

Research on the Cultural Connotation of the Imageries of Plants in Tang Poetry

Xingjuan Peng, Huan Cao*, Zhaojing Shi, Qiming Cao

School of English Language, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, China

*Corresponding Author: Huan Cao

ABSTRACT

The poetry of the Tang Dynasty in China has been passed down for a thousand years, among which are numerous descriptions of plant imageries, reflecting the Chinese national understanding of the world and all things within it. Based on a thorough reading, retrieval, and comprehension of the "Complete Collection of Tang Poems", this paper studies the plant imageries within Tang poetry and discusses the cultural significances of these images, including the five major imageries of bamboo, willows, pines and cypresses, lotus, and plum blossoms. By analyzing how poets integrate emotional experiences into plant imageries and thereby create unique poetic moods, the research reveals the distinctive aesthetic appeal and humanistic spirit of Tang poetry, showcasing a rich social life and a profound love for nature. Plant imageries embody the cultural connotations of the Chinese nation, and the inheritance of plant culture is the mission of literary researchers in the new era.

KEYWORDS

Tang Poetry; Plant Imageries; Cultural Connotations; Inheritance.

1. DEFINITION OF IMAGERY

Through the long river of history, countless literati have created an abundance of popular poetry that is part of our country's excellent traditional culture. Imagery is an important aesthetic unit that we appreciate in ancient poetry, through which we can fully understand and grasp, and then understand the poet's emotions and the artistic conception of the ancient poetry.

What is imagery? By its very name, imagery suggests images that encompass meanings; the subject projects their own emotions onto an objective entity, that is, the poet's intentions are expressed through the physical images. The meaning is thus housed within the image, with the image embodying meaning. "Meaning" refers to the connotations of poetry, the emotions, and intentions of the author. "Image" can be a tangible item that exists in reality, but it can also be classical references, historical events, and other intangibles. Wang Bi, in "Illustrative Examples of Zhouyi," says, "The image is something that arises from intention," and "Speech originates from imagery, therefore one can trace words to observe images, images arise from intentions, therefore one can trace images to understand intentions," and "establish images to express intentions fully." Thus, at the inception of their creation, poets often already have a rudimentary form of imagery in their minds. They look for physical images that align with their intentions, or they establish intentions based on images. Subsequently, they use words to construct these images, solidifying them into textual imageries. Readers then continually read these images to explore the meanings within them, reconstructing and thereby completing the process of constructing imagery. It is with the nourishment of plants that ancient Chinese poetry is so graceful, attractive, and shines brightly in the annals of literary history.

"Spring wakes up and rejoices, summer listens to the joy of cicadas in a nap, feels the tangible passage of time, autumn mourns the fallen leaves, and winter looks for poems in the snow." The poet projects his feelings on the natural scenery, and the scene blends, so that nature depends on his life and death, and shares the joy and sadness of the world. These joys and sorrows are precipitated through the records of ancient poems, and one by one, the natural landscape is transformed into the sustenance of the poet's feelings.

Every grass and tree is all emotions. The image of vegetation has become an important part of the artistic conception of poetry, which makes poetry have the beauty of harmony. Thousands of frosty days, human vegetation accompanied by China's 5,000-year cultural history, not only real scenes and symbols, but also the combination of virtual reality and reality, and the scenes complement each other to form the grass and tree image group of Tang poetry.

2. THE FIVE MAJOR PLANT IMAGERIES IN TANG POETRY

2.1. Bamboo

The beauty of Tang poetry lies in the graceful melody of bamboo. The Tang people cherished bamboo, and the complex longing for "inhabiting a place without bamboo" became a common cultural psychological phenomenon lurking among the literati. Tang literati placed a high value on bamboo, making it a subject of poetry, becoming a new literary creative direction in the new era. Flipping through "*The Complete Collection of Tang Poems*," one can see traces of bamboo everywhere. Tang poets did not only chant about bamboo but also focused on understanding the relationship between bamboo and themselves, from using bamboo as the theme of poetry to using bamboo as the purpose, from using bamboo as scenery to using bamboo as the theme. To summarize, the topic has the following points:

2.1.1. Admiring Its Purity and Integrity Through the Shape of Bamboo Joints

"Jade-like stems blow tall under the enduring wind, in their elegance, I stand forgetting to return home."---by Jianxun LI, from "*Bamboo*". The poet conveys a quiet, elegant and hidden artistic conception to the reader, which matches the noble character of bamboo. This poem is themed around bamboo, depicting the beautiful form of bamboo and the scenery in the bamboo forest. The author expresses his admiration for bamboo by describing the towering bamboo nodes that resemble phoenix branches, and using the wind and flow to communicate with me. The interplay of flower and bamboo shadows under the setting sun adds a touch of beauty and elegance to the entire scenery, allowing people to enjoy it. It depicts the scenery of bamboo forests in concise and fresh language, showcasing the author's admiration for nature. By describing the form of bamboo and the scenery in the bamboo forest, the poet conveys a sense of tranquility, elegance, and seclusion. The shadows of flowers and bamboo under the setting sun complement each other, giving people a beautiful and peaceful feeling. The entire poem takes natural scenery as a clue, showcasing the poet's pursuit of freshness, nature, and beauty. Poetically clear, it expresses the admiration for the beauty of nature and the longing for a peaceful life. This poem showcases the Tang Dynasty poets' love for bamboo and expresses their admiration for the beauty of nature through vivid and vivid descriptions.

2.1.2. Expressing Humility Through the Hollow Nature of Bamboo

"Though many species, they claim richness, a hollow heart sustains its own bearing." ---by Tao XUE, from "*Reply to Someone Playing with Bamboo After Rain*". This poem is created in the reward work created by poets and people after enjoying bamboo, and uses this to implicitly express his unyielding character and unwillingness to drift with the tide. "Playing with Bamboo after Rain" depicts the scene of the southern sky in spring after rain. The bamboo in the poem is used to contrast snow and frost, showcasing the lush posture of bamboo. The densely packed bamboo leaves are like connected clouds, showcasing the vitality of bamboo. Through bamboo, the author expresses a virtue of humility. He

believes that being humble and humble is the key to getting rid of desires. The second half of the poem describes the scene of drinking, and the author hopes to drink with wise people and accompany Consort Shun to share her sadness. Finally, the author describes himself with the phrase "In his later years, the king still appreciated it, and the green bamboo still stood tall and extraordinary.". This expresses the author's spirit of perseverance and perseverance in his later years.

2.1.3. Displaying Resilience Because of Withstanding Heat and Cold

"Integrity stands out amidst the frost of the censor, a hollow heart aspires to match the official's pen." --by Shen CEN, from "*Song of the Bamboo Clump of Fan Gong*". The poet has experienced the imperial examination many times, and finally passed the Jinshi. This poem not only writes bamboo, but also describes the tenacious quality that he does not give up easily. Overall, this poem compares the bamboo planted by Fan Gong with the beauty of bamboo that ordinary people do not understand, showcasing the scene of bamboo thriving and the coolness and beauty it brings. Through delicate descriptions and contrasting techniques, the poet praised Fan Gong's determination and taste in planting bamboo. This poem conveys the emotions of pleasure and tranquility.

2.1.4. Showing Ambition as High as the Skies Due to the Tallness of Bamboo

"Stalwart appearance has braved the snow, noble integrity yearns to soar to the clouds." ---by Xian SUN , from "*Farewell to Zhong Yuan, Who Had Written about Bamboo*". This poem depicts the scene of the poet saying goodbye to the bell, and also indirectly expresses the praise of the noble quality of the bell.

2.1.5. Manifesting Vibrant Vitality and Lofty Sentiment Because of Rapid Growth

"It's more tolerant to draw a thousand feet a night, but don't be a few inches of mud in the pool garden" ---by He LI , from "*Changgu North Garden New bamboo shoots*". The poet describes the urgency of new bamboo shoots to break free from the shackles and grow upwards. He expresses that although life is bumpy, he also hopes to grow upwards and realize his ambitions.

2.1.6. Showcasing Adaptability and Tenacious Vitality Through Its Growth in Poor Soil

"Dew cleanses the lead-dust-like joints; wind sways the green jade branches. Ever-graceful like a gentlemen, fitting anywhere it's placed."---by Yuxi LIU, from "*Courtyard Bamboos*". Although the growth environment of bamboo is bad, this does not prevent it from standing tall and growing tenaciously. This poem depicts bamboo in the courtyard. The poet washed the dust on the bamboo leaves with dew, and the wind blew the green bamboo branches, describing bamboo as elegant and noble. Bamboo adheres to self-discipline like a gentleman, and it complements its surrounding environment no matter where it grows. The entire poem depicts the image and quality of bamboo in concise language, showcasing the reverence for noble character and self-discipline in Chinese culture. At the same time, the poet indirectly expresses his longing for a better life and ideal personality by praising bamboo, and expresses his expectations for society and human nature.

In summary, as poetry evolved, the bamboo imagery was endowed with multi-layered cultural significance and became a typical image representing certain cultural connotations. Gradually moving from the periphery to the core of poetry, and solidifying and accumulating into the poetry's deep tradition and eternal spirit, it became a unique literary symbol. If one delves deep into the tangled layers of bamboo imagery in Tang poetry, they will find a profound resonance between the Tang poets and the imagery of bamboo in their works. The Tang people wrote about bamboo with varied artistic conceptions, yielding rich interpretations. Because of its unique representation, the bamboo was highly favored by the literati, whether expressing humility or elegance, ease or tenacity, tranquility and purity or brooding sentiment, tranquility or vitality.

2.2. Willows

According to preliminary statistics, there are as many as 2,703 poems featuring the "willow" imagery in *The Complete Collection of Tang Poems*. Tang people's singing of willows and imbuing their feelings into the willow imagery are inseparable from the rich aesthetic connotations of the willows themselves. Tang poetry maximized the connotations of longing and reminiscence within the willow imagery of previous generations. Willows are often associated with words like "traveler," "passerby," "distant person," "farewell," "departure," "thought," "sending off," etc., to express the poet's inner emotions. There are many such verses, such as:

"A morning rain at Wei city lightens the dust, fresh and vivid is the green of the willows at the hostel."---by Wei WANG, from *Farewell to Yuan the Second on a Mission to Anxi*". This poem was written by Wang Wei when he sent his friend to the northwest border. The title of the poem is also known as *Farewell*". It was written approximately before the An Lushan Rebellion. Anxi is the abbreviation for the Anxi Protectorate established by the Tang Central Government to govern the Western Regions, with its capital located in Kucha City (now Kuche, Xinjiang). This friend surnamed Yuan went to Anxi on the mission of the imperial court. During the Tang Dynasty, those who traveled westward from Chang'an often bid farewell to Wei City. Weicheng is the ancient city of Xianyang, the capital of Qin, located northwest of Chang'an on the north bank of the Wei River. It not only expresses the reluctance to leave his friends, but also contains the deep friendship between the two, various uncertainties about the future and concern for the future of his friends.

"The willows are fresh and green, the river water placid, I hear my beloved singing as he walks along the riverbank." ---by Yuxi LIU, from *Bamboo Branch Song*". This poem depicts the scenery of willows in the spring river, and then leads to the feelings of boys and girls in spring. This is a poem that depicts the love between young men and women. It depicts the inner activities of a young girl in her first love, who hears her lover's singing in the clear and beautiful spring days of willows and clear waters like a mirror. The willows are green and lush, and the river water is calm and clear. In this beautiful environment, the girl suddenly heard the voice of her beloved singing from the riverbank. He walked towards the riverbank while singing a song. Does he also have some interest in himself? The girl is not sure. So she thought to herself: This person is a bit like the weather of the Huangmei season, with unpredictable sunshine and rain in the west; It's a rainy day, and the sun is still shining in the east. Whether it's sunny or rainy is really unpredictable.

"Gently breaking a willow twig, I sent it to convey my feelings to my beloved." by Jiuling ZHANG , from *Breaking a Willow Twig*". This poem expresses the attachment and reluctance between the poet and his friends by describing the traditional farewell ceremony of folding willows. This poem describes the scene of the poet folding off a willow and giving it to the person he misses. The poet placed this willow branch on the person he missed, expressing his longing. The poet sighed at the preciousness of a willow, as it brought a nostalgia for the spring in his hometown. Although the scene has been delayed, the fragrant spring cannot compare to the new spring. In addition, the poet also feels worried about the soldiers who are on the expedition, and he will also age and accumulate dust on the edges. This poem depicts the poet's deep longing in his heart. As a representative of spring, willows are often associated with emotions such as separation and longing. The slender willows are regarded by the poet as a particularly precious gift to give to those who miss them, demonstrating his deep affection for each other. The spring in the poem describes the poet's nostalgia for his hometown, linking the beauty of the willows and the hometown, and deepening the expression of homesickness for leaving their hometown.

"Spring quickens the departure, the river clears for the launching boat." ---by Fu DU, from *Moving to Kuizhou*". This poem is created from the natural scenery seen by the poet after moving, expressing his joy for the new home and his praise for the spring scenery.

As described in the above poems, the feelings of departure, homesickness, and unwillingness to part have become the internal spirit of the willow imagery. Regarding this, Tang poets seemed to have an unspoken consensus that was established and not easily changed. Through the joint efforts and development of numerous poets, the willow imagery was formed, and it later became synonymous with sadness in Tang poetry.

2.3. Pines and Cypresses

The verdant pines and cypresses have been favored by literati since ancient times, from Confucius's high praise "Only after the cold of winter one knows the pines and cypresses are the last to shed their leaves," to the exclamation "The green pine withstands the cold, not falling; the vast sea is broad, striving for clarity." Since then, the inner connotations of pines and cypresses have been explored. Pines and cypresses are not afraid of harsh cold and are evergreen all year round, tall and tough, suitable for being the pillars of the hall; they have a long lifespan and can "endure a thousand years without decline," thus, ancient literati often likened pines and cypresses to their own character. Many verses in *"The Complete Collection of Tang Poems"* reflect this idea, for example:

"I wish you to learn from the pine, be wary not to become like the peach or plum." ---by Bai LI, from *"Sending Two Official Attires to Wei the Imperial Censor"*. Because his friend was wronged and wronged, Bai LI express his integrity with a pine, and encouraged his friends to stick to the integrity and live a smiling life. The straightness of the pine tree highlights the low, humble, and curved nature of the peach and plum trees; The frost and snow of the pine trees highlight the fear of wind and rain of the peach and plum trees; To contrast the firmness of the pine tree with the display of peach and plum blossoms; Using "flowers and leaves turn into mud" to reflect the steadfast personality of pine trees, which remain unchanged in their appearance throughout the four seasons, stand upright for thousands of years, and remain green despite the pressure of snow and frost. This contrasting writing style, through mutual reflection and contrast, makes the image more vivid and prominent. This not only saves a lot of writing, but also succinctly reveals the theme layer by layer, leaving a very deep impression on people. The right and wrong are exceptionally clear, making people aware at a glance and immediately making the right judgment.

Finally, the poet advised Huang Shang, "May you learn to grow pine trees, and be careful not to be a peach or plum tree. When you are wronged, do not change your heart, and then become a gentleman." He hoped that he could learn from the noble qualities and spiritual demeanor of pine trees, and not be like peach or plum trees, relying on following the trend to be charming for a while. As a supervisory envoy, we should adhere to the truth and never change our aspirations even when faced with setbacks and setbacks. Only in this way can one become a strong willed and capable person. The determination of Li Bai to adhere to his progressive political ideals under the dark rule of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang was not only a brave challenge to cracking down on and persecuting his corrupt political traitors, but also a satire and admonition of Huang Shang and others.

"Noise fills the rocky stream, color rests deeply in the pine forest." ---by Wei WANG, from "Green Creek". The poem deliver the following message: "Enter the Huanghua River for sightseeing, often chasing the green stream. The stream follows the mountain terrain in a hundred twists and turns, but the journey it passes through is less than a hundred miles. The sound of water is noisy among the scattered rocks in the mountains, and the color of water is quiet and deep in the dense pine forest. The water grass sways gently in the stream, and the reeds are clearly reflected in the clear water. My heart has always been leisurely, like a clear stream, calm and tranquil. I wish I could stay on the rocks by the stream and spend my life fishing". This poem depicts the calmness of the scenery, expressing that he is tired of his career and wants to return to the mountains and forests, and is willing to be indifferent.

"When the cold season changes all trees, the heart of pines and cypresses remains constant." ---by Yue ZHANG , from "Writing in Behalf to Send to Master Xue". This poem describes the

characteristics of pine and cypress not afraid of the cold, tenacious and tenacious to describe the beautiful quality of a gentleman.

The connotation and core of the pine and cypress imagery is a recognition and praise of personal ideals. Poets often highly praise the purity and integrity of the pine, likening it to a good teacher and friend, as a model of character. Over thousands of years of history, the lofty and virtuous character traits of the pines and cypresses have interpenetrated and merged with the humanistic concepts held by people for the pine, repeatedly transformed, and finally created a profound pine and cypress culture. "Pine" has become one of the symbols of the ideal personality of the Chinese nation, and a favorite subject portrayed by Chinese poets, writers, and artists, thus achieving the pine and cypress imagery.

2.4. Lotus

The lotus imagery is quite common in Tang poetry, with a high frequency of appearances in *"The Complete Collection of Tang Poems,"* as detailed in the statistics of Yu Xiangshun's *"Study on the Aesthetic Culture of Chinese Lotus,"* featuring "lotus" in 908 individual lines, "lotus" in 1,212, and "hibiscus" in 476. From this, it can be seen that lotuses in poetry are colorful and accessible to both refined and popular tastes. The lotus was initially known for its quality of emerging from the mud without being tainted, expressing a character of being clean and upright. But how could such a beautiful and moving image represent only one symbolic meaning? Later, some poets used the lotus as a light expression of their idle and indifferent mood, others to exhibit the meaning of life, and still others to express their deep yearning in life and death. All of these are varied and colorful; the lotus lives for people, poetry because of lotus, and people reflect lotuses, creating verses brimming with the emotions of life.

"Lotus wind sends fragrance, bamboo dew drops clear sound." ---by Haoran MENG, from *"A Summer Day at the Southern Pavilion Mourning for Xin Da"*. This poem describes the light and subtle aroma of the lotus, the sound of bamboo dew dripping on the surface of the pool is crisp, the delicate fragrance can be smelled, and the dripping water can be smelled.

"Lotus leaves are cut from one piece of green, the hibiscus blooms on both cheeks."---by Changling WANG, from *"Lotus Picking Song"*. This poem depicts Luo's skirt as green as lotus leaves, and lotus flowers as red as her face, integrating the beauty of the lotus picking girl with the summer scenery. This poem uses flowers, moon, boat, and water to set off a woman's appearance. It can be said that this is a small movie that vividly portrays the characters and has a unique charm. This poem can be said to be a "Lotus Picking Picture", with the center of the picture naturally being the lotus picking girls. But the author did not allow them to appear prominently in this activity from beginning to end, but instead allowed them to blend in with the lotus leaves and colorful lotus flowers in the fields, appearing and disappearing, blending the lotus picking girl with the beautiful nature, giving the entire poem a unique and imaginative beauty. This kind of artistic conception is unique and ingenious.

The lotus sways and displays its grace in the pond, truly endearing. The Tang people discovered the dynamic form of the lotus, observed with detail, and also appreciated the lovable beauty brought by this movement, achieving a profound artistic conception. Consequently, the lotus imagery is widely used by poets.

2.5. Plum Blossoms

According to statistics, there are about 882 poems in *"The Complete Collection of Tang Poems"* containing the word "plum," showing the plum blossom, a hardy flower that stands proudly alone in the winter and spring seasons, has a pivotal position in Chinese poetic culture. Along with the orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum, the plum is ranked among the "Four Gentlemen" of flowers and, along with pine and bamboo, is known as the "Three Friends of Winter" by Chinese literati. Tang people

often used plum blossoms to express a character of purity and transcendence, undaunted by the cold; to portray the image of a beautiful woman; to convey sentimental imagery. For example:

"Frosty plums are the first to bloom on the mountain top, unbeknownst to thousands of plants and flowers." --- by Jiuling LI , from "*Plum Blossom Words*". Even in the harsh winter, its buds bravely bloom, becoming a beautiful scenery full of mountains. It is not afraid of the cold, nor does it feel sad for other flowers to wither, preserving its own fragrance and the beauty of the flowers. Its resilience and composure demonstrate a fearless quality, unaffected by external influences. This poem describes the tenacity of plum blossoms in the cold, expresses the praise for the quality of plum blossoms, and also tells people to learn the spirit of plum blossoms. Even if there are difficulties, they should bloom the beauty of life.

"Plum trees worth picking surround the courtyard, the tree out of the window remains unclimbed." --by Hui YUAN , from "*January within the Chamber*". The poet used plum blossoms to express his loneliness and attachment to his homeland, and hoped that the cold of winter would leave soon to welcome the warm spring.

The plum blossom as an imagery is a combination of meaning and image, using the superficial image to bring out deeper significance. Wang Changling once wrote in "*The Standard of Poetry*": "Poetry has three realms: one is the realm of objects, the second is the realm of emotions, and the third is the realm of artistic conception." The plum blossom of the Tang era was in a transitional period, not as flourishing as in Song poetry, but it also had more of a breath of life, casual and natural, and indeed endearing.

3. SIGNIFICANT IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCHING PLANT IMAGERIES

All things in the world can enter poetry, and all things can also become imagery. Through the study and analysis of poetry related to the typical five major plant imageries in "*The Complete Collection of Tang Poems*," the author believes that the formation of the poetic imagery of the plant landscape is related to the emotional experience produced by the situation in which the poet is situated. The plant imagery injected into the poetry endows Tang poetry with unique sentiment. As the saying goes, "All sceneries are expressions of emotions." In this sense, plant poetry is the use of a certain plant or a certain part of a plant as an image, using literary techniques such as allegory, contrasting symbolism, embellishment of ideas, and combining reality and fiction, either born from the environment, infused with emotion into the environment, or merging the self with the object, achieving the creation from physical images to conceptual images and then to artistic conception. Thus, the poetic scene and imagery are closely combined, interacting with each other.

First, the emotional experience in the scene affects the generation of plant imagery. The bamboo is tall and straight, pure and strong. The willow is tender and emotional, expressing the feelings of separation. The pine and cypress are evergreen and tough, not fearing harsh cold. The plum blossoms defy frost and snow, with a fragrance that fills the nose. The lotus rises from the water, clear and pure as ice and jade. Many such scenes create an atmosphere felt by readers when faced with plant imagery in Tang poetry. This also depends on the resonance set by the author when creating plant imagery and infusing emotion into the scene, allowing the reader to feel the embedded artistic conception in the poetry. Tang poetry, with its unique aesthetic value, has become a treasure in the repository of Chinese literature. Each plant in nature is backed by a profound and ancient history, each plant is closely related to human life, and each has a rich cultural connotation. The emotions conveyed by Tang people's poetry penetrate their imagery sketching, scenic descriptions, and various aspects.

Second, plant imagery facilitates the perception of emotional atmosphere in Tang poetry. In terms of the aesthetic connotation of imagery, the connotation of Tang poetry's plant imagery basically covers the content that plant imagery in later poetry can express; in terms of the scope of imagery usage, Tang poetry's plant imagery appears widely in various poetry themes, and also sparks people's

reflection. At the same time, plant imagery also reveals the vast social life of the Tang Dynasty and the rich and delicate emotional world of the poets. The exploration of plant imagery in Tang poetry not only helps to understand more about the travel space of the scholars of the Tang Dynasty but also reveals the expansion of the Tang poetry's range of expression, enriching the research on the group of poetic imagery. It is also the sentiment that literary researchers of the new era should have, and it is an important means and an effective way to stand on tradition, inherit classics, innovate, enrich, and develop the spirit of the new era.

In conclusion, Tang poetry is a mature period for plant imagery, with many typical images expressing distinct characteristics of different times during the Tang Dynasty. Uncovering the inherent connection between plants and culture, interpreting culture through nature, and passing on culture through plants. As described above, the plant imagery in Tang poetry not only showcases the rich and diverse social life of the Tang Dynasty, providing readers with endless aesthetic experiences, but also offers rich nourishment for the development of future literature, an indispensable part of the imagery of Tang poetry.

Tang poetry promotes the presentation of plant imagery, and plant imagery in turn achieves the emotional expression of Tang poetry. To study the charm of Tang poetry, one must delve into the essence of plant imagery. Therefore, researching plant imagery is a long and important task.

4. INHERITING PLANT CULTURE IN TANG POETRY

Eastern Zhejiang is a unique place for seeking tranquility and visiting the past, a sacred place for landscapes. During the Tang Dynasty, many famous poets came here and left behind many famous verses. People are often amazed at the magnificent scenery of Eastern Zhejiang and the beauty of the ancient Tang poetry but pay little attention to the plants that inspired the poets.

"Plants do not speak, but they have a true nature, waiting for someone to carefully savor and appreciate." In the eyes of poets, everything in the world has emotion, let alone living flowers and trees. Their growth and decline allow poets to associate with people's life situations or the sweet and bitter experiences of a lifetime. They leap frequently between the lines of Tang poetry, expressing the literati's love for nature and revealing the poet's deep concern for human affairs.

Nonetheless, when people go out to tour, their attention to plant imagery only goes as far as exclaiming, "This flower is so beautiful," "This tree has a long history," and nothing more. But perhaps, after we pass on plant culture, everyone can remember which poet's verse the plants appeared in while appreciating the scenery, and when seeing these plants, they can also think about meanings beyond their own, such as describing a person's tenacity, with phrases like "There is a pine a hundred feet tall and ten girths round, living in the bottom of a ravine, cold and lowly," or depicting the rise and fall of the country, like "Crossing the spring breeze ten miles, all shepherd's purse green." Poets praise the marvelous work of Mother Nature within the decline and renewal, prosperity, and desolation of flowers and trees, exploring the emotional connection between plant imagery and people, and expressing their emotions of joy and sorrow. Perhaps this is the charm of plant culture.

So, inheriting plant culture is not just about preserving these poems for eternity, but rather making plant culture understood by more people; it is not just about making Chinese people admire it, but also about making the whole world comprehend the plant culture of Tang poetry in Eastern Zhejiang and understand the cultural connotations of the Chinese nation on a deeper level. Thousands of years ago, people from the Tang Dynasty left behind poems rich in plant imagery in Eastern Zhejiang, and thousands of years later, we probe into their moods through these plant images. This is a meeting that transcends time and space, and the romance left to us by Tang poets.

5. CONCLUSION

Poetry was the Tang people's sanctuary for their emotions and an implicit response to the world; they hid their thoughts in poetry, whether to vent dissatisfaction, express gratitude to mentors and friends, or to expound on aspirations, among other things. In short, writing poetry enabled poets to express themselves forthrightly. At times, by utilizing plant imagery, poets ingeniously concealed their emotions among plants. Plant imagery could depict a person's tenacity and humility, or the simplicity of a recluse; it could represent both decay and vibrant growth. Plants lack emotion, and to the average person might be just a blade of grass or a flower, but it is precisely because poets endow them with meaning beyond themselves at the tip of their pens that we understand that plants convey not only beauty but also culture. This is the everlasting treasure that poets have bequeathed to posterity.

And it is precisely the excellent qualities of plants that we contemporary young people should learn from; a poet can only exist in a certain stage, but the poetry they leave behind will remain in the long river of history, enduring and ever fragrant. Just as plants flourish and wither, through the cycles of years and lifetimes, their spirit can penetrate Chinese history, be remembered forever by people, and their character is worth reciting by everyone. As the young people of today, we are the freshly sprouted plants of the 21st century; we should learn the spirit of plants, inherit the culture of plants, and convey a different style of China to the world.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is the research result of the Innovation Experiment Program Project of Zhejiang Yuexiu University in 2023, "National Innovation Project: A Study on the Cultural Connotations of Plants' Imagery Implied in Tang Poetry and Its International Communication: Taking the Road of Tang Poetry in Eastern Zhejiang as an Example", under Grant No. 202312792004 and funded by the Innovation Training Program of Zhejiang Yuexiu University. The ownership of the thesis belongs to Zhejiang Yuexiu University.

We also thank the corresponding author Huan CAO for being our instructor and for her great contribution and assistance to this article. And this work is also a research result of the following three projects. The first is Shaoxing Education and Science Planning Project: Study on Cultivating College Students' Translation and Communication Ability to Introduce "Chinese Spirit" Well to Internal Community from the Perspective of Political Discourse, under Grant No. SGJ2023006. The Second is Zhejiang Province's Higher Education "14th Five Year Plan" Teaching Reform Project: Translation and Communication of the "Chinese Spirit" Implied in Political Discourse to Internal Community---Theoretical Construction and Teaching Innovation, under Grant No. jg20220618. The third one is Zhejiang Yuexiu University's Model Course for Ideological-political Education: English Lexicology (2022).

REFERENCES

- [1] Wan Bojiang, Dan Yao, Gui Shu, Chun Cao, Mu Luo. A Brief Discussion on the Image of Huainan Culture in Tang Poetry[J]. *Journal of Huainan Normal University*, 2023, 25 (05): 90-95.
- [2] Zhang Yuanyu. Grass and trees have their own hearts - Su Shi's "Hezi Youji's Eleven Herbs and Trees in the Garden" Grass and Wood Image Exploration[J]. *Middle School Chinese Teaching Reference*, 2023, (16): 66-68.
- [3] Zhang Xinyu. The relationship between women and vegetation in the Book of Songs[J]. *Literature Education (Part I)*, 2023, (01): 69-71. DOI:10.16692/j.cnki.wxjys.2023.01.019.

- [4] Ma Liyuan. Aesthetic Research on Natural Imagery in Tang Monk Hongxiu Collection[D]. Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology, 2022. DOI:10.27393/d.cnki.gxazu.2022.000529.
- [5] Guo Yue'e. Unified Edition High School Chinese Ancient Poetry and Grass and Wood Image Teaching Research[D]. Minnan Normal University, 2022. DOI:10.27726/d.cnki.gzsf.2022.000229.
- [6] Li Fujun. The female image of vegetation in the Book of Songs[J]. Peony, 2022, (10): 33-35.
- [7] Li Bing. Research on the relationship between plant characteristics and Bixing in the Book of Songs[J]. Modern and Ancient Cultural Creation, 2022, (21): 7-9. DOI:10.20024/j.cnki.CN42-1911/I.2022.21.002.
- [8] Zheng Yihan. Reading and teaching research on vegetation writing from an interdisciplinary perspective[D]. Central China Normal University, 2022. DOI:10.27159/d.cnki.ghzsu.2022.003130.
- [9] Qi Na. Research on the image of "grass" and "wood" in "Nineteen Ancient Poems"[J]. New Documentary, 2021, (35): 24-26.
- [10] Shi Tao. The image of grass and trees in Xie Lingyun's poems[J]. Journal of Qiqihar Normal College, 2021, (03): 40-42. DOI:10.16322/j.cnki.23-1534/z.2021.03.014.