



Clarify the Spatio-temporal Issues in the Comprehensive Compilation of Middle School History Textbooks “Huguang is Abundant, the World is Satisfied”

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Abstract

Based on my practical research in teaching, I have found that the explanation of the time and space concept related to the proverb "Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied" on page 97 of the second volume of the seventh-grade history textbook is somewhat unclear. This ambiguity could potentially cause confusion among teachers and students. Therefore, I aim to offer additional evidence on the spatial-temporal aspect of this proverb by organizing relevant historical facts to enhance clarity and comprehension. At the same time, while taking into account the cultivation requirements of the five core competencies in the history subject for middle school students as proposed by the Ministry of Education, I aim to utilize this argumentation to strengthen the development of pertinent historical subject competencies for junior high school students. Moreover, it can also contribute to fostering a culture of rigorous historical research within the middle school teacher team to some extent.

Keywords

Historical literacy, “Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied”, Unified teaching materials

In the "Compulsory Education History Curriculum Standards", one of the goals of the history curriculum is to cultivate students' core literacy. The core literacy that the history curriculum aims to develop mainly includes materialism, spatiotemporal concepts, historical evidence, historical interpretation, and patriotism. Among these five aspects of disciplinary literacy, "spatiotemporal concept," "historical evidence," and "historical interpretation" are the most distinctive features of the history discipline. The spatiotemporal concept is the essence of the history discipline and serves as the foundation. Historical evidence is an essential skill for learning history. Historical interpretation is a basic requirement for developing historical thinking and expression skills (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

For students in the compulsory education stage of junior high school, they are required to preliminarily learn how to view history under the guidance of materialism. They should examine history within specific spatiotemporal conditions. They should also learn to rely on high-credibility historical evidence to understand and recognize history. Based on historical evidence, they should preliminarily learn how to express their own views on history with logic and evidence.

Since the autumn of 2017, the unified compilation middle school history textbook published by People's Educa-

tion Press (hereinafter referred to as the unified textbook) has been used nationwide for more than 6 years. The unified textbook is improved and revised in certain knowledge points every year, and frontline teachers and researchers are required to treat the textbook with an objective approach, striving for excellence. Based on my own teaching and research practice, I aim to provide a clearer organization of the knowledge points in Lesson 19 of the seventh grade second semester of the unified textbook.

In the passage on page 97 of the textbook, it is mentioned that:

Before the Qing Dynasty, the Jiangnan region was known for its abundant rice production and thriving fish farming industry, earning it the title of "Land of Fish and Rice" and the proverb "When Suzhou and Huzhou are ripe, the world is satisfied." In the mid-Qing Dynasty, the cultivation of crops such as corn and sweet potatoes became widespread in the Jiangnan Plain, Dongting Lake Plain, and along the Xiangjiang River, resulting in a significant increase in grain production. During this time, the Huguang region became a new commodity grain base, giving rise to the proverb "Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied."

The proverb "Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied" appears multiple times in textbooks and teaching materials. It is often used to illustrate the abundant economic crops and the obvious trend of commercialization of agricultural products in the Jiangnan region during the Qing Dynasty (Han Feiyang, 2021). "Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied" is an important knowledge point in history textbooks, so it is necessary to clarify its meaning.

The following text will mainly present two points of verification regarding the temporal and spatial aspects of the proverbs mentioned in this article.

1. Analysis of the "Huguang" spatial concept

The text mentions several spatial concepts such as "Jiangnan", "Suhu", "Jiangnan Plain", "Dongting Lake Plain", "along the Xiang River", and "Huguang". In particular, the region of "Huguang" that will be discussed in this article is often misunderstood by many students and even teachers as an abbreviation for the regions of Two Lakes and Two Guangs, leading to confusion in geographical location. Furthermore, after reviewing the comprehensive textbooks and their teaching materials, the author did not find any clear explanations regarding the specific location of "Huguang". Therefore, it is necessary to thoroughly clarify the relevant regional issues of "Huguang", as this is of great importance in cultivating the spatiotemporal concept literacy of secondary school students in the subject of history.

In the early establishment of the Ming Dynasty, the administrative system was inherited from the Yuan Dynasty, and the provincial government was set up at the local level. In the ninth year of the Hongwu period, Zhu Yuanzhang, in order to further centralize the power of the central government and strengthen control over the local areas, abolished the provincial government at the local level without abolishing the provincial government and established the Provincial Governor's Office, the Criminal and Surveillance Office, and the Military Command Office. Among them, the Provincial Governor's Office was in charge of local administrative affairs. "Since then, it has been established as the thirteen Provincial Governor's Offices in Shandong, Shanxi, Henan, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Hubei, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou, and the two Directly Controlled Districts of Beijing and Nanjing" (Fu Linxiang, 2008).

During most of the Ming Dynasty, Huguang was one of the thirteen provincial administrations. In the early Qing Dynasty, the Huguang provincial administration was established, following the system of the Ming Dynasty. It included fifteen prefectures such as Wuchang, Hanyang, Huangzhou, Chengtian, Dean, Jingzhou, Xiangyang, Yunyang, Changsha, Hengzhou, Yongzhou, Baoqing, Chenzhou, Changde, and Yuezhou, as well as two directly-controlled states, Chenzhou and Jingzhou, and two pacification offices, Baojing and Yongshun. The provincial administration was located in Wuchang. In the third year of the Kangxi era, the Huguang provincial administration was divided into the left and right provincial administrations. In the sixth year of Kangxi, Huguang was divided into two provinces. Each provincial administration had two officials and had their administrative offices scattered throughout the region. The names of the left and right provincial administrations were abolished, and the provincial administrations were referred to as the provincial administrations of Hubei and Hunan. From this, it can be seen that "Huguang" during the Ming and Qing Dynasties referred to the provinces of Hubei and Hunan, rather than the literal interpretation of the abbreviation for the two lake regions or the two Guang regions.

Therefore, it can enable students to have a clearer understanding of the spatial elements of "Huguang ripe", and to investigate the economic development of the Ming and Qing dynasties in a specific geographical context. This is also a specific manifestation of the concept of time and space in the core literacy of the history discipline.

2. Revisiting the Temporal and Spatial Context of the Saying "Huguang is Abundant, the World is Satisfied"

According to page 97 of the compiled textbook, the saying "Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied" is believed to have originated in the mid-Qing Dynasty. However, after examining and interpreting relevant historical records, I propose that "Huguang" had already become the nation's major grain-producing region during the Ming Dynasty, rather than the Qing Dynasty. In his article "An analysis of the internal and external conditions of the saying 'When Huguang prospers, the whole world prospers'", Zhang Guoxiong pointed out that "this folk saying 'When Huguang prospers, the whole world prospers' appeared no earlier than the beginning of the Hongzhi period of the Ming Dynasty. Initially, it only expressed people's high hopes for the development of the two lakes. It was only after the Hongzhi period that it truly became a reality. In the Qing Dynasty, it became completely real" (Zhang Guoxiong, 1994).

The compiled textbook and its supplementary materials also lack a detailed explanation regarding the temporal and spatial context of the saying. Therefore, it is necessary to provide additional evidence to support the temporal and spatial context of the saying "Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied".

Since the Southern Song Dynasty, the Suzhou, Changzhou, and Huzhou areas in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River have always been the center for the production and sales of grain in the country. At that time, there was even a proverb that said, "When Suzhou and Huzhou are prosperous, the whole world is satisfied." By the mid-Ming Dynasty, the entire Dongting Lake Plain, Xiangjiang area, and the Jiangnan Plain in Hubei became important grain-producing areas in the country. Historians generally believe that the proverb "When Hubei and Hubei are prosperous, the whole world is satisfied" first appeared during the Hongzhi period of the Ming Dynasty (1488-1505). It can be found in He Mengchun's book "Yu Dong Xu Lu," where he recorded the old saying. He wrote, "Today, the counties outside the two capitals are under the jurisdiction of thirteen provinces, and the Hu provinces have fourteen prefectures, seventeen states, and one hundred and four counties. In terms of size, it is the largest among all the provinces. The tax allocation of its prefectures and counties is lower than that of the western counties in Jiangnan. However, the rumor of 'When Hubei and Hunan are prosperous, the whole world is satisfied' is widely believed." He Mengchun was from Chen Prefecture, Hunan Province. He became a jinshi in the sixth year of the Hongzhi period. In the early years of the Zhengde period, he served as a political official in Henan and later served as the governor of Yunnan. He retired due to illness in the spring of the sixth year of the Jiajing period. This text was written to bid farewell to Cao Feng, a person from Xinchai during the Hongzhi period, who was going to take up the position of the right judicial commissioner of Hubei and Hubei. It introduced to Cao Feng the situation of his hometown. From this, it can be inferred that the proverb "When Hubei and Hubei are prosperous, the whole world is satisfied" had already begun to appear in the early years of the Hongzhi period of the Ming Dynasty.

According to the description in "The General Theory of Huguang" in the "Comprehensive Map", compiled by Li Fuyuan and others in the late Ming Dynasty, Huguang is an ancient Jingchuregion. The Yangtze River and the Han River are like belts, and Heng and Jing are the main cities, while Dongting Lake and Yunmeng are like pools. The land of China is well-connected and prosperous, and there is no place like Huguang. Huguang is a land of marshes, with abundant crops and a double harvest in one year. It relies heavily on Chaisang, Wu, and Chu for supplies. There is a saying: "Huguang is ripe, the world is sufficient." It means that the land is fertile, and the transportation of the Yangtze River is convenient and easy, which is incomparable to other provinces.

Therefore, the proverb "Huguang is ripe, the world is sufficient" appeared as early as the Hongzhi period of the Ming Dynasty, not the mid-Qing Dynasty.

Providing supplementary evidence for the "Huguang ripe, the world is sufficient" spatiotemporal issue, on the one hand, can enhance students' awareness of relying on evidence and their ability to process historical information, enabling them to demonstrate history based on credible historical materials. At the same time, it encourages students to discover and propose new problems on the basis of understanding and discerning relevant historical materials, and to provide evidence for their own understanding. This is also a specific manifestation of the core competency of the historical discipline, which includes historical material evidence and historical interpretation.

3. Brief summary

By clarifying the evidence in the above two parts. Firstly, let's understand the spatial concept of "Huguang". During the Ming and Qing dynasties, "Huguang" roughly referred to the provinces of Hunan and Hubei at that time. It is

not an abbreviation for the Two Lakes region or the Two Guangs region as understood literally. Thus, it enables students to have a clearer understanding of the spatial elements of "Huguang Shu" and to examine the economic development of the Ming and Qing dynasties in a specific geographical context. This is also a concrete manifestation of the concept of time and space in the core literacy of the history discipline. Secondly, this article argues that the proverb "Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied" appeared as early as the Hongzhi period of the Ming dynasty, not the mid-Qing dynasty.

"In the 'Standards for Compulsory Education History Curriculum', it states that, during the teaching process, we should objectively analyze historical events, figures, and phenomena, and provide accurate explanations and evaluations of historical issues. We should adhere to the principle of historical analysis based on facts, and strive to embody the ideological, scientific, national, temporal, systematic, and foundational aspects of history teaching" (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

It is clear that this article has significant importance in providing evidence and clarification for the temporal and spatial issue of 'Huguang is abundant, the world is satisfied.' This aligns with the teaching suggestions and guidance in the curriculum standards.

As a frontline teacher in secondary school history education, I will never cease my practice and reflection on history teaching. I will always adhere to the application of the materialist historical perspective in daily teaching practice, and develop teaching goals and plans from the perspective of cultivating students' core competencies. Cultivating core competencies is the starting point and foothold of teaching, aiming to achieve the cultivation goals of core competencies in the history subject for secondary school students as stated in the 'Standards for Compulsory Education History Curriculum' (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022).

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