

Cultural Adaptation and Consciousness: A Case Study of Dong People in Huanggang Village

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ABSTRACT In the theoretical construction of cultural anthropology, acculturation is an important concept. Acculturation includes the processes of preservation and innovation during cultural adaptation. When different cultures face different environments, various cultural facts are constructed. Different ethnic groups have different methods of expression, and form different village features. In the fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2015, the present researchers proposed that cultural heritage of Dong community in Huanggang village of Guizhou Province can be categorized into seven aspects, namely, people, culture, geography, industry, landscape, history and belief. The present researchers observe that the Dong communal culture and its physical environment build a mutually dependent and restrictive coupling relationship. As a result, cultural adaptation and cultural consciousness of the Dong communal culture largely depends on natural and social contexts. Moreover, the Dong communal culture in the coupling of natural and social environment is a basic source of the Dong people's survival and development.

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, man and nature have been the fundamental relation concerned by human society (Yang and Peng 2015: 2). Moreover, research results of cultural ecology as cultural facts become mental wealth that is used by people in any time (Chan and Sanmartín 2015: 191). In the course of development of cultural diversity, ethnic and cultural distinctions are not only inevitable, but also expected. Loss of otherness of ethnic culture is equal to lost cultural diversity (Zhou 2014: 71). Dynamics of human cultural competition are difficult to sustain but have an immediate impact on the progress of human civilization (Tian et al. 2015). Cultural development requires self-contained diversity. Without internal diversity, one culture cannot expect to achieve any development. Seen from a human development perspective, formation and development of cultural fact systems in any era are achieved by interaction and conflict between dif-

ferent cultures, which results in new cultural fact systems produced by the compatibility of interacting ethnic cultures. Scholars indicate that an international system is a system wherein one cohesive diversity replaces diversity, arguing that this interaction creates large scale, perhaps even global cultural homogeneity. Therefore, there is not inborn first-class culture (Carrithers 1998: 35). Without diversity of ethnic culture, a society is unlikely to achieve cultural development. In addition, without interaction and conflict between ethnic and cultural diversity, an interacting system is unlikely to establish a new, advanced culture (Wang 2015: 13).

Thus, the present researchers argue that nowadays, concurrent ethnic culture made by people has merits beyond the sheer value of existence. Ethnic and cultural diversity is not a burden, but a valuable cultural heritage. Discarding or ignoring ethnic and cultural diversity is nothing short of destroying and abandoning human wisdom. Moreover, losing ethnic and cultural diversity shall cost commendable creativity and initiative opportunities in terms of social economic development (Tian 2014). This paper takes the Huanggang village, located in Liping County, Guizhou Province of China, as a case study, and it assumes that the Dong communal culture and its living environment, which are mutually dependent and restrictive, establish a coupling relationship.

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Literature Review: Acculturation

In the theories of cultural anthropology, acculturation is an important concept. Acculturation includes preservation and innovation of cultural adaptation processes, but it is restricted by many factors (Fan 2015: 2). Cultural evolution theory has lasted for almost half a century since the fall of classic evolutionism. Cultural evolution theory is the foundational theory of cultural anthropology. Most great scholars of cultural anthropology disdain the relationship between culture and ecological environment, and few people have observed the effect of ecological environment on culture.

Fortunately, Lewis Morgan is the exception. In his late years, when he conducted research on Native American tribes in the western United States, Morgan found that the roofs of Indian's houses were high and steep, with the purpose of draining rainwater quickly and keeping indoor spaces dry. In comparison, the houses of tribes in arid zones were also distinctive, as they had smooth roofs, thick walls, and small windows, which aimed to insulate houses from the hot external environment and keep indoor rooms cool (Conn 2004). The present researchers argue that Morgan's research on acculturation, unfortunately, did not garner attention in the field of anthropology, and also that acculturation was less likely to be narrated at that time. His study, however, first linked environment and culture.

The present researchers argue that the first researcher who explicitly conducted studies on the influence of environment on culture was Marcel Mauss. Mauss (2003) started a new era of research on the relationship between culture and environment. Mauss (2003) proposed that due to long, cold winter nights, as well as a shortage of food in the Arctic, Eskimo communities obviously behaved differently in winter and summer. They lived together to pass the long and chilly winter, while in summer they could gather food in small groups and live a dispersive lifestyle because of warm weather and abundant food. Mauss (2003) first analyzed social organizations and their adaptation to the environment. His findings made the field of anthropology begin to pay attention to environment and systematically study the relationship between environment and culture. However, his research mechanically applies a certain genealogy. In addition, its involved content is limited to cultural issues, which were passively adapted to the environment,

rather than considering how culture as a whole, deals with environmental stress via initiative.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the accepted understanding of the relationship of anthropology and environment changed from "determinism" to "probabilism." The change originated in "historical particularism," proposed by Franz Boas, who emphasized special culture and surpassed his predecessors in affirming that the environment directly affected culture (Ren 2004). Boas, however, did not pay attention to the environment's influence on culture, but regarded the environment as one of the reasons for cultural construction. On the basis of this understanding, his students proposed "environment probabilism" (Ren 2004: 87).

On the relationship between culture and environment, in the vein of the "standpoint of possibility," the keystone case is Alfred L. Kroeber's study on indigenous North Americans (Zhuang 2002: 133). In agreement with Boas, Kroeber asserted that cultural structure is complex, that single external and internal factors do not determine all characteristics of a culture, and that culture is an outcome of the combined effects of a variety of internal factors (Zhuang 2002: 133). In conclusion, they argue that culture and environment do not show a direct linear relationship and the influence that environment produces upon culture provides an understanding and interpretation. In this way, acculturation has no means of providing initiative. Thereafter, introduction to ecological perspectives advances further research on the relationship between environment and culture, and furthers human cognition.

American ethnologist Leslie White was the first to propose "dual acculturation" (Manas 1983). In his writings, White strictly distinguished signal behaviors and symbolic behaviors, explaining that signal behavior is behavior stimulated by the natural environment. All creatures have this ability. Symbolic behavior, on the other side, is specific to human society. It is said that culture has both signal behavior and symbolic behavior operating at the same time (Manas 1983: 31). Even though White's statement is vague, after hashing his original works, the present researchers now propose that his cultural evolution includes interdependent environment and society.

Each culture requires materials from a surrounding environment for survival. Thus, each culture shall adapt to its natural environment (Harding 1987: 37-38). Furthermore, White's student Juliar Stew-

ard used a long-term, comprehensive comparative analysis in Peru, Central America, Egypt, Mesopotamia and China as case studies, analyzing similarities and differences among the constructions of agricultural culture among those various civilizations (Xia 1997: 227). Steward asserted that the geographical environment of each of the five civilizations was semi-arid grassland with loose, easily cultivated soil (Xia 1997: 227). Because other factors that impact crop growth are easily overcome, development of these communities could be partially understood through the similarities of their ecological environments. However, ecological environments of the five civilizations had many differences. As a result, within these five civilizations there are obvious differences in strategies for crop planting, organization of agricultural production, tillage methods, ways of thinking, and religious ideology.

According to Steward, ecological context has a far-reaching influence on culture (Milton 2000). The influence, however, does not present as a simple one-to-one correspondence relationship. Thus, it can be seen that Steward's theory is far removed from the rough anthropogeography formula of "environment forming culture", and has turned to a painstaking formula in which specific environmental factors form special cultural identities (Milton 2000: 296-297). Steward stresses interaction and mutual relationship between culture and environment, suggesting that differences among cultures are caused by special adaptation processes formed of the interaction between society and environment (Milton 2000: 296-297).

On one hand, Steward admits a powerful and visible prescription from natural environment for human beings. The simpler a human society is, the more directly it is affected by environment. But differences in topography and flora and fauna force people to use different environmental manipulation techniques and form different social organizations. On the other hand, Steward stresses that, as human beings with a social culture, the present researchers have the ability to recognize, utilize and modify the natural environment (Ren 2004: 87). According to the above statements, the present researchers realize that Steward's acculturation is different from adaptation of biological species. During acculturation, humans' insights, understanding, wisdom and past experiences play important roles. Moreover, acculturation is different from a biological adaptation in that the latter pas-

sively adopts functions through heritable variation to acquire survival tools.

Furthermore, in the process of adaptation, cultural elements seem to have some independent ability to deal with the environment. For instance, crop varieties may change before other cultural elements respond. Only after the varieties of crops planted stabilize will such changes successively affect other cultural elements, causing them to make corresponding adjustments. That is to say, in the course of cultural adaptation, a variety of distinctive cultural elements will present different sequences of change, rather than following the style of biological species, which depend on an individual to change and adapt to the changing environment. Steward's statements play an important role in enlightening the essence of acculturation, marking effective digestion and absorption of the concept of adaptation in the field of cultural anthropology (Yang and Lv 2004: 264).

Marshall Sahlins, another successor of White's, integrated theories from White and Steward, proposing a theory of dual evolution with innovative consciousness (Harding 1987). Sahlins argued that on the one hand, cultural evolution produces an advanced organization, assuming a more integrated and comprehensive adaptive system, while on the other hand, as a new type of culture, it inevitably experiences an efficient adaptation to an environment (Xia 1997). The two aspects can be summarized as "general evolution" and "specific evolution" of culture. According to Sahlins, the goal of general evolution is to make culture more general and to achieve greater adaptability, while the goal of specific evolution is to allow culture to adapt to its specific environment. This means that Sahlins integrated dual acculturation and adjustment to nature and society into a concrete model of cultural evolution (Xia 1997).

Without a doubt, their understandings of acculturation surpassed their predecessors, and they even referred to the distinction between acculturation and biological adaptation. It is a pity that they did not realize that acculturation to an ecological system is an outcome of active control over an environment, rather than a result of passively accepting the physical conditions.

The main viewpoints on cultural materialism from Marvin Harris indicate that cultural features (technology, residential patterns, religious beliefs, and etiquette) are results of human adaptation to a natural environment. One of the most famous examples is the Indian sacred cow (Liu 2012; Harris 1988). Killing cows and eating beef is prohibited

within Hinduism. The result of the taboo is that many old and weak cattle are raised despite having lost their fertility. Cows hang about in Indian villages, interrupting traffic and disrupting markets. This is incomprehensible to people from Western society, however, Indian farmers, in the name of religion, retain cows that seem to be useless.

In Western countries, beef is a staple food and provides people with calories and protein. However, according to the local environmental context in India, it is quite reasonable not to kill cows. The cows' functions in local places embody many components, such as supplying milk, ploughing, load bearing, and transportation. In addition, there are many functions of cow dung, including, fertilizer, fuel, and flooring material. Cow dung, as a fertilizer and fuel, provides a great contribution to the local energy system, and substitutes for millions of tons of chemical fertilizers for farmers. Thus, farmers do not need to spend much money buying fertilizer. Cow dung is also the main fuel for cooking. If a large number of cattle were killed, local people would have to buy fuels such as coal, wood, or kerosene, all of which are more expensive than cow dung.

From the perspective of materialism, it is reasonable to explain that Indians do not eat beef because it is helpful in preserving other resources. Some scholars did researches on cattle bioenergy balance issues in West Bengal villages, discovering that cows make things that have no direct use for humans into usable products. Energy efficiency of products provided by cows is several times greater than that of agricultural production of beef. These scholars conclude that Western perspectives are unsuitable for judging the productive value of Indian cattle (Liu 2012).

Harris's cultural materialism avoids theoretical and methodological difficulties met by Steward, who divides cultural characteristics into cultural core and cultural remains. Harris, however, still did not free himself of environmental determinism. In the case of India's sacred cow, the explanation that he proposed is a rational explanation, rather than a causal one. The clear intention of Harris, however, is to prove that all cultural characteristics have ecological origins based upon material conditions imposed by the environment, but not to prove that some environmental characteristics are direct causes of specific cultural features. Harris proposed that cultural identity is a product of environmental adaptation. His theory still belongs to "environmental determinism," because it makes environment a decisive player in forming culture (Milton 2000).

Thus, there are some reasons for arguing that cultural materialism seems like environmental determinism, in comparison with Steward's cultural ecology. As it is a comprehensive consideration on interrelation of cultural phenomenon, it makes clues of determinism exist in places where this kind of connection is found (Milton 2000: 299).

Professor Rappaport systematically analyzed an integration of the relationship between culture and environment by taking Tsembaga Marings' *Kaiko* ritual in Papua Guinea as a research subject (Li 2000). Within a given space, when the numbers of people and pigs increased synchronously, intense conflict and competition between people and pigs in farmland and biological products would occur. To resolve these contradictions, the *Kaiko* ritual needs to be practiced. It is necessary to select important people for the ritual and launch inter-tribal wars, and the casualties help resolve competition for resources and relieve pressure on the environment. The *Kaiko* practice, based on a mechanism with an automatic adjusting function, not only involved preparing for wars, but also consuming extra pigs relative to standard rates. Pork could be used as a high-protein food for soldiers, so extra pigs would be consumed. This was a control mechanism for counteraction, used to rebalance the ecosystem. Moreover, the *Kaiko* ritual and its related systematic processes eliminate the ecological conflict, which generates a positive impact on the preservation of the ecosystem, so as to contribute to the balance of the entire system (Chon 2007: 14).

The present researchers should note that Rappaport's research has a clear provision. The purpose of the research was to illustrate the causal loop between the local ecosystem and the Tsembaga people's survival-adaptation system, which necessitates a highly structural analysis. Rappaport paid much attention to the interaction among various factors of the environment, and ignored cultural dynamics, which resulted in the accidental loss of the cultural environment in the analysis of dynamic adaptation (Chon 2007: 14).

As to the shortcomings that existed in Leslie White's acculturation, through lots of research, a multitude of scholars from China and other countries have agreed upon some corrections. Among these scholars, the most influential findings are from Tingshuo Yang, Shaoting Yin, and Kanglong Luo. They argued that the environment in which humans live has a duality of biological and social nature. To individuals who live in a given environ-

ment, the two factors must be acknowledged and used effectively so as to achieve the needs of human social life for the sake of constructing culture, which has both biological and social aspects. Acculturation should also recognize this duality (Yang 2007; Yin 2010; Luo 2007). Such an argument deepens the people's understanding of culture, but whether or not it has a dynamic nature on acculturation has still not been adequately explained.

METHODOLOGY

The present researchers believe that it is important that cultures and communities be studied holistically, comparatively, and relatively. Between 2007 and 2015, in order to acquire the first-hand data of Huanggang Village and understand cultural consciousness and acculturation of the indigenous people living there, the present researchers organized graduate students and faculties for 10 times to conduct the fieldwork on ecological environment, livelihood, clan, religious practices, drum towers, solar terms, festivals, and so on. Through the holistic analysis of the data collected, during his period of this time, 7 MA thesis and more than 50 papers have been published. The research achievements promote the fieldwork value of cultural anthropology, especially anthropological research's contribution to the solutions of human problems.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

In order to survive, a nationality should use various ways to build or form different kinds of relations with other nationalities (Yang 1995: 107). Moreover, a nationality's ecological environment is not a purely objective natural space, but a result of processing and transforming by the nationality. In the process, "people meet their fundamental needs by cultural tools" (Malinowski 2002: 49). As such, the community space of any nationality not only fulfills social needs, but also grants cultural products, reflecting a coupling relationship between ethnic culture and habitat.

People change the environment around them in the course of their lives. At all intersection points that contact with the outside world, they make tools and alter the landscape, producing an artificial environment (Malinowski 2002: 49). Such an artificial environment enables sociability and grants cultural belongingness, causing cultural facts of a nationality to present systematic, hierarchical differ-

ences in relation to the components of the environment and in the process of utilizing the living environment. Facing numerous complicated external environmental components whose relationship with a nation is close, distant, or independent may have such an effect. That is to say, a specific ethnic culture always has hierarchical communications with the components of a large-scale system (Tian 2013; Tian 2014).

The Dong People and Their Communal Culture

The Dong people are mainly distributed along the borders of Guizhou Province, Hunan Province, and Guangxi Province. According to the Fifth National Census of China, the Dong population was 2,960,293 in 2000 (Luo 2009: 11-17). From the 6th to the 9th century AD, the prefectures governing ethnic groups containing the Dong people were called *dong* 'cave' or *xidong* 'brook and cave,' which is an administrative unit governing ethnic minorities. *Yiling* is the earliest Dong name recorded in literature of the Song Dynasty. Moreover, *dongman*, *dongmiao*, *dongren*, *dongjia* and other Dong names were used in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Nowadays, some villages in this region are still called *dong*, which had gradually become the name of the ethnicity. After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the Dong people were officially called the Dong people, but still *Dongjia* is used in Dong communities.

Originally, the Dong was from "*luoyue*", one of the *baiyue* branches from the Qin and Han Dynasties. The Dong ancestors lived in the Wuzhou Region of Guangxi Province, and later moved eastward to Guizhou and Hunan. Some of them kept moving to Guangxi and settled down there. From the 12th to 13th centuries, some Han people from regions south of the Yangtze River moved to the Dong region, during the 14th Century, a large number of Han farmers from Jiangxi moved to the Dong areas, in the late 14th Century, stationed military was maintained in the Dong regions, and most soldiers were Han people from Jiangxi. The migrants and stationed soldiers later became Dong themselves. After the People's Republic of China was established, there was one Dong and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, three Dong Autonomous Counties, and three counties separately established by Dong and Miao, Dong and Yao, and Dong and Zhuang.

The Dong people have their own language, which belongs to a branch of the Zhuang-Dong

Kam-Sui language of Sino-Tibetan lineage. The Dong language has northern and southern dialects, but their differences are subtle. Most Dong people now speak Mandarin Chinese. In some communities, they exclusively speak Mandarin Chinese. The Dong language did not originally have its own characters. The characters designed in 1958 for a writing project were based on the Latin alphabet; however, these were not implemented successfully. Nowadays, the Dong people are still using Chinese as the standard writing tool in their daily lives.

The Dong people believe in polytheism and worship ancestors, especially the female ancestor called “*samu*”. Each village builds a temple or a shrine where the *samu* ancestor is worshiped. Influenced by Han culture, the Dong people in some communities have faith in some of the gods of the Han people and believe in immortality of the soul. In some other Dong regions, Buddhism is also practiced. There are monasteries too, but many people do not have faith in Buddhism. Moreover, Christianity and Catholicism have been introduced, but there are few believers.

In addition to abundant culture and art, the Dong people are famous for being “the hometown of poetry and the ocean of song”. For example, some artistic artifacts include the *Dongzu Dage* ‘Kam Grand Choirs’, reed flute dance, Dong drama, and bull fighting, and these are traditional cultural and recreational activities.

The common marital pattern in the Dong community is monogamy (Luo 2014: 92). According to the Dong custom, unmarried men and women sing to each other in the evening before getting married. The bride does not live in her husband’s family after marriage, unlike the common custom throughout much of China. Dong young men and women promote freedom of communication. Young women are always proud of having numerous men come to visit them. When young men visit young women, they bring a lantern. In the evening, if one girl’s house hangs up the most lanterns, this shows that the girl is excellent, and her parents are proud of her. At the time of festivals, young men and women sing to show their love for the opposite gender. In addition, men wear traditional costumes and turbans, while women wear their own traditional costumes, pleated skirts, waistbands, and headscarves with long braids.

The main food of the Dong people is rice. Dong people living in mountainous areas like to eat glutinous rice. They are also fond of drinking liquor and eating sour, spicy foods. Oil tea, sashimi, and salt-

ed fish are fine cuisines for guests. Most Dong regions celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival. However, some other places choose October or November to celebrate *Dongnian* ‘Dong New Year.’ April 8th or June 6th on the lunar calendar is the “Cow Sacrifice Festival”, which lets cows rest and eat fresh grasses, glutinous rice, and other foods. *Chixin* Festival ‘eating new festival’ is celebrated in July, and on that day the Dong worship ancestors with new rice and fish, and congratulate one another on a good harvest. When a senior passes away, young people should cut their hair. Men and women use water to bathe the corpse, dress up the dead tidily, and place a piece of silver in the mouth. Copper and iron are not allowed to stay with the corpses. The offspring do not eat meat during funerals. A traditional burial (in the ground) is carried out.

The Dong people are mainly engaged in agriculture and partially in forestry. The forestry business primarily utilizes fir trees (Yang 2013: 87). Japonica rice is their main product and rice paddies are used to breed fish. Folk handicraft is comparatively developed. Drum towers and sheltered bridges are unique ethnic architectural structures.

Chixin Festival, which is prevalent in most Dong regions, is an ancient festival within the Dong community. Dong people cook and eat fresh farm products harvested from the farmland on that day. Timing and content of the festival varies between different communities. For instance, in Tianzhu, Jinping, Sansui and other counties, some Dong villages celebrate the festival on the first day of *mao* ‘the fourth of the twelve earthly branches’ after *xiaoshu* ‘slight heat,’ and some others celebrate it on the day of *yin* ‘the third of the twelve earthly branches’ or *mao* ‘the fourth of the twelve earthly branches’ in July. Before the festival, women queue up according to their ordinal branches in their families and go to the bank of the river to wash bamboo tubes, water buckets, and reed leaves, and to dry fiddlehead. Then, the women go back home to mix glutinous rice, sorghum, and salt, and pickle the mixture in a jar. Next, they use *xinshui* ‘new water’ from the well to reconstitute rice and brew sweet wine. The main course for the festival is fish, and people eat corn and melon dishes without salt. Such dishes are called *yikufan* ‘reminiscing bitter rice.’

The Dong village is a cultural fact as well as a cultural creation. The setup of the Dong village is a constant within the culture. The Dong village’s natural components have cultural significance, and

the setup of villages is the expression of cultural significance. When different cultures confront their environments, different cultural standards are constructed. It is certain that a culture utilizes and copes with the environment. Although the result has a certain natural attribute, utilization generally no longer speaks to the environment but the resources therein. A resource is the product of culture utilizing and coping with the environment. The village is a division of the environment by culture, and different ethnic groups have different strategies for this expression, forming different village features among the various minorities.

Dong residents are no exception, and they too utilize their natural environment. The drum tower of a clan is generally an activity center for clan members. Each clan builds their houses concentrically around the drum towers, which become the center of a clan-village. The clan-village is surrounded by clan members' shared sacred forests, cemeteries, wells, rice paddies, fish ponds, pavilions, streams, and other public facilities and natural objects. Outside is the economic forest belt where the Dong people primarily plant camellia and tung oil. Outside the economic forest belt is a ring

of fir and pine forest. The outermost ring of the clan is a belt of wild, miscellaneous trees where clan members chop trees for firewood, burn grasslands, collect herbs and mountain fruit, hunt, and pasture. In the Dong communities, there is a prescription for environmental resource utilization that extends in circles centered upon the clan drum tower. This kind of pattern, formed by resource utilization habits, shows a cultural sequence that defines the structure of the Dong village (see Fig. 1).

Cultural Heritage of the Dong Community in Huanggang

The Huanggang village is located in Shuangjiang Town, Liping County, in the southeastern region of Guizhou Province. Most villagers are of the Dong people. Huanggang is a humid, hilly village in the midst of a jungle at high altitude. It includes 1607.06 mu (1 mu is 0.0667 hectares) of agricultural area, 28,656.6 mu of forestland area, and 1013.5 mu of non-forest land. It has a 68.4 percent forest coverage rate. Moreover, the fields of Huanggang are of five types as follows. Ten percent of fields depend on rain for water, four to five percent

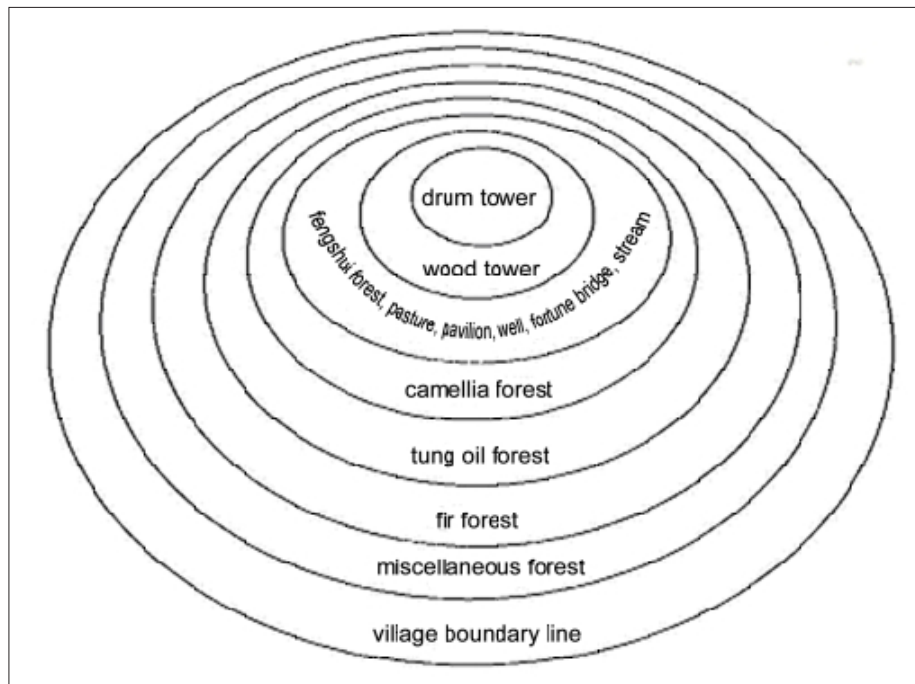


Fig. 1. Structure of the Dong village

Source: Author

depend on reservoirs for water, five to six percent belong to dike fields close to bunds, fifty percent lie between hills, and thirty percent are situated on mountains (Luo and Yang 2011: 34). The Dong living in this environment allocate and use resources by means of minimum environmental alteration (Luo and Walle 2014: 26).

As a rival of global cultural homogenization, cultural heritage practices come from a historical set of global versus regional debates involved in modernization since the 19th century. The basis of cultural heritage is cultural diversity (Bao 2013: 69). In the researchers' fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2015, they found that in Huanggang village, the cultural heritage of the Dong community can be summed up in seven aspects, namely, people, culture, geography, industry, landscape, history, and belief (see Fig. 2).

People of the Dong Community: The people of the Dong are divided into five clans and their names are *douc neix laox*, *douc neix weih*, *douc dav*, *sinc yinc*, and *lagx jomc*. The purpose of these distinctions is to establish a "marriage circle" in the village. Their ultimate purpose is to meet common needs, enabling interaction with others and establishing a happy life through the history and heritage.

Culture of the Dong Community: The current culture in Huanggang village consists of three primary cultures, namely, Dong, Miao, and Han. No-

tably, the Dong minority is rare in the world and this village aims for the continuation of ethnic history and culture within the community. In addition, the community operates artistic activities and promotes lifelong learning.

History of the Dong Community: During the process of migration, the Dong people fought with the Miao, who lived here earlier. The Dong prevailed in this conflict and then settled here. One of the Dong groups migrated into Huanggang village and intermarried with the local Miao people. As a result, the present characteristics of Huanggang village were gradually formed by the Dong in concert with Miao.

Geography of the Dong Community: Huanggang village is located in the southeast of Guizhou, amid mountainous terrain that dips low in the north and high in the south. There are four mountains stretching from north to south. In addition, there are three streams in the valley that run south to north, flowing eventually into the Guimi River, a branch of the Duliujiang River. Huanggang village is located at a dam in a mountain stream formed by intersection with another stream, and it sits upon a plateau. The elevation ranges from 400m to 1000m. The lowest arable land is located at 420m and the highest point of arable land is at 961m, while the elevation of the Dong living community is 760m.

Industries of the Dong Community: The leading industry of the Dong community is intensive

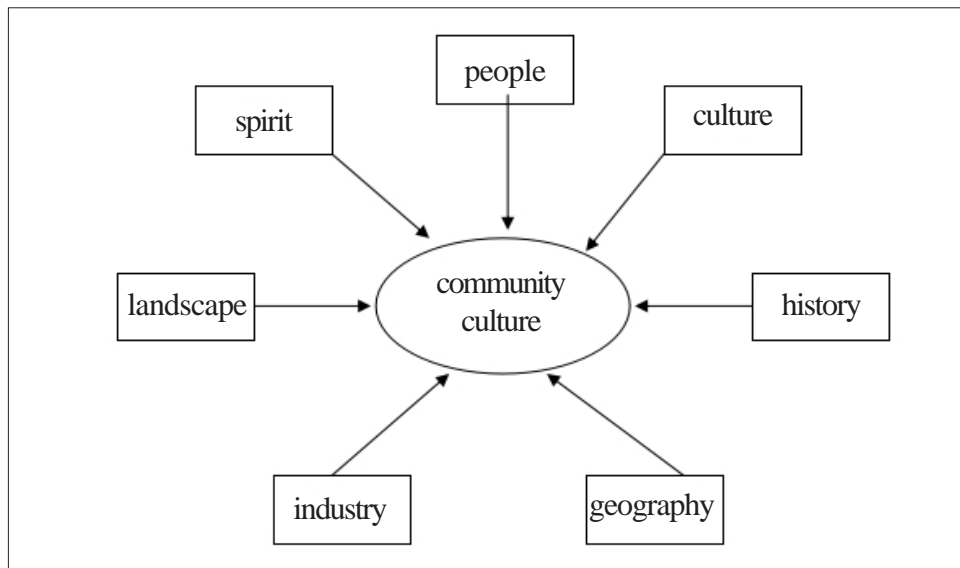


Fig. 2. Culture makeup of the Dong community

and meticulous “rice-fish-duck” farming. “Rice-fish-duck mutualism” describes farms that raise fish and ducks in rice fields, making rice, fish, and ducks interdependent and interactive. Farmers play an objective and regulatory effect in this mutualism (Yang 2013: 86; Zhang 2014: 131). In addition, the Dong farmers operate dry-land farming and forestry.

Landscape of the Community: Communal structures include the drum-tower, shelter bridge, opera stage, stilted building, storage, and fish-pond in Huanggang village, which constitute the unique landscape of the Dong community.

The landscape, full of traditional culture, shows harmonious development of humans and environment. The spirit of the landscape in the Dong village is mainly embedded in drum towers, which have become the most symbolic cultural heritage of the Dong community.

Belief of the Dong Community: The Dong people in Huanggang practice polytheism. Landscapes, streams, old trees, large rocks, bridges, water wells, and more are objects of worship for the Dong. Among the immortals worshiped by the Dong people, females constitute the majority. For example, there are *sadui* ‘goddess protecting mountains and hills,’ *sagao-qiao* and *sagaojiang* ‘goddess guarding bridge-head and bedside,’ *saliang* ‘goddess stealing and robbing souls,’ *saduo* ‘goddess spreading smallpox,’ *sabin* ‘goddess making wine,’ and so forth. In addition, there is *sasui* ‘a supreme deity’, which is also called *sama*, *sabing*, or *satang* ‘goddess worshiped by most Dong people’. It is believed that the goddess dominates everything and protects people, keeps domestic animals thriving and keeps the village safe. There are three *sasui* altars or ‘deity altars’ in Huanggang community.

The present researchers propose that cultural preservation and innovation can be achieved by community empowerment of the Dong people. In other words, the preservation and innovation of one culture is to build a new culture and new people. The preservation and innovation of the Dong communal culture, in fact, is to regard local talent in the Dong community as the producers, people, culture, and history of the community as the setting, local landscape and scenery as the stage, folk religion and ethics and morals as the bottom line, traditional knowledge and contemporary tech-

nology as the props, and all residents of the community as the actors.

CONCLUSION

Each nationality has its own living space. The characteristics of a community’s natural living space become its natural habitat. Every nationality effectively used its habitat throughout the history of its people, and the people of every modern culture have molded a system consisting of their own special cultural facts. A nationality, which can survive and develop, however, does not merely depend on its objective natural environment.

Individuals constituting a nationality have biological features, which rely on materials such as sunshine, water, and air to survive. What’s more important is that they have sociability, and individuals must be satisfied within their society to survive and develop their social conditions. A nationality’s specific social living environment is a sum of all kinds of relations. A nationality and its culture establish and gradually develop under synthetic cultivation and the effects of its own natural and social environment. In addition, cultural facts, which were used to utilize and coordinate the natural and social environments, themselves improve, too.

Of course, a nationality does not passively respond to natural and social environments, but acts in as a consequence of cultural action in a particular living environment. Perhaps it is the synthetic effects of these elements, which constitute a historical context of innovation and preserve an ethnic culture. Therefore, cultural innovation and preservation is a result of combined action of natural and social environments.

With regard to a nationality facing an external environment, it will always make specific choices according to its own culture, and build a personal relationship with its local “environmental circle”. The internal dynamics of each “environment circle” contains several kinds of natural and social factors, and each circle creates its own system. Numerous close or distant “environmental circles” jointly construct a large-scale system in the shape of the specific ethnic culture. Through frequent communication, a nationality’s culture is thus able to constantly develop and innovate.

The above analysis is regarded as a basic theory of how the present researchers treat preservation and innovation of cultural heritage in the Dong community, where the culture and living environment exemplify a mutually dependent and restric-

tive coupling relationship. Preservation of and innovation upon the Dong communal culture, however, largely depends on the Dong natural and social environment. Therefore, the Dong communal culture in tandem with its natural and social environment becomes the basic source of the Dong's survival and development.

The present researchers conclude that there is no "original ecological culture," because preservation and innovation always exist together and innovation is the acculturation of environmental change. In addition, cultural heritage is not only the maintenance of cultural facts, but also the basis and source of innovation. Preservation and innovation of the ethnic culture develop in the coupling of ethnic culture and ethnic habitat.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A culture's development and inheritance rely on its own diversity. One culture without internal diversity cannot be developed or inherited successfully. The present researchers propose that there is not the inherent cultural superiority. In this sense, without ethnic cultural diversity, it is impossible to achieve cultural development. Moreover, without cultural diverse interactions and conflicts, it is impossible to establish a new type of advanced culture too. Concurrent ethnic cultures nowadays are created by people and have their merits and the value of existence. Thus, the present researchers recommend that the diversity of ethnic culture is not a burdensome thing. It is, however, a human treasure too. If the diversity of ethnic cultures are discarded or ignored, it is nothing else but to destroy and abandon human intelligence. In addition, without the diversity of ethnic cultures, humans will lose the valuable creativity and initiative.

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