A Case study on economic development and traditional culture protection: Taking the Oroqen as an example

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Abstract. As a unified multi-ethnic socialist country, economic growth and traditional culture preservation in ethnic minority regions have always been the main objectives of China's economic and cultural construction. Due to a number of issues, including historical reasons, a humanistic environment, and geographic circumstances, the Oroqen people have lagged behind in terms of both economic and cultural industry growth. The traditional culture of Oroqen is rich and diversified, including aspects of food, costume, hunting, and religion. Economic innovation and progress are necessary for the preservation of minority cultures. The so-called innovation is to use distinctive national culture of Oroqen to produce economic value. This paper presents the Oroqen culture, illustrates the obstacles of preserving traditional culture, and explores how to use the traditional culture and the advantages of the ethnic group to develop the economy. It also covers how to use the financial benefits to help the Oroqen people in maintaining their ancient culture.

Keywords: Oroqen; economic development; traditional culture preservation; culture of ethnic minority regions.

1. Overview of Oroqen's traditional culture

1.1. The hunting cultures

As one of the few traditional hunters in the north, the Oroqen people have developed a great deal of experience and hunting expertise over time. From generation to generation, these hunting techniques have been passed down with mature skills, a rich cultural heritage, and a variety of hunting methods [12]. It includes "collective hunting", "fire hunting", "rope hunting", "trapping", "tracking", "blocking", "fencing", "river hunting", "dog hunting", "warehouse hunting", "tucking and hunting", "net hunting", "clamp hunting", "camouflage hunting", "mimic hunting", etc.

"Collective hunting" is one of the earliest forms of hunting in recorded human history. Earlier Oroqen people usually gather a family commune together to capture the prey. By lighting bonfires, shouting and intimidation, the prey become panic and flee. Oroqen hunters take this opportunity to kill the prey using bows, arrows, sticks and other tools, or by yelling to drive the prey to the traps set up in preparation.

"Fire hunting" is usually carried out in early spring and late autumn. At this stage, the grass and trees have dried up, making it possible to catch and eat the prey by lighting a fire where they are moving. In addition, Oroqen people also drive away the animals by fire or torch, and then shoot the prey with bow and arrow after introducing them into the encirclement. "Rope hunting" is also by driving the prey to the pre-set rope snare, when the prey is wrapped around the neck, people close the net to catch it. This way of hunting makes it easier to capture large prey alive.

"Trapping" is to set up a deep pit with sharp sticks and waiting for the animal to fall into it. A pierced or damaged animal will not be able to escape. Other hunting methods are also highly distinctive, Oroqen hunters mostly relied on animal habits to accomplish the hunt, which is seen in modern times as scientific and inventive.

1.2. Oroqen's Traditional Music

Among the minority, Oroqen's folk songs, dances, and musical instruments are extremely distinctive. The main types of Oroqen folk music are "Zhaandalgaa", "Nuggiel", "Samaanni yrol" and so on [13].

"Zhaandalgaa" comes in two varieties: folk song and ditty. The former has less fixed melody and various singing styles. The latter has more fixed tune and much richer material on the Oroqen people's life.

"Nuggiel" is typically employed as a dancing accompaniment, it has a symmetrical structure and strong rhythm. The song reflects the customs, manners and women's life.

"Samaanni yrol" is related to the Oroqen's religion of shamanism. The shaman usually sings the lead, joined by clan members and assistants. The content has a strong national religious flavor and focuses mostly on religious rituals, ghost exorcisms and sickness cures. Its music has a mysterious and unpleasant quality.

The dance of Oroqen is quite typical of the hunting life. The dance is accompanied by songs with strong rhythms and energizing moves. The Oroqen traditional dance is made up of coordinated footwork, upper body gestures, and vocalizations from the dancers.

Tambourine and mouth string the two most common national instruments of Oroqen. Tambourine is mainly used in shaman celebrations and religious events. The mouth string can imitate the call of geese and sparrows, which is an intriguing communication tool when Oroqen young men and women fall in love.

1.3. Oroqen's folk culture

Festival customs are a vital component of folk culture. Over the course of history, the Oroqen national festival with rich cultural connotation is gradually formed.

"Sebin Festival" is one of the ancient festivals of Oroqen, and "Sebin" means joy and peace [14]. According to "The Worshipper of the Sun", the festival was celebrated the day after the bears were caught by the tribe. The Oroqen people offer the delicious internal organs of the bear to the god "Bainacha" and hold a feast with songs and dances. In addition to the bonfire party, the contemporary Sebin Festival also features a cow racing program.

Additionally, the Oroqen people celebrate the "Aobao Festival" as a religious occasion to ask for calm winds, rain, and peace throughout the year. During the Aobao Festival, Oroqen people change the new wicker for Aobao, and tie the colorful Hada or satin. They present the offerings in front of the Aobao, and the elders of the clan lead the worship. They also host events like horse racing, wrestling, and archery on this day.

To commemorate the harvest from pastoralism, the Oroqen people have a unique event known as the "Mikuolu Festival". There is no fixed date for the festival, it depends on the weather and preparation. On the day of the festival, the tribe's elders will give ewes and lambs to the young people, and bless them to have more sheep in the future. Other notable celebrations in Oroqen include the Spring Festival and the Stroica Festival, which will not be mentioned here.

The marriage custom in Oroqen folk culture also has its own national characteristics. First of all, Oroqen is monogamous, and the marriage process is separated into three stages: negotiation, engagement and marriage [15].

In the past, some Oroqen people's marriage was arranged by their parents, but the Oroqen people who live near the Argun River practice a rather free type of marriage. There, a young guy will ask a well-spoken matchmaker to propose a marriage to someone he has in mind, and if the woman's family approves, the proposal is successful. After a well-received proposal, the engagement phase follows. According to tradition, the man will visit the woman's house with the bride price, accompanied by his mother and matchmaker. They will invite the woman's family members to join them in their celebration to wish them a happy marriage.

On the wedding day, the groom will parade to the bride's house with his parents and the family commune. An elderly guy carrying a deity statue leads the parade, while a man carrying a reindeer is

at the end of the procession. After kissing the god statue, the bride and groom should hug and kiss each other. The singing and winding "fairy pillar" activities come next.

1.4. Oroqen's national costume

Due to the special characteristics of Oroqen's living environment and manufacturing process, Oroqen's national costume combines elements of steppe and forest cultures [16]. The traditional clothing of Oroqen may be worn year-round for hunting because the materials are sourced from nature and are good at withstanding cold. Their clothing is light, warm, comfortable, and the designs are in a hunting-friendly manner.

The following are a few characteristic costumes. Elk skin serves as the primary raw material for Oroqen's boots, gloves, and other leather apparel. The nation's primordial religion and religious beliefs, which elevate reindeer and deify the antlers, are reflected in the typical antler patterns that are drawn on these garments. The roe deer hat is the most distinctive one since, from a distance, it resembles a real roe deer. Such hats are helpful for hunters who want to get close to their prey and serve as concealment. Along with the roe deer hat, there are also hats made of lynx, otter, and other animal skins. Typically, these leather garments are exceedingly soft. The current Oroqen costume is quite varied, brightly colored, and made of a variety of materials. Bone finger rings, which were formerly worn for archery but are now worn as ornaments, are also popular among Oroqen hunters.

1.5. Oroqen's religious beliefs

Oroqen people believe in "shamanism". Shaman, often known as a "prophet," is a term derived from the old Oroqen language and means "a person who is wild, aroused, and restless". Shamanism is polytheism, and Oroqen people pursue totem worship and believe in more than ten kinds of gods [17]. Shamanism holds religious rituals in two cases: one is to drive away ghosts and cure sicknesses, and the other is to pray for the clan's stability and prosperity. Shaman is not a hereditary profession; young shamans learn from experienced ones as mentors, learn their prayers to the gods, familiar with the details of religious rituals. Shaman has "sacred hat", "sacred clothes", "sacred drum" and other items. Shaman adherents hold that "God" is revered. The shamanic religion practices and the way of life of the Oroqen people are intertwined, and that people are inextricably linked to "God's" blessings.

2. Traditional culture transmission problems of the Oroqen

2.1. The loss of national traditional culture.

The production mode of the Oroqen after settling down from the mountain is mainly agriculture. The hunting opportunities were reduced, and the frequency to wear animal skins and make birch boats were also gradually decreased. These items have become tourist souvenirs and relics in the museum. The younger generation of the Oroqen grew up under the education of Chinese language and modern civilization, they have no interest in learning the national traditional culture and the national language. They are more adapted and aspire to the modern society with developed information and convenient transportation. For example, in the documentary "The Last Mountain God", Guo Baolin represents a generation of the Oroqen who have fully adapted to contemporary society and commodity economies, while the younger generation of the Oroqen are already full of strangers to the mountains and forests. When the reporter asked Guo Baolin's daughter whether she would like to live in the mountains and forests all her life, she answered "no" immediately. The new generation of the Oroqen is gradually assimilated by the modern way of life as they grow up under the influence of modern civilization.

Not just the youth, but the majority of the Oroqen now purchase their daily essentials from modern industrial manufacturing of plastic and alloy rather than birch bark products. The legacy of these skills is under severe threat with the passing of the older generation who were skilled in traditional methods. The spiritual homeland of the Oroqen is in risk of losing its roots due to the influence of contemporary culture.

2.2. The unreasonable policy.

2.2.1. The Settlement Policy

With the changing ecological environment and the advancement of society, the traditional hunting life of the Oroqen has struggled to keep up with modern society. In order to help the Oroqen integrate into contemporary life, the government encouraged them to leave the mountain and settle below. The Oroqen gradually began to settle down between 1951 and 1957, organized by the government. The government also introduced a number of assistance programs and gave out subsidies at the same time to assist in resolving the education, housing, and food problems.

However, a change in living conditions invariably results in a change in culture. After settlement, the social structure of the Oroqen has undergone significant alteration. The dispersed social structures based on hunting culture have given way to group living with villages and towns acting as the carriers.

2.2.2. No-Hunting Policy

The government issued the Notice on Prohibition of Hunting in 1996, compelling the Oroqen people to surrender their hunting guns and entirely give up the hunting way of life in favor of agricultural cultivation. The government financed the land reclamation and issued the arable land to the hunters in order to encourage them to turn to agriculture as their primary mode of production, hoping them to establish several businesses. However, it is difficult for the Oroqen to adapt to agricultural production. They live by hunting for so long that many people do not have the financial and technical ability to develop arable land. As a result, few hunters respond to the government's call, which leads to more severe pressure of economic life on ordinary people.

In the rapidly changing Oroqen community, some of the elder Oroqen people are reluctance to give up their hunting rifles, rejecting the lifestyle after settlement. They desire to go back to the mountains to live a nomadic life with no definite place. For example, in the documentary "The Last Mountain God", Meng Xiaoqing is a representative of the Oroqen who grew up in the mountains and forests. These Oroqen are extremely reticent to leave the mountains or study agricultural production. They insist on coexisting with nature and do not want to be assimilated by modern civilization. While Oroqen people represented by Meng Jinfu have left the mountains, but they have a hard time adjusting to modern life and still long for the days of hunting. These also reflect the difference in attitude of two generations of the Oroqen towards the change of national culture.

2.2.3. Religious policy

After settling down from the mountain, the government called the society to break the feudal superstition. Many Oroqen shamans performed the "farewell to the altar of God" rite in response to the pressure, sending the divine dolls, divine garments, and divine drums into the deep mountains. As a result, the shamans only existed in name and the ceremonial of jumping to the gods was never performed again. After the Cultural Revolution began, shamans—who were viewed as a massager between man and God—were blamed for promoting feudal superstition. The sacred clothes, drums were burned, shamanism gradually fade out of our sight.

After the 2000s, the government started to put emphasis on protecting the cultures of each ethnic group. The shamanic beliefs and associated folk customs of Oroqen were officially recognized, they were no longer feudal superstitions. However, Oroqen people are still not allowed to perform private rituals related to shaman, and can only be interviewed by journalists, or provide oral information for academic research. In the documentary "The Heart of the Shaman", the Heilongjiang government hoped that the shaman culture could be documented, and they promised to provide the location and other things so that Guan Kouni, the last shaman of Oroqen, could hold the "invocation ceremony". The government hopes she will elect the next shaman and pass on the culture. However, not only the shaman costume provided is not standard, but the government also requires the presence of pertinent officials to film during the ceremony, which makes Guan Kouni helpless and bewildered.

The invasion of modern elements transforms rituals that were once sacred and pure into performative and political activities. The modern people, who have been influenced by a materialistic

viewpoint for a long time, have progressively lost respect for faith and reverence for nature. The purity of Oroqen's own spiritual civilization has become less important under the context of the times and become the victim of politics.

2.3. Low economic profit of production

Although Oroqen people have rich resources and traditional culture, their actual inheritance situation is facing difficulties. Before settlement, the Oroqen relied on hunting as their primary means of production, with fishing and collecting acting as supplements. As a result, the commodity economy is almost at a stop. After settlement, the Oroqen are encouraged to establish a commodity economy, but their commodity has a hard time fitting into the fast production and fast marketing of today's economies. In terms of natural environment, the Oroqen live in a chilly, uncomfortable natural environment due to their high latitude location in the north, which makes it harder for them to sustain their way of life through production. At the same time, the lack of market demand leads to the low price and extremely low profit of Oroqen's meat and fur products, while the absence of promotion and news coverage also limits the growth of the market. As seen in the table, the percentage of people who have never heard of the Oroqen and those who don't know anything about them is extremely high. Only a very small number of people have learned about their cultural practices, which is indicative of Oroqen's marginalization.

Table 1. The Popularity of the Oroqen.

Options	Number of People	Proportion
Never heard of the Oroqen	47	39.17%
Only heard of it, but don't anything know it	58	48.33%
Heard of it and have some knowledge of their culture	6	5%
As a folklore lover, I know the Oroqen very well	2	1.67%
As an expert and scholar, I have studied the Oroqen in depth	0	0%
Learned about the Oroqen through, video, text books, etc.	5	4.17%
Have been to the local area to experience the Oroqen culture	2	1.67%

To sum up, the difficulties faced by the Oroqen reflect the country's eagerness to move towards modernization. Although helping ethnic minorities adapt into modern society is the goal of development policies, there is a lack of deep understanding of their cultural traditions. The "one-mode-fits-all" policy makes it challenging for the Oroqen to quickly adapt to the new way of life. As a marginal group with only about 8000 people, the Oroqen are forced to abandon their ancient way of life within decades, and progressively lose their national culture, religious beliefs and national language in the process of modernization. They were carried along by the social change and the flow of the age and became sacrifice of the times.

3. Measures to protect Oroqen traditional culture

3.1. Economic Policy

In terms of economy, the state has provided numerous economic programs to aid in the Oroqen people's economic development. For instance, paying maternity benefits, offering pregnant women free health care, helping Oroqen students pay for full-time college, etc. The government also provides guarantee for the living and education of Oroqen people, such as allocating housing for Oroqen people with rural registration, providing them with double-income insurance and free medical care. For Oroqen children, the nine-year obligatory education is free, and in addition to bonus points on the entrance exam, there is also a subsidy of 5,000 Yuan per academic year. After the implementation of such policies, Oroqen people have been guaranteed from birth to death, which not only encourages the growth of their population, but also reduces their living and financial strains.

In addition to providing direct assistance, the government should motivate people to reduce their reliance on government handouts and increase their independence. In light of the fact that their commodity economy has been struggling, the government should show more respect for the distinctive hunting customs of the Oroqen people and help them in finding additional economic models that work for them. Although hunting and gathering are typically considered to be archaic forms of production, for Oroqen people, they have acquired a special understanding and survival concept of hunting, which should not be easily abandoned.

Hunting, as a national culture, can be merged with contemporary business concepts to join the market as handcrafted and natural meat products. At the same time, fur products can be processed twice and turned into apparel, purses, accessories, furniture, and other products for retail sales. In terms of market expansion, the government should introduce talents in marketing and sales to advertise local goods to both domestic and international markets. Additionally, it is feasible to employ the national myth and religious culture of Oroqen in conjunction with the products and use them as the design concept to create a distinctive brand culture.

3.2. Ethnic crafts

The roe deer cap of Oroqen is a symbol of their culture. In the cold northeast China, the wise Oroqen people use the head of roe deer to make hats. They remove the flesh and bones, leaving only the head’s hair, horns, ears, nose and mouth of the head. After being carefully sewed, the result is identical to a roe deer's head. The roe deer cap is the traditional craft legacy of Oroqen people, they are finely made and have high artistic value. Nowadays, Oroqen people have put down their hunting guns and settled down, but the method for making the roe deer cap is constantly evolving.

In addition to being a tourist souvenir and handicraft, it can also be integrated into people's daily life. The roe deer's thick, silky fur is excellent in keeping warm in winter. Considering the convenience needs of people's daily lives, the camouflage function of the cap can be removed, like the horns on it, retaining the warmth and decorative function to meet people's daily clothing demands.

3.3. Food sales

Besides just making hats, the remaining parts of roe deer are treated in numerous ways. The meat from the roe deer is cut into long strips, marinated, exposed to the sun, and then hung under the house rafters. The meat strips are dried out by time, so that even in the cold winter, there is no need to worry about running out of meat.

In winter, Oroqen people go into the mountains to cut the crushes and place them in the shade while they wait for the spring's natural fungus. The output cycle of the fungus is lengthy, and the yield is small, which only sufficient for self-sufficiency. In 1990, Oroqen introduced the method of edible mushroom cultivation and finally cultivated high quality strains. Irrigated by groundwater, Oroqen's black fungus cultivation environment is excellent and pollution-free, which are highly desired by many people.

In the information age, online shopping has become the most popular way. To market their regional foods, Oroqen can use the direct and quick network to avoid dealers or intermediaries. The pickled meat and black fungus can be sold to customers directly across the nation.

3.4. Develop tourism

As more individuals become aware of Oroqen through the network, the tourism progressively comes into focus. Visitors can rent Oroqen traditional costumes, get in touch with nature, and buy moss to feed the elk. In Hlunbuir, Aoluguya Tribe Scenic Area, there are more than 1000 deer in the village despite just 200 Oroqen residents. The first Oroqen theme hotel, called Aoluguya, has also been built in Harbin.

Tourism industry has gradually become an important part of Oroqen cultural heritage. More travelers have been drawn to the area as a result of the photographs and videos, which has further promoted the development of the Oroqen tourism industry.

3.5. Cultural propaganda

In terms of film and television, a filmmaker Sun Zengtian captured the folklore documentary "The Last Mountain God" in 1992. It details the transition of Meng Jinfu's family from living in harmony with nature to settling down from the mountain. The documentary shows us the fading ethnic culture under the change of times.

Since 2003, independent documentary filmmaker Gu Tao went deep into The Great Khingan and spent ten years making three documentaries about the Oroqen people—— "Aoluguya, Aoluguya", "Hugo's Holiday" and "The Last Moose of Aoluguya". Among them, "The Last Moose of Aoluguya" won the documentary award in Busan International Film Festival. These three documentaries have brought many visitors to Oroqen tribe and bringing them to the public eye. 2011, the documentary "The Heart of the Shaman" made by Gu Tao was published, which recorded the last shaman, Guan Kouni, of the Oroqen tribe. The documentary discusses whether this land still allows the existence of gods under the sway of modern civilization and national policies. It also makes us reflect on the loss of modern people's reverence for nature.

In terms of literature, "The Last Quarter of the Moon" by Chi Zijian tells a national epic of the Oroqen people. The novel narrates a story in the mouth of the last chief's wife of Oroqen tribe, which is set deep inside The Great Khingan. It captures the little, helpless people who are affected by contemporary civilization and shows the isolation that is unique to Oroqen.

The primary goal of this cultural propaganda, in addition to drawing more attention to Oroqen, is to dispel public misconceptions regarding Oroqen's backwardness and primitivism. From the perspective of social psychology, although Oroqen people have been accepted by contemporary society, their long-standing identity as a marginalized ethnic group still have an indelible impact on their national temperament. Cultural propaganda should focus on guiding the public to eliminate prejudice and help the ethnic consciousness of Oroqen people to change from the depressing perspective of victims to self-confidence and joy. So that they will no longer be bothered by their minority identity and better integrate into modern life.

4. Conclusion

The Oroqen people are advancing in economic growth and integrating into modern society. However, they are still facing many problems. For instance, the number of young individuals ready to carry on their culture is declining, which causes the ethnic culture and religious beliefs to slowly disappear. Without economic backing and cultural transmission, they will soon be lost to history, much like the Qiang flute and shell carving.

This paper provides an overview of Oroqen's traditional culture, followed by noting the challenges that face its preservation and offering potential answers. It is envisaged that by combining Oroqen's rich cultural assets with contemporary technology and economic model, it will be possible to grow the economy and served as a reference for solving the traditional culture preservation issues of ethnic minorities.

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