

An Analysis on the Evolution of Eco-Cultural Identity in Gannan Tibetan Area

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ABSTRACT

The special geographical location contributes much to the intact original ecological culture in Gannan Tibetan area, but the profit-driven nature of economic system in industrial civilization leads to the intensification of the crisis of ecological and cultural identity in this area. In the evolution of eco-cultural identity in Gannan Tibetan area, only by accurately grasping the current historical orientation can we turn the threats into opportunities and achieve the harmonious coexistence between human and nature.

Keywords: *Gannan Tibetan Area, Ecological culture, Identity, Evolution.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The essence of eco-cultural identity is the tendentious consensus and recognition on ecological ethics formed during the process of dividing the material wealth provided by nature on a scale (global or local) under specific economic and technological conditions. In recent years, the frequent occurrence of natural disasters caused by abnormal climate change in Gannan Tibetan area has aroused great concern about the deterioration of the ecological environment in the region from all walks of life. And at the same time, the eco-cultural identity has fallen into a dilemma of expression that deviates from practice and theory: the rise of ecological culture and the deterioration of ecological environment, the consciousness of ecological civilization and the reflection of industrial civilization, the bottleneck of ecological degradation and the establishment of green development, etc. It can clearly locate the theoretical and practical direction of the development of ecological cultural identity in Gannan Tibetan area if we can accurately position the historical value of the original ecological culture in the harmonious coexistence between man and nature and precisely understand the contemporary crisis of eco-cultural identity in the process of industrialization in Gannan.

2. HISTORICAL VALUE OF ORIGINAL ECO-CULTURAL IDENTITY IN GANNAN TIBETAN AREA

Most of the primitive ancestors of Gannan Tibetan area lived in difficult and remote areas where the environment was relatively bad, so they had a profound understanding of the importance of harmony between man and nature. Influenced by the level of productivity, man is insignificant in front of nature and cannot compete with natural disasters, which results in people's awe of nature and dependence on nature. This kind of awe and dependence mainly takes the form of religious belief, laws and regulations, natural taboos and so on, which integrates people's identity to ecological culture into daily life.

2.1. Religious Belief versus Eco-cultural Identity

In Gannan Tibetan area, the primitive ancestors sanctified all kinds of elements in the natural environment, which was full of simple thinking about the relationship between man and nature. This is not only the reverence of the ancestors for the objective world, but also the sacred sense of the natural environment with which they coexist, and all of these have formed the basic content of subjective cognition and internalization into national mentality. This kind of psychological identity and behavior, in the name of protecting tribal worship, embodies the consistency of the ancestors' ecological and

cultural identity, and imperceptibly changes the binding life order to maintain the relationship between man and nature at root. These unique eco-cultural identity thoughts provide continuous power for the harmonious development between humans and nature in Gannan Tibetan area, which contributes to the harmonious intergrowth of man and nature.

2.2. Laws and Regulations versus Eco-cultural Identity

The laws and regulations formulated and implemented by the ancestors of Gannan Tibetan area include traditional customary laws and statutory laws promulgated by the government, in which the contents of protecting the ecological environment are gradually formed and transformed in the process of mutual adaptation between man and nature. When all kinds of customs and traditions in daily life rise to customary laws, they are promulgated and implemented by the government and tribe of the day in the form of statutory laws after written records are available, which becomes a mandatory document to regulate ecological protection and limit human behavior. Laws and regulations institutionalize the local customs and taboos in daily life, and contain rich elements of primary ecological protection, which can turn the original abstract punishment from god into the more concrete punishment from the government and the tribe [1], and provide a certain institutional guarantee for the sustainable development of the living environment.

2.3. Natural Taboos Versus Eco-cultural Identity

The taboo thoughts and behaviors towards nature in Gannan Tibetan area result from people's understanding of natural environment and they are the negative ecological moral ethics in primitive belief. They prescribe dos and don'ts, as well as how-to-do in their daily life. As a religious behavior and religious phenomenon, taboos are produced at the same time as the concept and consciousness of sacred things, so these taboos are closely related to religious beliefs [2]. Because of the complex geological conditions and fragile ecological environment in Gannan Tibetan area, environmental damage is not only difficult to restore, but also easy to cause geological disasters. The identification of the ecological culture from Tibetan ancestors is derived from the reflection in the process of people's struggles with nature. This is not only a summary of the experience of overcoming nature, but also a compromise to threats from nature. By avoiding offending, the gods and forming group memories and behaviors of ecological culture, the destruction of nature is precisely reduced, which is beneficial to form the historical accumulation of eco-cultural identity, maintain individual survival and

species' reproduction and achieve the harmonious unity of man and nature.

3. CONTEMPORARY CRISIS OF ECO-CULTURAL IDENTITY IN GANNAN TIBETAN AREA

With the transformation of traditional society to modern society, Gannan Tibetan area is undergoing the transformation from closed and semi-closed agricultural society to urban and open industrial society. Driven by economic interests and science and technology, the transformation of man's way of life and value concept makes the relationship between man and nature develop from limited transformation, mutual restriction to demand control as well as conquest and expansion. Thus the identity of the original ecological culture has been faced with unprecedented impact and challenge.

3.1. Status of the Ecological Environment

Because of the particular location of Gannan Tibetan area, the stability of the ecosystem is very poor. It is easy to cause ecological imbalance with the ecological environment destroyed. What's more, it requires a long recovery period, but the degree of its recovery is very low. Under the disturbance of global warming and man-made over-exploitation, the ecological environment in Gannan Tibetan area has presented grassland degradation and desertification, wetland degradation, soil erosion and biodiversity loss, and so on. Meanwhile, it is also accompanied by the decline of groundwater level, the decrease of surface runoff, the increase of sediment delivery and the structural damage of water conservation function by vegetation, etc.

3.2. Traps of Industrial Civilization

What causes the gradual deterioration of the ecological environment? On the surface, most researchers blame this on regional economic development, system construction, social transformation and so on. But at root, it is people's identification of ecological culture that has been misplaced. Since the 1980s, the phenomena of climate warming, environmental pollution, population explosion and ecological imbalance brought by industrial civilization have gradually appeared in Gannan Tibetan area, resulting in a summing-up "the struggle of human beings for their own survival threatens themselves" [3]. Although human survival is fundamentally based on material wealth, yet the relationship between man and nature is not an economic relationship, but an eco-cultural relationship. The fundamental reason for the lack of eco-cultural identity in Gannan Tibetan area is more industrial civilization that subverts the identity concept of ecological culture than economic development that violates the ecological law.

3.3. Conflicts of Values

The original ecological culture in Gannan Tibetan area contains rich ecological wisdom and is fixed in people's minds in the form of religion, which makes the survival value of human beings be highly consistent with the survival value of nature. In fact, both human beings and nature take the purposes of their own survival as the value scale, and the value of human survival is based on the value of nature's existence. At the same time, controlling the use value of nature means that the ecological environment has lost the survival value equivalently, which is also the price that human beings will pay little by little. The values of revering and worshipping nature influenced by the religious belief in Gannan Tibetan area stand for the ethical values of harmony between man and nature. However, they not only represent the relationship between human value and natural value in local areas but also embody the relationship between local natural value and national natural and survival value because of the particularity of geographical environment in Gannan Tibetan area.

4. FUTURE TREND OF ECO-CULTURE IDENTITY IN GANNAN TIBETAN AREA

In terms of the development of human society, people's identification of ecological culture can be divided into four stages due to the continuity of cultural development. First, in the period of primitive civilization, people's identification belongs to sensory understanding of natural culture. The relationship between man and nature appears as worship and respect, which features harmony and balance. Second, in the period of agricultural civilization, people's identification belongs to the rational integration of humanistic culture. And the relationship between man and nature presents as awe and submission, which is characterized by limited transformation and mutual restriction. Third, in the period of industrial civilization, people's identification belongs to disruptive technology of scientific culture. The relationship between man and nature is mainly manifested as conquest and expansion, which is marked by demand control and pollution. Fourth, in the period of ecological civilization, it belongs to the stage of regression and reconstruction of ecological culture. The relationship between man and nature attaches great importance to the unity of man and nature, which reflects the nature and sustainability.

In order to represent the above views intuitively, we can draw the following curve diagram of changing processes in the ecological index of human society, taking the ecological index (E) as the vertical axis and the stages of eco-cultural identity (R) as the horizontal axis, regardless of the specific time spans of the identification.

Assuming that Eh and Ex respectively stand for the best and the worst poles of the ecological index of human society, the result is shown as in Figure 1:

According to Marx's theory on the division of social stages and the course of social development in Gannan Tibetan area, Gannan Tibetan area had been in slave society during the period of agriculture civilization. When entering the industrial society, the development of economy and society is at a low level and speed due to the remote location of Gannan Tibetan area, so the destruction of ecological environment is relatively small. From the point of eco-cultural identity, the ecological consciousness based on religious belief still occupies an important position in the thoughts of a certain group of local people. Therefore, the ecological index of Gannan Tibetan area does not reach the lowest point Ex with industrial development but lies between Ex and Eh. If the trend of ecological deterioration in this area can be fundamentally reversed in a short term, the ecological index of Gannan Tibetan area will appear an inflection point G (as shown in the diagram) in the whole process of ecological changes.

As a result, in the perspective of ecological environment, the natural environment is still relatively well protected because of the particularity of its geographical location although Gannan Tibetan area has suffered various natural and man-made disasters in history. From the view of industrialization, China just entered the stage of substantive industrialization while the western countries deeply reflected on the ecological crisis brought by industrial civilization in the middle of the 20th century. And the industrial development of Gannan Tibetan area has a certain lag than other places because of its location on the edge of the border of Gansu, Qinghai and Sichuan. From the policy of the superstructure, the construction of ecological civilization has unswervingly become the will of our country and the Party's strategy since the 18th National Congress, and it will go deep into all aspects of social and economic development step by step. According to the theoretical basis, the ecological wisdom of the unity of nature and man in Chinese traditional culture and the profound original ecological culture in Gannan Tibetan area provide favorable conditions for the leapfrogging of eco-culture identity.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the eco-cultural identity of Gannan Tibetan area does not come up to the period of disruptive technology of scientific culture fundamentally, so we can hold the point that we will have every reason to realize the transition from the rational integration of humanistic culture to the regression and reconstruction of ecological culture.

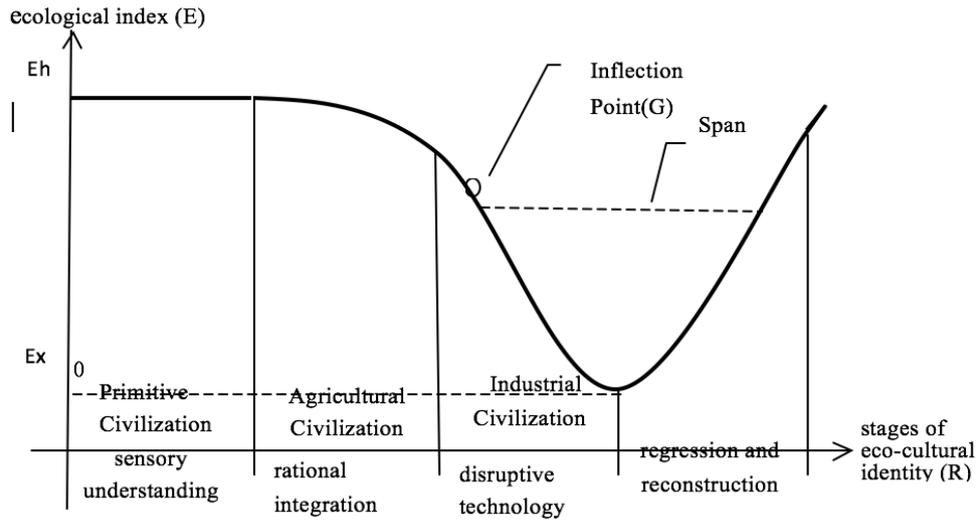


Figure 1 Schematic diagram of the changing process of ecological index of human society

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