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Exploration of Coupling Operation: Relationship between Culture and Ecosystem

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Abstract

In this research paper the main focus is to explore the relationship between culture and ecosystem operating in multi-ethnic groups. Human society is born out of and always parasitic on natural ecosystems, and human beings construct their own cultures in natural ecosystems. This paper analyzes the concept of culture, and discusses the “deviation” and “regression” processes of ethnic culture and natural ecosystem. It argues that culture is an information system that guides the development of human beings. Ethnic culture has a unique structure that is different with natural ecosystem, but also has a series of characteristics that coincide with natural ecosystems, and the causal relationships governing these characteristics are mutually restrictive and interdependent, thus forming the coupling operation system.

Key words: deviation; regression; ethnic culture; ecological disaster



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Introduction

Since antiquity it has been observed that human society is born out of natural ecosystems, but always parasitic on natural ecosystems. Hegel's philosophy of spirit" is an account of "cultural formations" in the same sense as Cassirer's theory of culture is a theory of "forms" Michael Foucault discussed the origin of culture and its association with the "ecosystem" in his book *Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language* (1972). Cultural formations come into existence as products of human activity in the course of history. Human beings construct their own culture in the natural ecosystem. Culture is a man-made information system for human beings to seek survival, development and continuity. Different people in different ecosystems have formed different cultural facts corresponding to them, which constitutes the diversity of human culture. In this process, humans rely on their own culture to achieve a deviation from the natural ecosystem, but while human beings get rid of their natural attributes by cultural rules, human deviation from the natural system has returned. In this reciprocating process of deviation and returning to natural ecosystem, the check and balance relationship between culture and its natural ecosystem is formed. This kind of check and "balance relationship" is the accumulation process of the deviation and return of ethnic groups in different cultures in response to the natural ecosystem (Tian, 2014).

Culture is the most basic concept in cultural anthropology (Tian, 2014). Kant (2006) defined culture as the capable creation by a rational entity for a specific purpose, in which the "creation" refers to the development of human being from primitive state dominated by natural force to the state governing natural force in both spirit and body (Cai, 2003).

The study of culture as a subject area begins with cultural anthropology, which is the study of the relationship between human and culture, that is, the study of human science from a cultural perspective. It is a discipline that studies behaviors, beliefs, habits, and social



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organizations in human society, and is concerned with people and their behaviors (Luo, 2014). Predecessors have different understandings of culture in the history of cultural anthropology, and in the past cultural studies, more attention was paid to the appearance of culture, and to describe and define it from cultural facts (Ping, 2010), on which basis to discuss the law of cultural operation. What they were discussing was not the culture itself, but the product of culture, which was the result of culture operation.

The Connotation of Culture

Culture does not exist to satisfy human needs, it is a value and information system that human beings created for their own development and continuity. The concept of information system is formed with the development of science and technology and the wide application of computer technology (Zhang, 2004). This system is considered as a whole, which is composed of several elements with independent functions, and the elements are interrelated and mutually restricted (Chen & Ma, 2007). Just like that culture is integrated, and culture is created based on symbols, the various cultural elements are interconnected and constrained to meet the overall goal of human life.

Culture is an information system that functions under the command of information. Just like a computer, the control system can evolve into pictures, movies, documents, songs and so on by processing the database. Such an information system as culture can also evolve into various secondary information, such as when festivals are held, when people get together or sing songs, have meals, hold ceremonies and so on (Ren, 2004). These human behaviors are controlled by information. If there is no control, people will not know what each other is doing, so they cannot participate in the normal and complete human life process. Thus it can be seen that culture has encapsulated everything in this information system.



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Human brain is the carrier of culture (Tian & Luo, 2013). The carrier of information system is the database that outputs useful information by processing the data. Culture is created by people, while the human brain directs people's thinking and creates wisdom (Dovey et al., 2016). Therefore, cultural information is based on the human brain as a carrier to remember, rewrite and think. Obviously it is different from other bioinformatics systems. It should be noted that many researchers tend to stay in the study of cultural representations, and ignore the unique thinking function of the brain. Therefore, some think that clothing is culture, regardless of the thinking function of human brain, as that the reason for wearing clothes in this way, is because climate, habits, beliefs and so on act on the brain, and is the result of rational selection of the human brain. For example, nomads mostly live in the plateau and the climate is changeable, so they mostly use fur as the raw material for their clothing. The Hezhe people use fish skin as the raw material for clothing, as they are mainly based on fishery economy, and the fish skin is good raw material. In this way, the logical relationship of culture itself is shown.

Since culture is an information system, the human brain as the carrier of culture, should have the ability to produce information, receive information, send information, rewrite information, decipher information and feedback information. This ability can fully explain the evolution of culture. But the information system is always selective when receiving and using information. It constantly innovates and expands the system, thus making culture more and more complex in social construction and social movement more and more effective (Hann & Hart, 2011).

Culture is the most basic concept in cultural anthropology. Claude Lewis Straus propounded the theory of culture and mind. He believed that the savage mind had the same structure as the civilized mind. He published *Structural Study of Myth* (1855) and *The Naked Man* (1981) investigating the growth of human civilization and culture. Karl Marx gave his own materialistic



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view of culture arguing that culture is secondary in society. His *Das Capital* gave the theory of economic determinism. Marx defines the relationship between culture and economic forces operating in society. Frederic Nietzsche was a critic of modern culture. He lashed against democracy, liberalism and many progressive movements. Nietzsche attacked tradition while calling for a new society and culture. Immanuel Kant's *Moral Philosophy* (2004) states that culture is the creation of a capable entity for a certain purpose. This creation refers to the gradual development of mankind in the spiritual and physical aspects from the primitive state governed by natural forces to the rule of dominance of natural forces (Cai, 2003). The critics, philosophers and anthropologists believe that there is the interrelationship of language, thought and culture. The development of culture is a continuous process; it is the symbol of the progress of society. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau have explored the evolution of the civilized societies. Lewis Strauss in his book *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* (1949) explored the various socio-political forces that shaped the society and culture.

Looking from history of human development, this information system has run through the whole human society. It takes human brain as the carrier to gradually shape it through continuous learning, innovation and reconstruction. Different groups of people live in different habitats, and the cultural elements constructed by them vary greatly, thus forming the diversity of human culture (Yang & Peng, 2015). These diversities, by virtue of the command of the human brain, spread, communicate, and adapt to each other, thus making the information system and the self-consistency of culture more perfect (Jacobs, 2017). The steady-state continuation of life on earth depends on the rational coexistence of biodiversity and the restriction and balance among species. And the stability of human society and the coexistence of cultural diversity depend on diverse cultures and the restriction and balance among them.



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Taking Chinese Han culture as an example, it can be traced back to 7,000 years ago. The Mongolian people of Yuan Dynasty and the Manchus of the Qing Dynasty, when entering the center of Han culture, quickly accepted the life style of Han people. As they believe that the mode of Han culture is more suitable for the continuation and development of their own culture. Due to the development of science and technology, the current culture has the ability to make comprehensive use of life information and natural information. It also provides the community with effective resources to sustain the community. Thus culture can be understood as an information system that informs, disciplines and guides people how to play social games, that is, culture is an information system that guides the development of human beings.

Society, Ecosystem, and the Construction of Culture

Human society is born out of and always parasitic on natural ecosystems, and human beings construct their own cultures in natural ecosystems. Only when the cultural system of human society and the information architecture of natural ecosystem have a certain degree of compatibility, can the parasitic relationship between culture and ecosystem be maintained (Markusen et al., 2011). Natural ecosystem is a complex self-organization system constructed and regulated by genetic information, and its operation mode can only achieve the overall steady-state continuation by biological restriction and balance. And the human society constructed and regulated by cultural information relies on the balance of culture to achieve the steady-state continuity of the whole (Tian, 2014b).

Culture is Constructed Based on Natural Ecosystem

Human society constructs culture based on natural ecosystem, and the relationship between culture and natural ecosystem develops accordingly. Human beings are not qualitatively different from other biological species in terms of their biological nature. Because the biological information system that governs the generation, development and continuation of an ethnic



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group is genetic information, which is not qualitatively different from other organisms (Redfield, 1960). Similar to other biological species, human genetic information relies on four kinds of deoxyribonucleic acids to construct a hyperbolic spiral of genetic information carrier in different proportions, quantities and orders (Demerath, 2018), which ensures that human beings can naturally take other organisms as the source of living materials and biological energy, and rely on such acquired living materials and biological energy to ensure their own development and growth, and become a self-organizing unit in a complex system. This is exactly the prerequisite that human society can and must be parasitic on natural ecosystems. The objective existence of this premise leads to the fact that no matter what method humans use to construct their own culture, there must be a biological aspect in their culture, to ensure that the different societies constructed by humans can always maintain a parasitic relationship with the natural ecosystem.

The cultural construction of any ethnic group is based on the sufficient provision of living materials and biological energy needs, and to maintain a certain degree of communication between the cultural information system and the natural ecosystem information system. Any ethnic culture must have the ability to receive, decipher and make use of certain information about the natural ecosystem (Yang & Yang, 2015). To achieve this goal, it is necessary to maintain some relevance between the natural ecosystem and the cultural information system. This correlation can be reflected in the classification, assessment, utilization and transformation of life phenomena by different ethnic cultures. The difference between different ethnic cultures lies in what kind of natural ecosystems are concerned, and what kinds of life phenomena are used. Like biological species, they can vary widely in appearance, but they are all capable of life.

Ethnic culture is showing intrinsic consistency in the use of natural ecosystems, and shows obvious differences in the use of methods (Chen, 2001). However, whether it is the inherent identity or the external difference of culture, they both accept the rules of cultural information system (Berry & Pierre, 2019). The cultural information system must maintain a direct



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connection with the natural ecosystem, so as to ensure the smooth communication between cultural information and natural life information within a certain range.

Human Cultural Construction must be in Harmony with Natural Ecosystem

Based on the fact that cultural construction is based on natural ecosystem, it should be further noted that no matter how complicated the cultural construction of human society is, in the end, cultural construction must be in harmony with the natural ecosystem. This is the dominant form of parallel continuation of human society and natural ecosystems. Human society is not the opposite of natural ecosystems. These two complex systems have coexisted for a long time, and there is both symbiosis and parasitism between them. In view of the fact that each of the two systems is a complex system of its own, and that these two systems are self-organizing systems which can operate independently, the relationship between them is always represented by the interaction between the two systems (Luo & Liu, 2013).

Human society, past, present and future, cannot be completely detached from the natural ecosystem. The view that human society will inevitably destroy the natural ecosystem is unfounded, as before the destruction of natural ecosystem, the human would have left the planet (Schmidt, 2018). At the same time, we must recognize that human society and natural ecosystems are not completely in the same system. The cultural construction of human society is based on natural ecosystems, rather than simple copying. So that human society can maintain its own independence to a certain extent. This independence is reflected in the fact that people can actively understand and utilize the natural ecosystem, but not replace and destroy the natural ecosystem (Luo, 2009).

As human society and natural ecosystem are systems with self-organizing ability, the disharmony in the process of operation can be finally repaired through mutual adjustment. Human society is fully equipped to achieve coordination with the ecosystem through cultural



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adaptation and reconstruction, and ecological catastrophe is only a process in which culture needs to be reconstructed and adjusted, which is neither the end of natural ecosystems nor the end of human society.

The Coupling Operation of Culture and Ecosystem

The normal operation of culture needs the support of its natural ecosystem, and at the same time, it is necessary to facilitate the utilization of the living materials and biological energy by relevant ethnic groups (Wu & Li, 2018). As a result, although it is impossible for ethnic culture to maintain the same structure with natural ecosystem, the structure of ethnic culture must have a series of characteristics that coincide with natural ecosystem. The causal relationship governing these characteristics is mutually restrictive and interdependent (Luo et al., 2015).

The “Deviation” Relationship

When people study on ethnic culture, it is easy to notice the representation of these characteristics, but it is difficult to see through its deep compound causality, so that it is very difficult to describe the relationship between ethnic culture and natural ecosystem in terms of its quantity, shape and scope. This relationship can be interpreted as “deviation”.

In fact, the biological nature of human being has determined that the human being is, in the biological sense, just a common species. No matter how human beings construct culture, it should be based on this essential feature. Thus the culture is inevitably biological. At the same time, culture has to deviate from the biological nature, to ensure that culture can maintain human beings as an active group that can surpass the natural ecosystem. Previous cultural studies only focused on the part of culture which is beyond the natural ecosystem (Simberloff, 2018), namely its social part, but neglected the biological part of culture. This led to that only when the ecological crisis is approaching did mankind become alert to this catastrophe. The value of this



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vigilance lies in that it arouses the awakening of human beings to their biological nature and acknowledges that the culture always contains the biological side.

From a biological point of view, humans are just one of many species in the natural ecosystem, and the waste left by human life activities has to participate in the material and energy cycle of other species. This leads to the fact that no matter how developed the human society is, it cannot be separated from the natural ecosystem. Since ecological environment is a basic factor that cannot be sublated in human community, the diversity of ecology and its essential connection also make the diversity and multi-linear development of human society become inevitable (Chen, 2000). This suggests that humans must be diverse and variable when dealing with their natural ecosystems.

The “Deviation” of Ethnic Culture from Natural Ecosystem

From the very beginning, the cultural construction of human beings has been based on the natural ecosystem in which they are located. It developed a set of information systems specific to the culture based on its understanding of the ecosystem, in this way to regulate social individuals in the culture and to maintain a degree of compatibility with its natural ecosystem (Dovey et al., 2016). Then, with the improvement of people’s understanding of the natural ecosystem, the information system is constantly revised, improved and expanded, which indicates the development of culture itself. Once the pace of development is taken, it will pull a crack from the natural ecosystem and cause culture to deviate from its natural ecosystem, and the construction of human culture becomes a fact. As this fact spreads, the deviation of human culture from its ecosystem becomes an irreversible trend.

The process of human’s deviation from its ecosystem is the process of human’s deepening understanding of natural ecological environment, and the process of human’s deepening utilization of natural resources. This has become the process of the development of human



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culture itself. Human's deviation from natural ecosystem is an extremely arduous process, and every step has to pay a certain price. After numerous attempts, such attempts are considered successful in deviating from the natural ecosystem once they are normalized in the culture.

On the whole, however, human beings are confronted with an infinitely complex natural ecosystem, and no culture can be fully understood by anyone. Therefore, human beings take "ethnic group" as the unit to study the human deviation from the natural ecosystem. Each ethnic group has specific ecological niche, and in order to live in its specific ecological niche, people must first obtain the survival material from its ecological niche. In the deviation from the natural ecological system, it gradually established the indigenous knowledge system of the ethnic living space system, economic lifestyle, language system, social organization, custom, religious belief, ethics, and scientific skills and so on. From this understanding, it can be said that the diversity of the contemporary world's ethnic cultures is, to some extent, the result of different cultures deviating from their natural ecosystems.

In the process of ethnic culture deviating from the natural ecosystem, on one hand, there are certainly far fewer species growing in ethnic cultures than in ecosystems (Tian, 2014b). But to what extent is it fewer, it is related to the cultural attribute of the ethnic group. On the other hand, relationships between biological species can also be simplified in the habitat due to human intervention, and is simply divided into good and bad, useful and useless, noble and low-lying, and so on. In this division, the value orientation of culture plays an important role. What's more, the conversion of material and energy is also divided into two parts under the intervention of human beings, one part is converted according to the biological law, and the other part is converted according to the social law. Different cultures are using different components of the natural ecosystem or using the same component in different ways. However, natural ecosystems have their own structural characteristics. The different ways in which humans use it lead to



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different outcomes. This will inevitably lead to a series of chain reactions, and ultimately give feedback to humans in a very different way.

The “Deviation” and “Regression” Processes of Ethnic Culture to Natural Ecosystem

The sociality of human beings makes the deviation of ethnic culture from natural ecosystem almost inevitable, and the existence of deviation has positive significance. If there were no such deviations, humans would become like a normal species, there could be absolutely no flourishing of human society, let alone the accumulation of scientific knowledge formed by such a process of deviation (Chen, 2001). However, due to the lack of human’s understands on the complexity of natural ecosystems in a specific historical period, it has triggered the natural disasters in the process of deviation. This is related to the operation of human society, but it is by no means a deliberate attempt by culture to damage natural ecosystems. Because no culture will ever be able to fully understand its natural ecosystems, it certainly does not have the full capacity to repair ecosystem damage. And any culture is dependent on natural ecosystems. The remanufactured products of social groups need to be repaired by culture. It’s like a patient trying to heal himself with his own imagination.

Human so in natural ecosystem and deviates from it, in the “coexistence” and “deviation” and ensures the cultural construction of each ethnic group and the steady-state continuation of the natural ecosystem (Yang et al., 1992). If this “deviation” goes beyond the allowable range, nature will destroy the harmony between human society and nature, and it will lead to human disaster Therefore, to effectively control this “deviation” and realize the “regression” of culture to the natural ecosystem, is one of the major functions of human culture.

The ethnic culture will imitate the operation characteristics of the natural ecological system, and constantly modify those cultural contents which may cause ecological imbalance. In this way, the “deviation” between ethnic culture and the natural ecological system will not be blindly



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expanded, and the effective “regression” will be realized. “Deviation” and “regression” are opposite and interactive processes, which will make the ethnic culture swing in a limited curve between the imbalance and balance, so as to ensure the stable operation of the culture.

The “regression” process of human culture to natural ecosystem is also extremely difficult. As a result of cultural inertia, once any culture starts to deviate from its ecosystem, it becomes a trend and expands continuously, from which it absorbs more survival materials. Although the cost of its intake is increasing, the large amount of energy accumulated in the process of its “deviation” can provide energy for further “deviation”, and to offset the cost in the current process. Only when this compensatory “deviation” cannot be sustained, it is possible to change to the “regression” process to the natural system (Yang et al., 1992).

In human history, there have been many times of dramatic changes in the natural ecosystems of various ethnic groups. Due to its “deviation” value is too large, and the inability of “regression”, the civilization that it created disappeared in the way of “deviation” (Yang, 2006). But what disappeared is only a very small part of human civilization. Human civilization is still continuing and developing.

The Relationship Between Culture and Natural Resources

There is an indirect relationship between culture and natural resources (Demerath, 2018). In the legends of ethnic cultures, it is the disasters related to natural resources that are prominent, rather than the frequent minor changes of natural resources. In the operation of ethnic habitats, if natural resources are not severely disastrous, the relevant cultures are often unconscious. It can be seen that the culture’s attention to natural resources is in a subordinate position. Therefore, when planning the maintenance of natural resources, it is particularly important to absorb and learn from the experience of many other ethnic groups (Luo & Liu, 2013).



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The indirect relationship between culture and natural resources can easily accelerate and expand the “deviation” of culture from ecological environment. In the construction of ethnic habitats, the harm caused by many practices that are adverse to the maintenance of natural resources can easily be covered up by short-term effects and accumulate into disasters unconsciously (Simberloff, 2018). To change this situation, people usually rely on accurate natural science experiments and theoretical guidance. Even if a theoretical summary is made, it is difficult to fully master these cumbersome operation techniques in the existing experience of the executor, so it is even more difficult to ensure that every executor can correctly understand and apply them in the implementation process. It is obviously not enough to deal with complex natural resource maintenance problems based on the experience accumulated by only one specific culture. Only by synthesizing the experience of different ethnic groups can we sum up the instructive experience (Demerath, 2018).

Conclusion

After more than a century of exploration, anthropologists have gradually reached a consensus, that is, no matter what kind of culture, before the major external shocks, it will always be relatively stable for a long time to continue before major external shocks. Building a culture is not an easy task, which can only be gradually shaped in the process of the continuation, and be enriched and improved in the process of inheritance. Any culture is bound to manifest itself in the collective labor and intelligence of many individuals, and to change or to give up easily means great loss.

When the ecological crisis threatens the survival and development of human beings, what kind of responsibilities should human beings take? And to what extent can humans undertake this responsibility? Of course, other species cannot be expected to share any ecological responsibility. The rules of natural ecosystem will not solve the problem of ecological



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consequences caused by human existence. Any ecological problem caused by human behaviors must be taken by human beings themselves.

To conclude, under normal circumstances, human biology and sociality are always well combined, and the only means for humans to achieve this combination is to build a unique culture. Culture is a system of social norms. It is through this system that human beings firmly combine individuals to form a social synergy, and with this social synergy, in accordance with the unique way of this culture, the exchange of living matter and bio-energy are maintained with the surrounding natural ecosystems. So that each individual can be born, grown up and reproduced like other organisms, and will continue to live for generations. But maintaining this strong bond between individuals is not an easy task (Chen and Ma, 2007). In short, culture, a unique creation of human beings, effectively integrates the biological and social aspects of human beings. It is clear that since humans are very different from other species in the natural ecosystem in terms of dual reset characteristics, it certainly cannot count on other biological species to share any ecological responsibility for themselves (Jacobs, 2017).

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