

Cultural Behavior in an Ecological Context: Exploration of Inter-Ethnic Cultural and Ecological Relationship

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The locations of ethnic groups in a country are determined by their living spatial systems, in which the unique characteristics of local culture play a key role. It is known that an ethnic culture is formed through a long term multiple evolution. This paper probes the nature of human culture and ecologic connections to explore the relationship between cultural harmony and ecological maintenance. It attempts to find ways to achieve cultural ecological balance in human society. Results suggest that when dealing with ecological crisis, cultural balance mechanism can provide beneficial help. As there is a cultural balance system inside the living spatial systems, by combining the systems with the adjustment mechanism of culture, the international ecological crisis will be effectively handled, and the human ecological environment will be maintained naturally and efficiently.

Key words: Cultural relationship, Ecological maintenance, Mutual restriction and relative balance.

INTRODUCTION

More than 10 hectares of land are turning into desert every minute in the world. Every year, 5-7 million hectares of farmland and pastures are turning to desert, 40 million hectares of land are salinized. Of the 400 million mu of grassland in China that has been reclaimed for agriculture, one-third has been turned into desert (Dong, 2014). More than 100 countries and regions in the world are already suffering from water shortage to varying degrees, with areas with severe water shortages account for 60 percent of the earth's total land area. The destruction of natural environment has in turn exacerbated the crises of human society, especially the ubiquitous poverty and endless wars. As far as the current basic situation of the global ecological environment is concerned, the areas of ecological disasters and ecological crisis are mainly concentrated in the intersection of multi-ethnic locations (Zhang and Wang, 2013).

Based on the relationship between culture and habitat, the location regions of ethnic groups can be divided into three main areas, respectively the core location area, the effective location area, and the compensatory location area (Huan, 2014; Huan, 2015). In general, ecological catastrophe and crisis do not happen in the core area, but mainly in the compensatory area. Therefore, in order to avoid ecological disasters and crises, the key is to make clear the importance of cultural balance among different ethnic groups. Through cultural balance, cultural boundaries of different ethnic groups can be constructed and

maintained, to ensure that the activities of different ethnic groups are in harmony with their ecological environment, and to achieve the orderly utilization and ecological maintenance (Miton and Charbonneau, 2018).

Relationship between Culture and Ecological Environment

Since antiquity it has been observed that human society is born out of natural ecosystems, but always parasitic on natural ecosystems. Only when culture has a certain degree of compatibility with natural ecosystems, can the sustainable parasitic relationship between culture and ecosystems be achieved (Wang and Chen, 2005). This leads to the fact that no matter how human beings construct their own culture, they are bound to depend on the natural ecosystem to ensure that the different societies constructed by human beings can always maintain a parasitic relationship with the natural ecosystem (Zhao, 2015). On the surface, the constructions of different cultures may be as different as biological species (Hackett, Liu, and Noble, 2018), but most part of the information systems that restrict the operation of culture need to be consistent and compatible with natural ecosystem. Different human societies are directly related to the natural ecosystem in this sense (Yang, 2007).

Human society and natural ecosystem are complex systems that can coexist symbiotically (Plumwood, 2005; Lv, 2013). These two systems are also self-organizing systems that can operate independently (Kottak, 1999), which can be the basic starting point for analyzing the relationship between human society and nature. In order to maintain the steady state continuation of the parasitic relationship, the harmonious coexistence of human society and natural ecosystem in it must be the mainstream. The idea that human society will inevitably destroy natural ecosystem is unfounded, because humans would have left the planet before the natural ecosystems were destroyed (Ji, 2007).

In the normal operation of human culture, there must be a very important part of the close integration of culture and ecosystem, forming the core of culture (Wu and Li, 2018). All ethnic groups rely on this cultural core to achieve the exchange of bio-energy and information and provide a source of life for group members (Huang, 1999). Human society is by no means equivalent to the natural ecosystem, but to a certain extent maintains a deviation from the natural ecosystem (Li, 2008). This deviation has a positive meaning. If there were no such deviations, humans would become just like the common species and would not prosper (Bourgeron, 2018). But if such deviation goes beyond the allowable range, it will destroy the harmony between human society and nature and lead to disaster (Yuan, 2018).

The cost of human society to obtain life material and energy will increase when the deviation expands. In this case, culture will naturally emulate the workings of ecosystems and narrow the deviations (Huan, 2017). Similarly, when the expansion of this deviation affects the cohesion of an ethnic group, culture will also initiate a mechanism of reverse adaptation, to increase cohesion among ethnic group members (Yang, 2009; Zhang, 2013). In short, the deviation of culture from ecosystem cannot and should not be eliminated, and it will eventually make human society face habitat imbalance catastrophes, but during this process, culture functions well to eliminate the imbalance and disasters. Only three things need to be clarified. First, make clear the substantial connotation of ethnic culture's deviation from the ecosystem. Second, find out the social mechanism that leads to deviation expansion and explore the means to prevent and block it. Third, clarify why the current ecological crisis did not cause human timely vigilance (Pan, 2013).

In terms of specific ethnic culture, the core content of dealing with environment problem is to make clear the best adaptive scope of each culture, and maintain the corresponding relationship with relevant ecosystem, so as to make the biology and sociality characters in cultural construction mutually compatible (Wu, 2016). Once this compatibility guides culture to a normal state of operation, its deviation from natural ecosystem is within the allowable range. This task requires the cooperation of anthropologists and ecologists to arrive at a true judgment (Carolan, 2018). With this kind of work, people can find out in time that which ethnic culture's biological construction is disjointed from social construction (Xun and Bao, 2008), which have affected the normal operation of culture.

Thus on the one hand, natural ecosystems are always subject to natural disasters, and diverse cultures have obvious advantages in preventing natural risks. On the other hand, culture can avoid risks by

changing the way natural resources are used. Only with this advantage can culture control the deviation of natural ecology. When the ecological crisis threatens the survival and development of mankind, what kind of responsibility does humanity need to bear? And to what extent can human beings take this responsibility? Since humans are very different from other species in the natural ecosystem, they certainly cannot expect other biological species to share any ecological responsibility for them. Any ecological problems caused by human beings must be taken by human beings themselves.

Ethnic Group Location and Resource Utilization

A certain natural space exists in every single ethnic group, in which the group members live and make development, and culture systematically combines the natural elements together. Such a living space is called “the natural habitat”. At the same time, certain ethnic groups coexist with other ethnic groups, in different ways. Under the influence of specific culture, these social entities select and combine the social environment surrounding the group, making the social environment work at various levels for the specific ethnic group. Such a social environment is called “the social habitat”. The combination of an ethnic group’s “natural habitat” and “social habitat” becomes its “habitat” (Yang et al., 1992), and the specific location area.

It is known that an ethnic culture is formed through some long term multiple evolutions. This paper proposes to determine the adaptation status of diverse cultures in specific environment from the perspective of cultural adaptability, and divides ethnic areas into three main regions, respectively the optimal location area, the effective location area and the compensatory location area (Yang et al., 1992).

In a specific ethnic culture environment, the area with Equal Fitness Value higher than 0.9 is the core location area of this ethnic culture, namely, the optimal location area. The area with Equal Fitness Value between 0.5 and 0.9 is the effective location area of this ethnic culture. And the area with Equal Fitness Value below 0.5 is the compensatory location area of this ethnic culture (Stone-Jovicich, 2018). In the compensatory location area of a specific culture, this culture cannot function normally, it must be put into existence by means of compensatory force, and this compensatory force comes from optimal location area and effective location area.

However, such division is only a theoretical expectation. In the actual historical process, this orderly pattern is often broken. As a result, in the history of mankind, there have been many dramatic changes in the natural ecosystems of various ethnic groups. Some ethnic groups may be distributed to several different natural ecosystems in a certain historical period. While for some others, its natural ecosystems may be crowded out by other peoples (Rees, 1992). These will lead to the misalignment between the relevant ethnic culture and the corresponding natural ecosystem, and the abnormal operation of the relevant ethnic culture, and finally cause the ecological disaster and crisis.

To understand the urgency of human resource crisis, people need to distinguish the core location zone and staggered location area of each ethnic group. In the core location area, it is necessary to summarize the characteristics of the utilization of the living resources of various ethnic groups, and the characteristics of derived resources. In the interlaced location area of various ethnic groups, it is necessary to pay attention to the differences in people’s way of using living resources, notice that these differences are compatible or conflicting, and finally find the cultural countermeasures to repair the structure of human resources.

Although two or more ethnic groups live adjacent to each other in a limited space, they use different natural ecosystems. Or even if the same natural ecosystem is used, the using methods or orientations are different. In this case, the relevant ethnic groups usually do not show a hostile relationship, but a harmonious neighbor relationship. When the relevant ethnic groups are using natural ecosystems, resource problems will naturally occur, but the problems that occur between them will differ. The result will always be in the equalization use of biological resources by diverse groups in a limited space. If this pattern can be maintained steady-state, the problem of man-made resource crisis can be solved finally. If due to social changes among related ethnic groups, no matter which party is trying to change this pattern with social forces, then the relationship of restrictions and balances will develop in reverse (Greenfield, 2018).

With man-made changes in ethnic areas, all groups will inevitably rely on their own traditional culture to use natural ecosystems that are not suitable for him, which will lead to the deviation expansion of relevant ethnic culture from the natural ecosystem, and the resource crisis that was originally controlled by ethnic groups will also expand. If the relevant ethnic groups cannot jointly use the natural ecosystems that are not suitable for them in the normal way, then the culture deviation from the natural ecosystem will expand be superimposed. This unusual cultural operation is the root cause of resource crisis and catastrophe.

In some transition zones with intricate natural backgrounds, there are many kinds of human living resource structures, and various classes are interlaced with each other. In this kind of regions, there is a high degree of complementarity in the use of resources among ethnic groups. Under the normal operation of inter-ethnic cultural restriction and balance, all ethnic groups can coexist harmoniously, and human resource crisis can be effectively controlled.

To achieve this ideal situation depends on the combined effects of the following aspects. First, no matter what kind of culture is using resources, it will not use resources to the limit. Second, diverse cultures have different negative effects due to different ways of using resources and goals. As a result, diverse cultures that coexist are using the same resources, and they have mutual trade-offs, mutual gains and losses, and mutual engagement. This on one side improves the efficiency of resource utilization, and on the other side can offset the negative impacts in the process of utilization. Third, ecosystems, resources and national cultures are all complex systems. The interaction between the systems is always subject to the interaction of multiple causal relationships, so that no matter which force the complex system comes from, it will be dispersed diverted in a complex system being acted on (Yang, 2009). As a result, there is no one-on-one positive conflict or mutual closure between complex systems, but rather a coexistence of multiple effects and feedback. This form of inter-ethnic cultural restriction and balance help people achieve efficient use of resources

Under the condition of inter-ethnic cultural restriction and balance, relevant ethnic groups have diverse ways of resource utilization. The resource use has shown the following regular features. First, Human utilization of resources presents a phenomenon of equilibrium. Second, the utilizing methods are always diversified. Third, the use of resources is always in a state of restriction. Fourth, the resource problem associated with utilization will be naturally dispersed. Fifth, the form and scale of resource issues will also be diversified. Sixth, in some cases, the resource problem can be resolved in the process of utilization by other ethnic groups. Seventh, all ethnic groups can utilize and preserve the kind of resources to which it is best suited.

The solution to the resource problem generated by the mechanism of cultural restriction and balance is rooted in the interplay of complex systems, which is based on the experience accumulation in the observation and perception of the interaction between complex systems. To deal with the complex and changeable resource problems on the basis of such experience can ensure the steady operation of the control on resources. And the specific control measures are reflected in that stabilizing resources utilization of all ethnic groups, and stabilizing the cultural balance between ethnic groups, so as to keep ethnic culture in a normal state of operation and help group members to achieve effective control of the pattern of resource utilization.

Cultural Balance and Ecological Maintenance

In the second half of 20th century, the traditional methods of using biological, water and soil resources of ethnic groups in the third world were not functioning properly under the political, economic and even military coercion of the strong ethnic groups (Szocik, 2018). For example, the expansion of fixed farmland occupied the available grassland, and the expansion of single species led to the overload of grassland, the disorderly exploitation of mineral resources destroyed forests, grasslands and farmland. These all indicated the abnormal operation of relevant culture, which was manifested in the decline of the inherent self-control ability of culture. This is the direct cause of the contemporary ecological crisis (Yang, 2007). It can be said that it is the loss of the normal operation of traditional culture that has led to ecological crises. Such crises and catastrophes involve many ethnic groups and social aspects. Therefore,

the charity or investment, modern engineering or co-ordinated action by the UN will not help in this case. Only by ensuring the gradual recovery of the damaged system in the interwoven restriction and balance of diverse cultures, can human beings realize the foundation and future of self-existence and development (Bourgeron, 2018).

For example, the Jingpo and Dai people in southwestern Yunnan province of China live geographically side by side for generations but use different resources. The Dai people use the resources from dam area crisscrossed by waterways, and the Jingpo people use resources from mountain jungles. Under the influence of the restriction and balance effect of inter-ethnic culture, the use of natural ecosystems by the two groups is controlled within a reasonable range, which will not lead to disputes and frictions over resources.

For another example, in the contiguous zone of Sichuan, Guizhou and Yunnan province of China, ethnic groups such as the Yi, Qiang, Pumi, Naxi, Miao, Gelao, Buyi and Han people are living under the mixed farming and grazing system. In this way of livelihood, farmland, forests, and pastures are used interchangeably (Yin, 2007). For instance, the Buyi and Han people the settled farming in the rice paddies of dam area, but only the ears of the rice are harvested, and the straws are left in the paddies. That's because the paddies will be converted into pastures for herds of Yi people in winter times. In return, the herds become a natural fertilizer producer for this field (Yin, 2007). The mountain grassland structure of Yi is very complicated. In the edge of plateau mesa or steep stone hillside, there will be obvious grassland degradation after long-term grazing. Here, it is not the Yi people that have conducted the grassland renewal work, but the Miao and Gelao people who make shifting cultivation on the plateau, and who are here today and gone tomorrow. Their farming methods may seem crude, but their contribution to grassland renewal should not be underestimated. After two or three years of slash-and-burn farming, the harmful plants are cleared away.

The ethnic groups use resources in their own way and man-made ecological problems do happen, but that such problems are not harmful in the eyes of other ethnic groups, or the harm can be overcome. Thus, in the normal production of all ethnic groups, they can actively repair the adverse consequences caused by harm and in this way different forms of human-made ecological problems can be effectively eliminated.

At the junction of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the Loess Plateau, the inter-ethnic cultural balance presents another scene. Diverse types and styles of ethnic cultures can develop moderately here. But no one can control the overall situation (Cui, 2009). The common people of any ethnic group need to find a way to survive in the local natural environment. Once there is serious ecological crisis, it depends on these common people to repair. Otherwise, this area would have been barren.

The use of soil and water resources varies among different ethnic groups. Under the restriction and balance mechanism of ethnic cultures, each of them occupies a specific ecological niche, just like biological species, and maintains the environment in their respective ecological niche. In such a network, the use of resources by any ethnic group will not go to an extreme, and the man-made ecological problems will not be developed to disasters. Under the influence of cultural restriction and balance, human beings' utilization of resources shows the following characteristics. First is the equalization of resource use; Second, the methods of utilization are always diversified; Third, the use of resources has always been moderate; Fourth, the problems associated with the utilization of human resources will be dispersed naturally; Fifth, the form and scale of resource problems are diversified; Sixth, in some cases, man-made ecological problems caused by different ethnic groups in the use of resources can be eliminated in the use of other ethnic groups; Seventh, each ethnic group has the opportunity to make use of and maintain the most suitable resources.

CONCLUSION

The common solution to the ecological environmental problems is always to use a single measure or a single technology. The idea of solving the problem in this way is to decompose complex things and make logical judgments based on a single causal relationship, so as to form corresponding countermeasures. To engage in natural science research in this way, or to manage an enterprise, or to regulate homogeneous

social behavior, can receive ideal results. But the problem is that the ecological environment is a complex system, not a single material movement or a single individual behavior. The movement of environmental structure and individual behaviors in society are extremely complex. Any single causal relationship contained in it cannot fully reflect the interaction between the two complex systems. As a result, using a single strategy to solve the problem of ecological maintenance will end in failure.

When dealing with ecological crisis, cultural balance mechanism can provide beneficial help in the following four aspects:

First, under the influence of cultural restriction and balance, each ethnic group locates itself in the natural ecosystem that it can best adapt to. It not only has a high adaptability to the ecological maintenance of the region, but also has a whole set of survival skills to cope with the evolution of the local ecological resource structure. If such skills are sorted out purposefully and systematically, they can work well to cope with ecological crises.

Second, cultural restriction and balance enable ethnic groups to maintain a moderate margin in the process of mutual restriction and interdependence. Thus, in the use of ecological resources, it will not go to the extreme. If there is no cultural restriction and balance mechanism in play, it is difficult to coordinate the utilization pattern of ecological environment resources across ethnic groups. With the power of cultural operation, cultural balance can help control ecological crisis. In fact, cross-cultural compatibility has always been achieved through the mechanism of cultural restriction and balance.

Third, the key to control the man-made ecological crisis is to prevent the expansion of the deviation between the utilization mode of ecological resources and the specific ecological environment structure. The role of cultural restriction and balance will make the utilization of ecological environment resources of any ethnic group stable in a moderate range for a long time. For vicious ecological crisis, it is unrealistic to wait until the completion of this running-in process. If human beings master the law of cultural restriction and balance and use it as an analytical means to analyze its causes, it is possible to find ways to induce cultural adjustment. In this way, the ability of culture to adapt to a specific ecological environment can be improved in a relatively short time, so as to effectively resolve the ecological crisis.

Fourth, Ecological crisis is usually the superposed product of various forms of ecological environment resource utilization problem. It is the result of people applying the same approach to different resource structures of different natures. The key to its cure lies in diversifying the use of different resources to their best advantage. In this regard, ethnic group people should grasp the law of cultural restriction and balance, explore the utilization mode of ecological environment resources of all ethnic groups, and accelerate the cultural reconstruction and adaptation process under the guidance of modern science and technology, so as to achieve a new pattern of restriction and balance, and to achieve the radical cure of ecological crisis.

Human beings are faced with severe ecological crisis, mostly because the ethnic cultures are in an abnormal state of operation, leading to that the cultural balance cannot be maintained stably. However, for the whole human society, the abnormal operation of culture and the disorder of cultural restriction and balance are only a temporary process, rather than the final result. Through the self-adjustment of relevant cultures, human beings can construct a new pattern of restriction and balance and maintain it in a long-term stable state. The man-made ecological crisis caused by the abnormal operation of culture can be gradually eliminated in the readjustment of culture. Therefore, using cultural restriction and balance to control man-made ecological crisis is completely a proper countermeasure in line with the law of complex system operation.

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