

Characteristics of the Integration and Coexistence of Multinational Literature in Qinghai from the Perspective of Ecocriticism and Their Implications for Classroom Teaching



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Abstract: From the vantage point of ecocriticism, this paper examines Qinghai's multi-ethnic writings to disclose the plural articulations of eco-ethics embedded in them and the symbiotic interplay among diverse ethnic cultures. On this basis, it derives practical implications for undergraduate teaching within the discipline of Chinese Language and Literature. The study first maps the manifold expressions of eco-ethical thinking in Qinghai's multi-ethnic literary corpus; it then explicates the region's characteristic model of ecological and cultural conviviality. Finally, it proposes a classroom pedagogy centred on the triadic synergy of "ecology – culture – education". By constructing an interdisciplinary eco-educational framework, instituting a multicultural-symbiosis classroom model, and developing curricular resources rooted in local ecocriticism, the approach cultivates students' ecological ethical awareness, cross-cultural understanding, and critical thinking, thereby realizing the dual educational goals of "nurturing life through literature" and "shaping character through ecology".

Keywords: ecocriticism, literary confluence, Chinese language and literature, pedagogical implications

1. Introduction

Qinghai, situated in the west of China on the northeastern rim of the Qinghai, Tibet Plateau, "the roof of the world" — is the cradle of the Yangtze, Yellow, and Lancang rivers. Known as "the Source of Three Rivers", the province boasts a landscape where natural grandeur and human cultures have long co-existed in mutual accord. Over centuries, Tibetan, Han, Hui, Mongol, Tu, Salar and other peoples have laboured, multiplied and interacted on this high plateau, forging a distinctive eco-philosophy, moral code, aesthetic vision and value orientation rooted in multi-ethnic convergence. On the basis of respect for natural law they have constructed a literary-cultural system that is simultaneously

multi-ethnic and eco-centred, thereby opening up a unique developmental dimension for Qinghai literature and embedding it with rich eco-cultural connotations (Lei, 2021). As the central vehicle of this culture, Qinghai's multi-ethnic literature has continuously shouldered the mission of recording and disseminating the region's plural heritage. Drawing on the province's singular environment and its long history of ethnic interchange, writers — working in genres that range from the epic, novel and short story to the prose poem and lyric essay — have articulated a profound symbiosis between humankind and the more-than-human world, advocating an ecological ethic of reverence for nature, harmony among all beings and reverence for life. This literary vision, at once grounded in eco-cultural tradition and shaped

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by ethnic interaction, displays the characteristic symbiosis of Qinghai writing and offers important pedagogical insights and social value for university classrooms committed to “educating through literature” and “establishing character through ecology”.

2. Eco-Ethical Vision in Qinghai’s Multi-Ethnic Literatures

Ecological theory reminds us that “human beings depend on nature and all life phenomena are inter-related, consequently, humankind and nature must coexist in harmony and develop in concert” (Xu, 2002). Owing to the harshness of the plateau environment and the scarcity of its resources, the people of Qinghai have always entertained an instinctive awe and cherishing attitude toward the ecosystems on which they rely. Historical evolution has thus produced a culture that venerates nature, reveres life and prizes all living things—values that surface repeatedly in local literary production (Lei, 2021). As a major branch of Chinese ecocriticism, Qinghai’s multi-ethnic writing encapsulates a core eco-ethical idea: harmonious co-existence and mutual flourishing between human and non-human life. This idea is not an abstract proposition; it is forged through inter-ethnic literary practice, narrative traditions of nature worship and contemporary discourses of ecological protection, constituting a coherent ecocriticism ethic.

2.1 Harmonious Symbiosis: Writing the Eco-Community

Qinghai literatures take the province’s “mountain-and-water(*Chinese original is 山宗水源*)” heartland—Kunlun and the Three-Rivers Source, as its primary imaginative space, elevating multi-ethnic attitudes of awe and dependence into a consciousness of ecological community.

2.1.1 Awe toward nature

In the Tibetan epic King Gesar and its Mongolian counterpart Geser, snow-mountains, lakes and grasslands are endowed with sacred agency and function as spiritual icons of ethnic identity. Gesar and the Han progenitor Houji alike appear as culture

heroes whose deeds encode an animistic worldview (Liu, 2009), while the epics’ transmission across generations reinforces communal cohesion (Liu, 2009). The 1716 Beijing woodblock print *The Biography of Geser Khan, Sovereign of the Ten Directions*, the earliest printed version, includes a tale in which the hero transforms a female demon into a donkey, a narrative that clearly borrows from the Tang-dynasty tale “Banqiao San-niang” and testifies to the circulation of eco-wisdom across ethnic boundaries (Feng, 2024).

2.1.2 The Ecological Pursuit of Multiethnic Literature

Throughout the Huangshui (Hehuang) valley of eastern Qinghai, Han settlers recount their migration from Nanjing’s Zhuji Lane; Tibetans remember imperial garrisons; Hui communities narrate the arrival of west-Asian merchants or soldiers (Bi, 2018). These variant legends form a palimpsest of multi-ethnic historical memory (Zhao, 2018). Because folk narratives are indigenised as they travel, they absorb local ecological meaning and become “historically thick and credibly marvellous” accounts that function simultaneously as narrative art and as ethnic historiography (Zhao, 2018). Qinghai’s multi-ethnic literature thus displays not only reverence for nature but also an inclusive attitude toward divergent memories of the past.

2.1.3 Eco-consensus through shared language

On the plateau, several ethnic groups compose eco-themed works in Chinese or regional dialects. The popular “Hua’er” folk-songs, for example, are sung in Chinese by Han, Hui and Tibetans alike, their recurrent images “blossoms, snow-mountains, steppe, tears, clear springs” translate ecological awareness into a shared literary ethic. Contemporary writers reinforce the same intimacy. Tang Juan’s prose piece “The Enchanting Gangcha” describes arriving by train and glimpsing Qinghai Lake: “From the height above Gangcha station the lake suddenly appears, shimmering with a dream-like blue light”(Tang, 2018). Through generic cross-fertilisation, ecological co-existence and linguistic sharing, Qinghai texts construct an ethical chain linking “sacred nature –

ecological awareness – ethnic symbiosis”, offering teachers lively cases for inter-cultural eco-pedagogy.

2.2 Reverence for Life: Personification of Nature and Narratives of Eco-Justice

Contemporary Tibetan writer Meizhuo has observed: “Our awe of the great mountains, our rituals of worship, our personified dialogue with the mountain gods constitute an exchange of life-information. Our mountain deities are often pictured as fully-armed warriors, embodying the invincible majesty and grandeur of nature”(Mei, 2006). This reverence underlies two rhetorical strategies: (i) making respect for nature the primary condition for human – non-human harmony, thereby inviting readers into a soul-stirring ecological aesthetics; (ii) personifying natural elements to communicate an ideal of eco-justice through the narrative of a community of life.

2.2.1 Pedagogical function of awe

In Tibetan oral literature, the Mountain of NianBaoYuZe is venerated as “the back-garden of the gods”, shifts in its snow-line are read as a barometer of ecological health. Qinghai Lake is locally known as the “Jade Pond of the Queen-Mother of the West” (*Chinese original is 西王母瑶池*), floods or droughts are interpreted as warnings against human excess. Such stories ethicise ecological crisis, producing a moral pattern of “awe – punishment – repentance”.

2.2.2 Life-narrative and ecological development

Qinghai’s multi-ethnic literature frequently employs core imagery such as rivers, snow-capped realms and grasslands, imbuing these motifs with anthropomorphic qualities that profoundly reflect the sentiments of its multi-ethnic writers. For instance, in his contemporary poem “Taga: An Ancient Village in Qinghai”, the Hui poet Ma Wenxiu writes:

“A village far from the city / leaves its inner struggle and contradiction / beneath the feet / while frantic explorers / let their cars roar through the gullies ... / The disturbed mountain god / stretches, lets the thin oxygen / block the explorers’ gaze / they cannot appreciate the grandeur along the way (*Chinese original is 一座远离城市的村庄/将心底的*

挣扎与矛盾/留在脚下/而疯狂的探秘者/任由, 汽车在沟壑咆哮.../被惊动的山神/伸了伸懒腰, 让稀薄的氧气/挡住了探秘者的目光/难以欣赏到沿路的壮美与雄奇)”(Ma, 2020).

By personifying the mountain, the poet voices resistance to intrusive outsiders and articulates a vision of eco-development that privileges restraint. Through strategies of ethical pedagogy and personified natural imagery, Qinghai’s multi-ethnic narratives translate abstract eco-ethics into palpable stories of life, furnishing undergraduate classrooms in Chinese Language and Literature with an affective model of ecological moral education.

3. Eco-Harmonious Symbiosis in Qinghai’s Multi-Ethnic Literatures

As the central vehicle of the Qinghai – Tibet Plateau’s ecocriticism, Qinghai’s multi-ethnic literature has distilled, through centuries of inter-ethnic contact, a pronounced characteristic of harmonious symbiosis. This reciprocity operates not only at the macro-level of cultural inter-penetration, but also permeates nature worship, institutional norms, life ethics and aesthetic expression, producing an ecological holism in which human and non-human flourish together and civilisations co-prosper. Four core features are analysed below.

3.1 Homologous cultural genes and symbiotic growth

Qinghai’s ethnic communities, though differentiated by language and custom, share a common historical origin for their ecological world-views: the harshness of the high-plateau environment. Tibetans, Mongols, Tu and others have all developed a reverence for every natural entity. Literary depictions Mountain of NianBaoYuZe or Qinghai Lake therefore, converge in a sacred register, turning these “holy mountains and lakes” into spiritual icons of an eco-community.

The narrative ecology is also mutually infiltrative. Centuries of mixed residence have produced a literary system that is inclusive and dynamically transformative. The Tibetan “mountain-circumambulation” and the Tu “Nadun”

harvest festival, for example, are re-imagined in fiction and poetry as inter-ethnic eco-rituals. Through such textual practices geographical space is converted into a cultural signifier: Mountain of NianBaoYuZe and Qinghai Lake become meta-personified sources of life, dramatising the collective nature of eco-worship.

3.2 Aesthetic symbiosis of the life-community

3.2.1 An interconnected imagery system

Qinghai poets weave a semantic web of “human – animal – mountain”. The brent goose is the “chorister” of the sacred lake; moonlight, village, wheat-ear and butter-lamp form a chain saturated with native affection. Such imagery dismantles anthropocentrism and advances an aesthetic egalitarianism in which “the ten-thousand things possess spirituality”.

3.2.2 Symbiotic early-warning narratives

Literary representations of the eco-crisis underscore the fragility of symbiosis. Meiduo laments: “Step by step, modernity devours villages and fields; the decline of an ancient settlement or an old building may now be unavoidable”(Mei, 2015). By translating “natural revenge” into collective existential anxiety, such texts appeal for the re-knitting of the bond between life and land.

4. Pedagogical Implications of Qinghai’s Multi-Ethnic Ecocriticism

Rich in symbiotic imagery and ecocriticism discourse, Qinghai’s multi-ethnic ecocriticism embodies the ecological wisdom of the Qinghai – Tibet Plateau and offers university instructors a repertoire of cultural resources and practical paradigms.

4.1 Designing an interdisciplinary Eco-Education framework

The eco-ethics embedded in Qinghai texts can be mobilised in cross-departmental courses that link literature with geography, biology, and ethics. For example, Meizhuo’s novel *The Inspired: Record of the Demon Range* (Mei, 2019) can be used as a case study. Students analyse its representation of animal care and human self-care, draw on theories from their

parallel coursework, critique anthropocentrism and cultivate ecological intelligence and symbiotic awareness.

4.2 Instituting a Multicultural-Symbiosis classroom model

Firstly, teachers may conduct comparative analyses of multi-ethnic literary works in the classroom, guiding students to reflect upon and discuss the similarities and differences in how various ethnic groups depict “homeland”. For instance, they could contrast the work “Compassionate Voyage” by Chang Yao, a Han Chinese poet long resident in Qinghai, with the region’s “Hua” folk songs. Secondly, teachers may organise collaborative learning in small groups, such as simulating creative scenarios involving multi-ethnic writers to explore innovative literary expressions. Finally, teachers may employ linguistic and cultural immersion by incorporating bilingual ecological vocabulary instruction (e.g., Tibetan-Chinese, Mongolian-Chinese) into lessons, thereby deepening students’ understanding of the interconnection between cultural diversity and ecological systems.

4.3 Developing Place-Based curricular resources instructors can localise content in three moves:

- 1) Produce a Qinghai Eco-Literature Reader that anthologises canonical texts and critical essays from all ethnic groups.
- 2) Embed fieldwork modules: students visit villages, record eco-proverbs from oral literature and write ethnographic reports.
- 3) Integrate digital-humanities tools: build an interactive platform that maps literary eco-sites with GIS overlays, VR visualisations and annotated corpora to heighten immersive learning.

5. Conclusion-Toward a Philosophy of Action

The pedagogical practice of multi-ethnic ecological literature in Qinghai fundamentally pursues dual educational objectives: “nourishing life through literature” and “enlightening character through ecology”. It transforms the ancient wisdom

of “harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature” into ecological agency among the younger generation. When we extend classroom interpretations of ecological literary texts and theoretical analyses to the sacred lakes nestled among snow-capped mountains, ecological literature transforms from textual symbols into an educational bridge connecting civilisational traditions with a sustainable future. This represents the ultimate revelation of Qinghai’s multi-ethnic ecological literary ethics and characteristics within the context of university education.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

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