wuqi as the prime minister in order to reform the whole country. Wuqi uphold the principle of "serving and public and neglecting self interest, following the law and reform the bureaucratic system", this also protected the law.

The law of Chu has many anti-corruption codes and righteous official protecting codes. These codes not only regulated the king but also the officials. This made Chu a strong and successful country.

4. Cultivating Morality by Fulfilling "Oriented by People"

In spring and autumn period and warring state period, many great thinker and politicians put forward the notion of "people are the root of king". they realized that the king and the people have vase common interest and the king must be diligent to serve the people.officials must be responsible for people and this notion is highly respected in Chu state.

Zhaowang of Chu is very diligent and loved people very much. One day, when he was full, he thought that many people were still starving and he ordered his official to open the granaries and feed the hungry. Two years after, Wu state invaded Chu and Zhaowang had to run away to Sui state. At this time, his people gathered together and asked zhaowang to come back and lead them to fight against Wu. Zhaowang realized the people's power and came back. They defeated Wu through common effort. This victory is because of Zhaowang's love for people.

"The responsibility of a governor is to feed and protect his people." this is said by zhiwen and is upheld as the principle of Chu's officials. Sunshuao also loved the people, in 605BC, he led the worker to build the water irrigation project in qisi. This was the earliest irrigation project in China. According to historical record, he also led the worker to build the quepo dam. He emphasized agriculture, livestock husbandry and fishing. He persuaded people to collect timber in autumn and winter when it was slack season and sell them in spring and summer when there was enough water to make the waterway a transportation tunnel. This made many people rich at that time.

Sunshuao always persuaded the zhuangwang of Chu to "think about the people", zhuangwang thought the handcart in Chu was too small and ordered all people to build big cart. Sunshuao said to the zhuangwang that order may trigger resentment and if zhuangwang asked officials to raise the threshold people would use the big cart voluntarily. Zhuangwang then thought the currency of Chu is too small and asked the mint to make large sized money. After fulfilling the order, the market was in chaos. Sunshuao persuaded zhuangwang to make small currency again and convinient the people. Zhuangwang took his advice and the market became thrift again.[8]

In Chu's history, the kings and the officials upheld the notion of "protecting the people", "upholding the moral", "being just and fair" and "serving and public". these notions has become the values of Chinese society. Today ,when our government want to build a just, fair and benevolent society, we can learn something from Chu's officials and kings and summarize more values.

Acknowledgements

Foundation Item: Yangtze Youth Fund

Research Title: Research on Morality Culture and Righteous officials;

Project Number: 2016cqn53

References

- [1] Y.Zhang: Compilation of Chinese Historical Materials(Beijing Normal University Press, China 2009), p.161.(In Chinese)
- [2] Research Institute of Sichuan University, Z.Z.Zeng, L. Liu,et al. Compilation of Ancient Books Collation from ; Song Dynasty, Vol. 18.(Chengdu Bashu Press, China 1991), p.696.(In Chinese)
- [3] S.Ying: Folk Customs (Guizhou People's Press, Guiyang 1998) p.67.(In Chinese)
- [4] D.Mo: Mo-tse (North Literature and Art Press, Harbin 2014), p.10. (In Chinese)
- [5] B.W.Lv:Lv's Commentaries of History(North Literature and Art Press, Harbin 2014), p.367-369.(In Chinese)
- [6] Chu Culture Research Group of Anhui archaeological team (Anhui archaeology, China 1980), p.194-195.(In Chinese)
- [7] Q.M.Zuo:Chinese history books series(Shanghai Ancient Books Press, Shanghai 2015)p.376.(In Chinese)
- [8] B. Pen: Chinese Moral Officials(China Fangzheng Press, Beijing 2006) p.1-8.(In Chinese).