

On the Economic Development of Tujia Ethnic Group Inhabiting the Wujiang River Basin Before and During the Five Dynasties in China

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Abstract

The economic development of Tujia Ethnic Group inhabiting the Wujiang River Basin has a long history, the earliest of which can be traced back to pre-Qin period. But the feudal rulers did not recognize the social progress, economic development and ethnic composition until the Five Dynasties following the Sui and Tang Dynasties, after which they strengthened the governance and management of Wujiang River Basin and promoted the development of the region. This paper will take the Five Dynasties as the demarcation point to review the economic development in this region.

Key words: Before and during the Five Dynasties; Wujiang River Basin; Tujia ethnic group region; Economic development

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INTRODUCTION

Wujiang River is the largest tributary of the southern bank of the upper reach of the Yangtze River, originating in the mountain area in northern Guizhou and eastern Sichuan. With a total length of 1,050 km, its basin area covers 88,000 km². In this vast territory, more than 40 ethnic groups are distributed, among which Tujia is one of them. Tujia is an ethnic group with a long history,

mainly dwelling in the adjoining area of Hunan, Hubei, Chongqing and Guizhou. To be more specific, they inhabit Qingjiang River Basin to the south of the Three Gorges, the south to Xiajiang in East Chongqing, the lower reaches of Wujiang River and Youshui and Lishui River Basin.

This paper mainly refers to the area in which the majority of the Tujia ethnic group dwell alongside the Wujiang River Basin. With the Wujiang River serving as a link, the area is a relatively independent geographical unit and its cultural features are also relatively close in different historical periods. According to the division of administrative units, it includes Lichuan city and Xianfeng county governed by Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Enshi in Hubei Province, Xiushan, Youyang, Qianjiang, Pengshui Miao and Tujia Autonomous County in Chongqing, mixed with Fuling, and Wulong county, the riverside Tujia Autonomous county and Yinjiang Tujia and Miao Autonomous county in Guizhou Province, mixed with Dejianga and Sinan County. According to the view of Li Liangpin (Li & Wu, 2009), the area from Shi Gangdong in Weining County to Wu Ji in Qianxi County is considered as the upper reaches of the Wujiang River; Wu Ji to Sinan County the middle reaches; Sinan to Chongqing Fuling the lower ones. From this point of view, the area mostly belongs to the lower reaches of Wujiang River.

Here one thing needs to be pointed out, the Tujia region in the Wujiang River Basin is different from that in the historical periods, as is resulted from the continuous migration of different ethnic groups. Besides, the ancestors here had close contact with the outside, especially the surrounding Tujia ethnic group and others. Therefore, great similarities can be found in the economic sector and the cultural creation. This paper will inevitably relate to the neighboring regions when referring to historical data.

Ancient Ba People and today's Tujia Ethnic Group are closely linked in terms of ethnic origins, to put it in another way, a group of descendants of the ancient Ba

people gradually assimilated other ethnic groups and finally formed the Tujia ethnic group in the Five Dynasties by the end of Tang Dynasty. Therefore discussion of the Ba People today is of great significance to the study of the Tujia ethnic group. Since Sui and Tang Dynasties, feudal rulers recognized the actual social progress, economic development and ethnic composition, and took several measures to strengthen the governance and management of the Wujiang River Basin, including establishing states and counties, dispatching officials, beating new paths, circulating goods, respecting Confucianism, etc.. All these measures increased the central government's contact with the border areas, and promoted the development in ethnic regions (Peng, 2011).

1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF BA PEOPLE IN THE WUJIANG RIVER BASIN BEFORE AND DURING THE FIVE DYNASTIES IN CHINA

According to Volume 86 in *the Book of Later Han "Collected Biographies of Nanman and the Southwest Barbarians"*, the Ba People first originated in Wuluozhongli Mountain, and after continual migration they established the Ba State. As is stated in the *Records of Huayang Kingdom, Records of Ba*, "King Wu's Conquest greatly inspired the martial spirit." Having performed meritorious service in the conquest, the Ba State became a fief of Zhou State (Chang, 354). Historically, the territory of Ba State was so vast that it covered Shaanxi, Hubei, Sichuan, Chongqing, Hunan and Guizhou provinces in its heyday.

According to the view of Mr. Li Shaoming, those who lived in the Ba territory can be called Ba People (Li, 1993). As a result, Ba People are quite prosperous with many branches. There are three main branches distributed in the Wujiang River Basin: Yufu Ba People, Baihu Ba People and Bieling Ba People⁴ (Zeng, 2004). There are no records about the specific time they moved to the Wujiang River Basin, but Ba tombs unearthed from Fuling Xiao Tian Xi showed Ba People' trails in the Wujiang River Basin in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. *Wu chuan Lu* also mentioned, "Although Fuling people didn't live with alien tribes, also the old custom of barbarians, they are called the Four People which consisted of Ethnic Chinese, Ba People, Lin Jun and Panhu." (Fan, 2004) This shows that Ba People entered the Wujiang River Basin in the late Spring and Autumn Period, after which they continued to migrate to the upper reaches of the Wujiang River and to Wuchuan area until Han Dynasty. Then they labored, lived and multiplied on this land. (Wu, 1991)

As is stated in the *Records of Huayang Kingdom, Records of Ba*, "the territory of Ba State stretches to

Yufu to the east, Bodao to the west, Hanzhong to the north and Qianfu to the south." The Qianfu area governs Pengshui, Qianjiang, northeast Guizhou and northwest Hunan (You, 2005). In addition to northwest Hunan, the other regions in the south of Ba State fell within the scope of the Wujiang River Basin. Ba State was replaced by the system of prefectures and counties after it was defeated by Qin State. This area mainly belonged to the sphere of jurisdiction of Ba County, Nan County and QianZhong County (it was named Wuling County in Han Dynasty). Today, Ba County covers the eastern Sichuan and the whole Chongqing which consists of 11 counties in total. Fuling county (it was called Ba Ting County in Xin Dynasty) is one of them and its government is in Pengshui. In addition, the rest are Guizhen, Wuchuan, Dejiang, Sinan and Yanhe in today's Guizhou. The western Hubei Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture mostly belong to the Nan County and the southwest region belongs to the Wujiang River Basin. The Qianling County (containing Xiushan) in Wuling County and Youyang County (including Qianjiang and Youyang) are also in the range of Wujiang River Basin. Later in this region, Ba People preserved their own culture and customs. Though its name has changed based on different regional systems, the distribution area remains unchanged since the Five Dynasties (Tan, 1996).

The various branches of the Ba People merged into the Wujiang River Basin at different times, adding new blood and new forces to the economic development of the Wujiang River Basin which had profound influences on social advancement, economic development, cultural creation and ethnic integration there.

2. THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE WUJIANG RIVER BASIN BEFORE AND DURING THE FIVE DYNASTIES

Ba People made use of local rich natural resources in the Wujiang River Basin. By adjusting measures to local conditions and expanding enterprising, they accumulated rich experience in production and life, and were active in extensive and in-depth development of the Wujiang River Basin, making outstanding contributions to the civilization of the Wujiang River Basin. And their contributions can be found in the following aspects.

2.1 The Development of Agriculture

Ba culture has a distinctive characteristic, which features its economy by a combination of farming, fishing and hunting. In lifestyle, Ba ancestors first fed on fishing, gradually they developed a compound mode of farming, fishing and hunting. (Xiong & Zhang, 2007)

This conclusion can be testified in historical documents and archaeological discoveries. In 1981, an investigation of ancient fossils unearthed 20 mammal

species, 1 reptile species and 1 bird species in the north of Chahua Village, Fengjiaba Town, Qianjiang. It can be broadly located in the middle and late Paleolithic Period at that time; meantime, more than 800 chipped stone implements belonging to the same period were also found. According to the investigation, four human teeth and 1,000 fossils consisting of 26 species such as pandas, saber-toothed elephants, dogs, and rhinoceros were unearthed in the Biankoudong fossil site in Yeping Village, Yongdong County in XiuShan, and its time corresponded to the previous one. While in 1964, more than 3000 stone implements were found in the Guanyindong paleolithic site in Qianxi County, Guizhou Province along the upstream of the Wujiang River. As experts found, these stone implements mainly consisted of scraping devices, followed by chopping devices, pointed devices, stone cones as well as engraving devices. They were made by hammering methods and occasionally by striking methods (Deng, 2002). The above archaeological discoveries showed that hunting economy occupied a pivotal position in the ancestors' lives in that region.

Whether the Ba People had entered the Wujiang River Basin is unknown, but we are sure that the local people in primitive times possessed skilled tool-making techniques, and had certain rules to follow from choosing materials to shape tools. Although these tools were relatively simple, they laid a good foundation for future development in the region. After entering the Slavery Age and the Feudal Age, primitive agriculture began to show in the Tujia area economy which was previously based on hunting and fishing in primitive times. As is stated in *Yu Di Ji Sheng (Memoir for the Wonders on Land)*, "The slash-and-burn cultivation being the primitive farming tradition, paddy fields were only seen in several regions like Chongqing County." (Wang, 2005) By means of the slash-and-burn cultivation, people burnt the weeds in the spring which would grow with the paddies. Later, they would drown the weeds. This kind of farming method was primitive. In addition to the cultivation of paddies, the residents also learned to raise livestock. And they owned houses and homesteads (Si & Fu, 1980). Dead bodies of livestock such as chickens, ducks, pigs, dogs and horses were found in Sanduizi in Fuling. Pottery fields, pottery barns, pottery pigs and pottery hens were unearthed in the Han tomb in Yu Shan, proving that people there had mastered the method of raising livestock in the late Han Dynasty.

In Tang Dynasty, the government divided the country into 10 administrative regions. The Ba region belongs to Qianzhou, Shizhou, Feizhou, Fuzhou (Tan, 1996) With the social development and advancement of productive forces, the fertile soil, abundant rainfall and dense forests in the Wujiang River Basin made a farming place with broad prospects. Besides, ravines and thick forests in vast mountains permanently protected the people from wars. After long-term cultivation, part of the primitive forests

was changed into farmland. *Yu Di Ji Sheng (Memoir for the Wonders on Land)* quoted from the *Sui Book - Geographical Annals* and stated "Qian state, at the time, served tea and candles in summer and rice and grain in autumn" (Wang, 2005). It also cited from Jiuqing and mentioned that "Average people wore clothes made of coarse cloth rather than silk" (Wang, 2005). As we can tell, though not leading a rich life, the residents could afford basic supplies of food and clothing. In some flat regions in Wuchuan, even blade ploughs and cattle plough were put into use. (Wu, 1991)

In addition to grain crops in the Tang Dynasty, there were some economic crops. At that time, the main economic crops included wax, cloth and honey, etc.. *Yuan He Jun Xian Tu Zhi (Record of Prefectures and Counties During the Yuanhe Period)* recorded the tribute paying at that time " (Qian county) tribute: beeswax in Kaiyuan age (713-741) and 23 kg wax, bamboo cloth and ramie cloth in Yuanhe age (806-820). (Pengshui) tribute: income brought by salt springs. (Fuzhou) tribute: flake gold, iron cutter and betel pepper in Kaiyuan age and whitish honey and a bolt of cloth in Yuanhe age. (Si zhou) tribute: fabric and zinnober in Kaiyuan age and 7.5 kg wax in Yuanhe age. (Fei Zhou) tribute: 20 kg wax in Kaiyuan age. (Shi Zhou) tribute: honey, edible vegetable oil, coptis, herb balls and wax in Kaiyuan age and 5 kg coptis and 200 herb balls in Yuanhe age (Li, 2005). The so-called tribute refers to the precious products offered by subjects and vassals to the emperor. Obviously, these economic products were abundant and of highly quality. In addition, being an important court tribute, litchis produced in the Tang Dynasty in Fuzhou enjoyed full flourished when Emperor Xuanzong was in charge. *Guang Zhi Yi* mentioned "litchis are produced in extremely hot regions, and they can only grow in Sichuan except for Fujian and Guangdong. The litchis in the line "Seeing a hurried ride, the princess smiles; No one knows it is for the litchis" depicted in a Tang poem were produced in the litchi orchard in Fuzhou in Sichuan Province in China (Wang, 2006).

2.2 The Development of Handicraft Industry

In the Ba period, the first and the second great social division of labor the region had been completed in the region. Agriculture and animal husbandry had the division of labor, and handicraft industry was separated from agriculture. In addition, there appeared production departments such as professional handicraft industry and mining industry.

In 1972, three tombs of Ba rulers were excavated in Xiaotianxi in Fuling which were featured by the Bashu bronze ware culture in this area during the Warring States period. More than 180 pieces of cultural relics were unearthed, the vast majority of which were bronze wares. The shape and decoration of weapons generally belong to the type of Bashu bronze weapons. There were 14 chimes 14 golds, with decreasing sizes and different thickness,

among which 8 had inlaying gold ornamentation, 4 had inlaying silver beast head ornamentation of tiger shapes, 2 embedded black beads, 2 had beads in a tiger's mouth. The rest had 1 copper pot with inlaying silver lines, 1 square mirror with hollowed double dragons and 1 Chunyu (an ancient musical instrument) with tiger knots. The above bronze wares were very splendid with high levels of foundry and manufacturing techniques (Si, Chong, & Fu, 1974).

For a long time, the salt was very rich in the region, so that the name of the salt was tagged with Ba (in Sichuan, the salt was called Yan Ba). There is no doubt that the great contributions made by salt industry were fully recognized by Ba people. The salt industry development mainly took place in the Qingjiang River Basin in Hubei, the Three Gorges and the Wujiang River Basin. The development of salt industry in the Wujiang River Basin mainly focusses one tributary named Yushui basin where the salt spring flow from the foot of the Funiu mountain ranges in Yushan townlet in Pengshui county. The Ba people first simmered, cooked and processed the salt, and then transshipped and sold them, making the place the second largest salt spring producing area (Qu, 1997). With officials responsible for the salt industry management in Han Dynasty, salt tax was in the charge of them. At that time, officials were in charge of four places, namely Quren county (now the west YunYang), Hanfa county (now Youyang county), Wu county (now Wushan) and Linjiang county (now Zhong county) (Li, Zhou, & Li, 1996) The Hanfa county belonged to the region. Since then the salt industry continued, for there was still a record of salt production in Pengshui county in Tang Dynasty.

In the Wujiang River Basin, mining and smelting started early which could date back to the Warring States Period when cinnabar was exploited. As was stated in the *Records of the Historian, Collected Biographies of the Commercial and Industrial Management*, the widow named Qing became rich due to the exploitation of cinnabar, for which she was praised by the First Emperor of Qin and thus was awarded a pavilion named after her. Although controversies exist about where the widow lived, it surely belonged to the Wujiang River Basin. In Han Dynasty, cinnabar exploitation mainly concentrated in the lower reaches of Wujiang River Basin, specifically speaking, they included Fuling, Qianjiang and Pengshui, etc.. Cinnabar exploitation was already known at that time. Chang Qu recorded in his *Records of Huayang Kingdom, Records of Ba* that cinnabar was produced in Danxing county (now Youyang county) which not only meant that cinnabar mining reached its zenith at that time but also showed the county was named after the Chinese character of cinnabar. Even in Tang Dynasty Qianzhou, Sizhou and other places took cinnabar and quicksilver as the tribute, making the mining and smelting industry of cinnabar expanded.

2.3 The Development of Transportation Industry

Ba people were a nation of migration, therefore, they carved out roads between mountains and built bridges over waters, which stimulated the development of transportation industry. On land, intricate paths connected with bridges, mountain passes and borders. By water, Waterway transportation was completed by the thick-plate ships and snakelike shapes in the Wujiang River.

An important characteristic of the migration of Ba people is that they migrated to mountainous areas, making them a typical mountain nation. Ba people carved out numerous risky paths while fighting with the adverse circumstances, with the gallery roads being a special case. As a result, land transportation also greatly developed.

In terms of water transportation, Wujiang River had been an important channel since ancient times, the main tributaries of which are Furong River, Changxi River, Yu River and A'peng River, etc.. But the gorge was deep and the water was very dangerous. Goods and materials exported from Sichuan were often transported along the Yangtze River from Chongqing to Fuling, and then to the Wujiang River; Or to Gongtan in Youyang county, then they were carried to Longtan by labor and to Yuanling through Youshui and Yuanjiang and finally to Changde and Hankou, etc.; Or from the Yu river to Pengshui, then to Changde and Hankou through the Youyang county and Youshui; Or they can be shipped to from A'peng River to Longtan through Lianglukou and finally to Yuanling, Changde and Hankou through Youshui and vice versa (Peng & Wang, 2007). As was stated in the *Records of Huayang Kingdom, Records of Ba*, Sima Cuo started business from the Wujiang River. As we can see, the Wujiang River was not only one important commercial channel but also of strategic significance in ancient times.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION BEFORE AND DURING THE FIVE DYNASTIES

Before and during the Five Dynasties, the central government in Tujia region did not have effective management. Precisely, the Tujia ethnic group experienced the slavery system, feudal laird system and feudal lord system from (316 BC) Qin and Han dynasties to (1279) Tang and Song dynasties. In such a long time, the Tujia ethnic group naturally and slowly developed under the Jimi system (Li & Zhou, 1995).

Ba state was sparsely populated until was set as a county of Qin State, and a large number of people moved here, promoting the development of local farming, fishing and collecting economy. Some scholars believe that Tujia

economy gradually shifted from the primitive fishing and collecting economy to farm industry supplemented by the primitive economy (Zhou, 2004). As was stated in the *Book of Han, Records of Geography*, in Nan county and Wuling people could feed themselves on rice, fish and fruits. In fact, this is just the description of economic development in Tujia region. Before and during the Five Dynasties, fishing, hunting and gathering economy were dominant within the scope of the Wujiang River Basin in the Tujia region while agricultural production was distributed sporadically in some neighboring counties in the Tujia region. Most parts of the Nan county and Wuling mentioned in the book were beyond the scope of the Wujiang River Basin. Therefore, these do not represent the economic development in the Tujia region. All in all, before and during the Five Dynasties, the agricultural economy relatively lagged behind others.

Handcraft industry was well developed early in the Warring States Period in the region, which was mainly represented in the following aspects: (a) there were of different and abundant kinds. They included bronze wares, lacquer wares, pottery wares, inlaying gold wares, silver wares. Among the bronze wares, there were bronze swords, bronze spears, bronze crossbows and bronze arrow bunches, etc.; (b) they were distinctive in characteristics, such as bronze chimes, willow-leaf shaped swords (with ornamentation of tiger shapes), dagger axes with tiger knots, Chunyu (an ancient musical instrument) with tiger knots; (c) the smelting technology was exquisite. Through the laboratory analysis of the unearthed bronze weapons, the percentages of all kinds of metals met the technological standard of *Kao Gong Ji* (the earliest documents of handicraft technology). In addition, other industries such as salt industry and cinnabar exploitation also developed. However, industrial development was closely related to the distribution of raw materials, so the industrial distribution was limited.

CONCLUSION

Before and during the Five Dynasties, a series of economic development promoted the economic and cultural development and the amalgamation and progress of civilization in this region. But due to the limitations of the development capability, the level of the economic development stayed comparatively low in this region. That is the reason why people then thought it was a backwater. This, however, contributed to the fact that the ecological environment of the Tujia region remained unaffected by those bad effects caused by economic development.

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