

The Spiritual Journey of Chinese Americans Viewed from the Cultural Connotation of The Joy Luck Club

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Abstract: Chinese-American writers who live in both Chinese and American cultures are the most sensitive to cultural conflict and integration. Amy Tan is one of those writers who probe deeply into the relationship between the Chinese and American cultures. *The Joy Luck Club*, a novel that tells stories of four Chinese mothers and their American-born daughters, has caused a great sensation inside and outside the United States and made Tan a famous writer. From the perspective of intercultural communication, Cultural conflicts between four couples of mother and daughter, between husbands and wives arising from the difference in cultural background are looked into from the angles of Chinese obedience to parents and American independence and democracy, Chinese women's submissiveness and American women's independence, Chinese family's honor and American individual achievement, Chinese high-context culture and American low-context culture, Chinese superstition and American science. The causes of the conflicts are also discussed in the aspects of Chinese culture and American culture. Chinese mothers are deeply influenced by the concept of "Three Obedience and Four Virtues", "Resign oneself to Adversity", Etc. However, American daughters are born in the culture that emphasizes "Individualism, Equality, Independence and Freedom." In this thesis, it is also put forward that despite the conflicts, mutual compatibility of two cultures is unavoidable and an inescapable tendency, which reflects the development from the clash to the coexistence of the two cultures in the context of globalization.

Keywords: The Joy Luck Club; Cultural Conflict; Cultural Integration.

1. Introduction

The Joy Luck Club is a Chinese American female writer Amy Tan's novel. It is the name of the party that immigrant American mothers take to play mahjong. By describing the generation gap and the barriers between the mother and the daughter, the author reflects the collision and compatibility of the Chinese mother culture and the heterogeneous culture, and the difficult search for the self-cultural identity of the two cultures in the collision.

The novel tells the story of four Chinese women immigrating to San Francisco in the 1950s. The four Chinese immigrants from the United States meet each other by playing mahjong and establishes a club "Happiness Club" together with their expectations for a better life. The four Chinese women each have a daughter. As Chinese mothers, they have difficulties in communicating with American-born daughters and daughters' love friends. Obviously, this communication barrier comes from the different cultural backgrounds of mother and daughter. Mothers grows up in the traditional high-context culture of China, and their daughters grows up in the invasion of American low-context culture.

The story shows the contradictions and confusion faced by two generations of women in the marginal zone. The daughters of the four mothers receives a new style of education and a life style from an early age. There seems to be a gap between mother and daughter that cannot be communicated and a contradiction that is difficult to resolve. However, the blood and love between the mother and the daughter prompts the two sides to work hard to resolve the contradictions between them. Eventually they understand and accepts each other.

Since the 1860s, the United States has been described as a "paradise" that combines freedom, democracy, and richness. In the first half of the 20th century, the Chinese who

immigrants to the United States in the old generation has to deliberately integrate into the strong culture of the United States in order to adapt to the new environment, but they are still attached to the weak Chinese culture. Their children yearn to become a true member of American society, eager to fully integrate into the strong culture of the United States. The immigrant writer Amy Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club* reflects the subtle attitudes and perceptions of Chinese people. The research on cultural conflict between the east and west as well as the novel *The Joy Luck Club* at home and abroad takes on variability. However, they do not specially combine intercultural communication theories with literary texts. Besides, although they have predicted that integration or fusion of the western culture and eastern culture is the world's developing tendency by putting it in the background of globalization, they do not illustrate how this kind of cultural conflict between the west and east actually exist in literary texts, why this conflict happen in the texts or the reality and then fundamentally find out specific solutions to solving or relieving this conflict. And these are what this paper will further discuss and undertake.

From the perspective of intercultural communication, the cultural conflict between Chinese and Americans in *The Joy Luck Club* is discussed in this thesis. Cultural conflicts between four couples of mother and daughter, between husbands and wives arising from the difference in cultural background are looked into from the angles of Chinese obedience to parents and American independence and democracy, Chinese women's submissiveness and American women's independence, Chinese family's honor and American individual achievement, Chinese high-context culture and American low-context culture, Chinese superstition and American science. The causes of the conflicts are also discussed in the aspects of Chinese culture and American culture. Chinese mothers are deeply influenced by

the concept of "Three Obedience and Four Virtues", "Resign oneself to Adversity", etc. However, American daughters are born in the culture that emphasizes "Individualism, Equality, Independence and Freedom." In this thesis, it is also put forward that despite the conflicts, mutual compatibility of two cultures is unavoidable and an inescapable tendency, which reflects the development from the clash to the coexistence of the two cultures in the context of globalization.

2. Chinese-American Writer Amy Tan and The Joy Luck Club

2.1. Background of Chinese-American Writer Amy Tan

Since the twentieth seventies and eighties, Chinese American literature has made staggering progress. The Chinese American writers who are headed by Maxine Hong Kingston have pushed it to a peak. Because Chinese American literature has been developed among two kinds of culture of China and America all the time, "culture identity" becomes the key word in its research. In our country the research lay emphasis on it, but the research concentrates on more specific writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston, and it has no assurance of the whole on development and characteristic of Chinese American literature. American Chinese are all in the state of sinking into oblivion, and its identity which is entrusted to by white man's major culture, is full of discrimination against, hostility and prejudice. So Chinese American literature faces the tasks of resisting finalizing the design prejudice, and reorienting the American Chinese culture identity since producing.

As a Chinese-American writer, Amy Tan lives in the United States from a young age and accepts the mainstream cultural education in the United States. This gives her a sense of psychological superiority. She always looks at Chinese traditional culture in a down-to-head manner and has many misunderstandings about Chinese traditional culture. At the same time, Amy Tan also shows the excellent side of Chinese traditional culture and spread it to Western society.

Many of Amy Tan's novels are autobiographical and are good at describing the subtle emotions between mother and daughter. They are often dominated by Chinese-born women in the United States. These Chinese women not only have to face the issue of ethnic identity, but also face the gap in cultural identity with their parents. These are inseparable from the growth environment of Amy Tan.

The Chinese image in Amy Tan's novels is a typical image in Chinese literature. The formation of this Chinese image has profound social and cultural reasons. Her mother has told her many stories about China. Amy Tan's understanding of China is also come from Mothers, families and Chinese communities, which will inevitably bias her understanding of Chinese society.

Amy Tan is the second generation of Chinese immigrants. Although she has the blood of Chinese people, she is deeply influenced by the mainstream American culture. It can be said that Amy Tan is a typical "banana man", which makes Amy Tan often uses Americans ways and value standards to look at China. The perception of the Chinese in the mainstream American society will inevitably affect Amy Tan's point of view. When Amy Tan looks at China with American psychology, she will misunderstand China. At the same time, as a minority in the United States, Amy Tan is deeply dissatisfied with the racial discrimination in the United States.

She often shapes China as a fantasy of ancient cultures or Utopia, in order to gain recognition from the mainstream American society. Amy Tan is integrating Chinese imagery according to her own needs and shaping China's image.

Amy Tan's novel reproduces the image of China with its unique cultural identity and survival experience. Although this Chinese image has many distortions, it satisfies the psychological expectations of Westerners and promotes the exchange and communication between Chinese and American cultures.

Amy Tan's work *The Joy Luck Club* more reveals the differences and conflicts between Chinese and American heterogeneous cultures, it is not satisfied with the shackles of Chinese culture and simply caters to the mainstream American society, but it strives to sound the marginal and ethnic culture and explore the identity of Chinese-Americans.

Amy Tan reveals the conflict between Chinese and American cultures from the perspective of literature. The theme of the works also reflects that the writer is in the gap between two cultures, or seeks self in the conflict through reconciliation or rebellion, and strives to build the identity of self-culture. Complete the new construction of the connotation of the "relationship" motif.

2.2. The Clue of The Joy Luck Club

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan structures four pairs of mother-daughter relationships in the four-player mahjong club. Suyuan Wu and her daughter June, Lindo and her daughter Waverly, Yingying and her daughter Lena, and Anmei Xu and her daughter Rose. All mothers immigrated to American from Chinese in late 1940s. And all the mothers hoped their daughters could live happily and were obedient as they hope, but they were disappointed because many kinds of conflicts took place between them.

Mother Suyuan Wu and her daughter June

Suyuan Wu left China to America during the Second World War, her husband severed as an offer in Chongqing. In America, she built *The Joy Luck Club* with her three friends to solve the difficulties in life. When the day of the Japanese invasion, she left and abandoned her twin baby helplessly. Later she married and gave birth to a daughter June. During June's childhood, her mother had tried to make her a prodigy so as to amaze the world. At the end of the novel, June visited China and saw the twin sisters whom her mother had abandoned before.

Mother Lindo and her daughter Waverly

Lindo was a strong-willed woman. When she was only twelve, she was forced to married with a young child. Her cruel mother-in-law forced her to delivered a grandson. In order to escaped the painful situation, Lindo made a clever plan and escaped the terrible marriage, then she emigrated to American and married a Chinese-American man. And had a daughter Waverly. But Waverly was an independent girl who was once a gifted chess champion, but quit after finding her mother was using her to show off.

Mother Yingying and her daughter Lena

Yingying was brought in a wealthy and conservative family and she married an abusive man and kilt her son by accident. Then she married an American man and had a daughter Lena. Lena's husband was her boss and he insisted that all household expenses should be divided equally. Yingying told her story when she knew it and hoped daughter to break free from the same trap.

Mother Anmei and her daughter Rose

Anmei was raised by her grandparents after her windowed mother humiliated the family by being raped by a wealthy man. Anmei's mother committed suicide herself then Anmei went to America and married, and had a daughter Rose. Rose married an American doctor, and decided to divorce. Anmei told her story to daughter and Rose was able to voice out and won the marriage.

3. Cultural Connotation and Cultural Conflicts in The Joy Luck Club

3.1. Research on High Context Culture and Low Context Culture

Hall's book *"Silent Language"* pointed out the importance of culture in human society. And then he put forward an effective way to study cultural differences and similarities from the perspective of communication and perception in 1976. It was quite obvious that culture has contextuality, according to the context of information. And according to the degree of expression, he divided culture into high context and low context, and proposed two communicative types: high-context communication and low-context communication. Different cultures had different levels of dependence for the environment, and the communication of high context was "the vast majority of information internalized in an individual, rarely presented in being edited and the code was clearly transmitted in the message. On the contrary, Low contextual communication was "a lot of information was contained in a clear code."

Directly explicit and indirect implicit expression.

Hall believes that low-context coding information is mainly reflected in speech, and communication information has little dependence on context. Everything needs to be expressed through accurate speech; while high-context coding information is highly dependent on context, and many meanings are included in the context.

Focus on the speaker or the listener.

High context culture is often centered on the listener. The speaker is reliant on others and pays more attention to the environment. The information often be simplified and shortened, rather than detailed. Listener needs to guess and further expand and improve the obtained information. The real meaning has been perceived, not has been woven with language, that is, the meaning "can be understood but cannot be explained."

Relatively speaking, low-context culture is often centered on the transmitter, emphasizing the transmitter how to form a better message, improve the credibility of the source, and improve the delivery skills. For example, when a low-context member using a direct communication method to ask someone else when closing the door, he may say: "The door is open"; and using indirect communication method the members of high context may say: "It's a bit cold today."

The extent of self-disclosure

Other studies have also shown that in "self-disclosure", high-low context cultural members who tell others about the process of knowing the information also shows the difference. Due to the individualistic characteristics of Americans, they are more inclined for self-disclosure, and the Orientals, especially the Chinese, in order to save face, less self-disclosure. In terms of language aggression and

eloquence, Americans also perform more powerful than the Chinese.

High-context culture and low-context culture differences lead to conflicts in interpersonal communication

As a part of the cultural, language has been developed and used for the great influence of deep culture. Each culture has its own unique style, norms, and behavioral patterns, value systems, social customs, moral values, psychological orientation, and thinking characteristics, etc. It is these that determine the use of language. The relationship demonstrates obviously in the communicative activities of people with different cultural backgrounds.

3.2. Research on the Cultural Dimension of Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism is a political, ethical, and social philosophy that emphasizes individual freedom, personal interests, and self-discipline. In essence, it is a world view that looks at the world from the perspective of the individual, the world as the center, and the social and interpersonal relationship. This theory advocates that the individual is the purpose itself, and the society is only a means to achieve personal goals; all individuals are morally equal. The same French as individualism, derived from the Latin *individuum*, meaning "individual", "indivisible things." It was first used by the French sociologist Tocqueville and described as a modest self-interest. Individualism arises with the emergence of private ownership of the means of production, and develops with the development of private ownership: the capitalist system is the last and most complete social form of private ownership of the means of production, and individualism has reached its peak in the bourgeoisie. The thinkers of the modern bourgeois revolution turned the individualism into an eternal human nature and made it the basic content of morality and the main criterion for judging good and evil, as an ideological weapon against feudal morality and religious asceticism. Individualism has a wide meaning: as a value system, it advocates that all values are individual-centered, and that individuals themselves have the highest value: as a general attitude toward political, economic, social, and religious behavior, it includes a high degree of personal evaluation. Self-confidence, personal and personal respect, respect for authority and control over individuals.

The interpretation of "individualism" in the *Concise Britannic Encyclopedia* is as follows: "A political and social philosophy that attaches great importance to individual liberty and emphasizes self-discipline, self-control, individuals or self-independent individuals. A philosophy in which individualism encompasses a system of values, a theory of humanity, a general attitude toward certain political, economic, social, and religious behaviors" (qtd in *Concise Britannic Encyclopedia*, 2008).

According to this understanding, individualism, as an individual's attitude, inclination and belief in participating in social life, has its inevitability of historical performance. In other words, in the process of civilization in western society, individualism as a way of life, life and world view has the meaning of holistic and universal, and constitutes the basic way and state of existence that Westerners rely on to grasp the relationship between man and the world. Specifically, the penetration of individualism in all aspects of western social life can be roughly summarized as philosophical humanism, political democracy, economic liberalism, and cultural self-

awareness that requires individual independence.

The concept of collectivism was explicitly put forward by Stalin in July 1934 in a conversation with the British writer Wells ("*Dialogue with the British writer Herbert George Wells*"). He said: "Collectivism and socialism do not deny personal interests, but organically combine individual interests with collective interests...". In his conversation, he proposed that "there is no and irreconcilable opposition between individual and collective, personal interests and collective interests. There should be no such opposition, because collectivism and socialism do not deny personal interests. It is to combine personal interests with collective interests. Socialism cannot ignore personal interests. Only a socialist society can best satisfy this personal interest. In addition, the socialist society is the only reliable guarantee for protecting personal interests "(qtd in *Dialogue with the British writer Herbert George Wells, 1934*).

Collectivism is a philosophical, political, religious, economic, or social perspective that emphasizes the interdependence of each individual. Collectivism is a basic cultural element, anti-individualism in human nature (the same high-context culture has a reverse low-context culture), and in some cases emphasizes the prioritization and cohesion of organizational goals for individual goals. The importance of social groups (such as a "group", defined in a specific context). Collectivists usually focus on the community, society or country. It is used as an element throughout history in many different types of government and political, economic, and educational philosophies. In practice, all human societies contain elements of individualism and collectivism. Collectivism can be divided into horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism. Horizontal collectivism emphasizes collective decision-making between relatively equal individuals and is therefore usually based on decentralization. Vertical collectivism is based on the hierarchical structure of power and the consistency of moral culture, and is therefore based on the concentration of power. A cooperative enterprise is an example of horizontal collectivism, while a military hierarchy is an example of vertical collectivism.

3.3. Cultural Conflicts in The Joy Luck Club

The cultural conflict between Chinese and Americans in *The Joy Luck Club* is discussed in this thesis. Cultural conflicts between four couples of mother and daughter, between husbands and wives arising from the difference in cultural background are looked into from the angles of Chinese obedience to parents and American independence and democracy, Chinese women's submissiveness and American women's independence, Chinese family's honor and American individual achievement, Chinese high-context culture and American low-context culture, Chinese superstition and American science. Under the surface of these conflicts, Amy Tan shows a series of difference between the Chinese culture and the American culture.

3.3.1. Conflicts between Chinese Obedience to Parents and American Independence and Democracy

The American way of family education is based on democratic equality, in other words, parents respect the opinions of the children, value the children's personality, and give them enough self sovereignty and private space. Their purpose is to foster the independence of the child, correspondingly this relaxed and tolerant atmosphere makes children's growth process relatively easy. Because they have

a lot of autonomy, they can maximize their own potential, to stimulate the desire of their struggle. On the contrary, Chinese families have been for thousands of years. Pursuing the principle of "seeking a child into a dragon" and "looking a woman into a phoenix", everything is for children, Chinese parents rarely care about their children's thoughts and abilities and see them as their future.

The difference between Chinese and Western educational concepts directly affects the relationship between mother and daughter, American daughters hope that mothers can truly achieve democracy and equality, and they hope that parents will give enough space and free, don't want to grow according to the route parents set for themselves. Correspondingly, Chinese mothers always pursue the policy of "looking a woman into a phoenix" and impose the good things that they think good on their children, daughters will not be allowed to give their own opinions, they should be steady and proper throughout their life.

Wu Suyuan hopes that her daughter June will be able to become China's Xiulan Dengboer. In order to let her daughter study the piano, she is willing to work as a cleaner for the retired piano teacher in the apartment. In the eyes of the mother, as long as it is good for the child, it must be good, no matter how hard it is. It's worth to be tired. The meaning and value of the mother's existence is to make her daughter healthily grow up. This spirit of selfless dedication is extremely common in Chinese education. But daughters often feel suffocated, they can't understand the mother's good intentions, they only will be stiff with mother. June revolts with her mother when she is practicing the piano, and she does not want to be the kind of daughter that her mother want her to be.

You want to be someone that I'm not! I sobbed. I will never be the kind of daughter you want me to be.

Only two kinds of daughters. Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind! Only one kind of daughter can live in this house. Obedient daughter (Amy Tan, 1989: 153).

And it is the only rebellion of June to revolt her mother. To June, independence and democracy are the basic rights, and the values of her mothers are just something ridiculous. So she can not imagine obedience to parents is a must for her. In the following years, she has tried to free from the restrictions established by her mother.

Gong Linda's love for her daughter is reflected in her wiping trophy and repeatedly drilling into her daughter. As a mother, when she sees her daughter take back the trophy, she must be very proud. But the Chinese characteristic is that it does not directly praise the child, but instead she will give the child more requirements, she hopes her daughter will take it to the next level. It is the expectation and concern for the future of the children. Therefore, Gong Linda tries to cover up the inner excitement and joy, she hopes that her daughter has a big progress and will do better next time.

Growing up in the United States, who is influenced by American culture, Waverly does not think so. Her concern is whether she can win this game without considering whether it is wonderful or not. She does not count on how much she has improved compared to the past, she just meets the current result. Therefore Waverly is very impatient with her mother's teachings and methods of education. This kind of disapprobation finally breaks out after the long-term accumulation.

... Every Saturday, in the days when I have no competition, I have to accompany with my mother to the market. At this

time, Mom will happily walk with me, almost in and out of each store, buy a big stacking things, and then without losing the opportunity, proudly introduce to anyone who glances at her : "This is Waverly Gong, my daughter."When I stepped out of a shop, I whispered to her: "Mom, you are just like advertising"(Amy Tan, 1989:99).

Like all other Americans,the second generation of Chinese American believes in independence,freedom, democracy and equality.When deciding their own marriage, they emphasize themselves independent will, and it is difficult to endure the outside world (even parents' s interference).In the novel, when Linda discovered that Waverly's American boyfriend was an irresponsible person, she insisted that her daughter should break up with him.However, Waverley did not listen to her mother's persuasion,but also decided to go with the man.In addition, Waverley asked her mother to respect her private life.Obviously,Waverley's style is a typical American characteristics.

3.3.2. Conflicts between Chinese Women's Submissiveness and American Women's Independence

In *The Joy Luck Club* mothers have experienced unfortunate marriage in China. Marriage forces them to leave their homes and flee to the United States and thus on the problem about the marriage of the daughters, they are actively intervening for the sake of not letting the tragedy happen on the daughters.This is a manifestation of their love for their daughters.But their idea is in conflict with the thoughts of the daughters.

In the traditional Chinese marriage model, the husband is the head of the family and is in an absolute dominant position in marriage.The wife can only depend on her husband and does not have sufficient status.In the division of family labor, the husband is responsible for making money to support the family,and the wife is responsible for the housework,forming a clear pattern of "male outside, female inside". Even after a substantial improvement in economic conditions, many wives are still willing to hide behind her husband and silently do contributions for the family. In contrast,both men and women are extremely strong in the Western marriage model. Equality of consciousness,both sides must bear family responsibilities equally,in terms of status and personality equal and freedom.

As in traditional Chinese society, wife is subordinate to husband.Just as revealed in *The Joy Luck Club*,the mother Lindo tries to be an obedient wife.

I learn to be an obedient wife.I learn to cook so well...I could sew small stitches...Can you see how the Huangs almost washed their thinking into my skin?I came to think of Tyan-hu(her husband)as a god, someone whose opinions were worth much more than my own life. I came to think of Huang Taitai as my real mother, someone I wanted to please, someone I should follow and obey without question (Amy Tan,1989:50).

While the daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* are brought in an elite education. However ,they are also influenced by the traditional Chinese culture.In the love story of Rose,we can see the Chinese obedience that lies in her subconsciousness.

With imagined tragedy hovering over us,we become inseparable, two halves creating the whole: yin and yang.I was victim to his hero.I was always in danger and he was always rescuing me. I would fall and he would lift me up... The emotional effect of saving and being saved was addicting to both of us.And that, as much as anything we ever did in Ted,was how we made love to each other: conjoined where

my weakness needed protection(Amy Tan,1989:125).

Rose has excellent academic performance, charming appearance, independent self-confidence, so her partner's value is very high when she first meets Ted. Even though Ted's parents were obstructed, they quickly entered the marriage. But the old Chinese traditional culture in her bones after marriage gradually becomes apparent. Rose after marriage gradually loses herself, everywhere with her husband as the center, fear of making decisions,too obedient,have no vision, no personality.In this marriage relationship, she becomes more and more self-lost and the value of the two sides in the marriage is unbalanced.The result is Ted's derailment.

At this time her mother An-mei tells her story about her mother, whether in old China or in the United States,the forbearance is not an effective strategy to deal with the problem,you must speak your voice loudly.At the mother's point, she should not escape from the problem and bravely ask the husband.Her resistance is beyond Ted's expectation, and he sees the former self-confident and independent Rose,which makes him regain her happiness.In the process of dealing with the marriage, Rose slowly realizes the mother's wisdom and her own misunderstanding of Chinese culture.She is no longer compromising everywhere.In the event of injustice, she learns to shout like her mother An-mei.She increases her partner's value and saves her husband.

The relationship between Lina and Harold is typical in America.From the beginning of the date,they begin to split the bill.Although Harold's salary is higher than wife,they still often argue for some small accounts.On the surface,the husband and wife are equal,but in fact the husband has disguised oppression to his wife.More importantly, the husband's indifference to his wife is the root of the problem.These little things can't escape the mother's eyes, she sharply awares the irrationality of this marriage, and encourages her daughter to get out of the shadows and have a new choice.

3.3.3. Conflict between Family Honor and Individual Achievement

The contradiction between mother and daughter in the novel is to some extent a collectivist value contradiction with individualistic values. Hofstad defines collectivism and individualism as:"In an individualistic society, interpersonal relationships are loose and everyone consider self and own family;on the contrary, in a collectivist society, people come out life is combined with a strong and cohesive internal group, and this provides lifelong protection to these loyal members"(Hofstad,2010:80-81).Ander Sen and his colleagues also summarize the characteristics of collectivism and individualism: Collectivism emphasizes collective ideas and cooperative consciousness.People must live in harmony and should give the other party enough face;Individualism emphasizes individual power and responsibility, paying attention to privacy, free expression of opinions, innovation, and self-worth(Ander Sen,2009:90-91).

China is a collectivist country, and people pay attention to maintain the relationship between family members and friends. A person's ability often does not just reflect his personal values,but the values of the group. Parents educate children to learn from the perspective of "we",and they should always maintain the collective honor. Mother Wu Suyuan accepts the traditional culture education of collectivism since childhood,and her life values are embodied in the role of the mother.She looks her daughter into a phoenix and hopes that

the child can follow by her own will, and she believes that success in the future is not only herself glory, but also is the glory of parents and families. But if the daughter does something wrong, it will make the whole family feel ashamed. So she asks her daughter to do some intelligent test questions from her own daily newspapers and magazines, in order to change a beautiful piano lesson and hope to cultivate her daughter into a luxurious "Day Goose".

The daughter is educated in American culture at an early age. As an individualist representative in the United States, children have learned to think about problems from the perspective of "I" since childhood. American individual culture has deeply influenced her ideas. She advocates personal struggle, independent consciousness. She doesn't understand everything the mother does for herself. She doesn't want her mother to involve in her own life. In rebellious times she always tries to get rid of the mother.

Waverly has a talent for playing chess since childhood and wins many awards. "Mother likes regarding me as her capital to show off, she always loves to discuss with others when I play chess as if she has designed these tactics. I hate her. The act of keeping all the credit on her account" (Amy Tan, 1989:178). Mother always looks the child's honor as her glory, as growing in the United States, for Waverly, the honor she gets are all her own efforts. This leads to a gap between mother and daughter.

The emotional conflict between mothers in *The Joy Luck Club* demonstrates in the individual relationship: the mothers accept the collectivism from an early age. Their outlook on life and values are not only based on personal achievement, it is more reflected in the expectations of children. Therefore, it is one of the mother's duties and obligations to manage the children and let the children follow her. But children's education in American advocates individual struggle values and pursues equality. This shows the contradictory roots of the four mothers and their children. The contradiction between the values of collectivism and the view of personal value.

3.3.4. Conflict between Chinese High-Context Culture and American Low-Context Culture

The contradiction between the mother and the daughter is largely due to the impossibility of speech. Mother and child can only communicate through lame English, and June once said: "Our mother and daughter have never really understood each other, we just use our own comprehension to understand each other's meaning; and often the information from the mother is passed in the form of reduction while the information from me is passed in the form of addition" (Amy Tan, 1989:25). The reason for this gap is mainly because the two different cultural context.

In a high-context culture, people have more information embodied in the social and cultural environment and context, or internalized in the minds of communicators... The explicit language code loads less information. In low-context communication, great part of the information is done in a clearly coded language, with only a small amount of information implied in the hidden environment. In general, low-context communication methods mainly appear in the culture of individualism, and in the culture of collectivism, the communication mode of high context is in the dominant position. Hall believes that in a high-context culture, people have similar experiences and information channels. When talking, it often does not need too much expression, just gestures and even silence can make the other person understand. In a low context cultural background, people in

the conversation are more straightforward when talking. The mother who is deeply influenced by Chinese culture mother is used to high-context culture while the daughter who grows in the United States is more inclined to low-context culture... Su Yun is a typical representative of Chinese mothers. She is not used to being like the American mother. The performance is so direct, to kiss your child and say "I love you." Chinese mother's love for child is reflected in the action, they always about the child. While daughter June does not understand this kind of "Chinese mother's love", she needs the communication of the heart and the emotional exchange.

Chinese-style modesty is also the product of high-context culture. In order to promote stability and subtlety in interpersonal communication, to be modest as a virtue, it is not easy to praise yourself or achievement of the family. But Americans advocate personal struggles and encourage bluntness. They express own views and be willing to accept praise from others. This kind of "modesty" also gives mother Su Yuan and daughter June a lot of trouble. At a party, Waverly puts the best crab and does not care about the feelings of others. However, June gives a slightly better crab to the mother. Su Yuan says to Waverly: "She (June) is not as capable as you are, it is completely natural." June completely can't understand why mother say herself in front of her friends. She doesn't know the reason. She doesn't know that it is the mother's modest words, mother not really thinks that she is not as good as others, the mother is precisely proud of the traditional Chinese virtues that have been passed down to her daughter. In Su Yuan's eyes, Waverly represents the self-centered American culture, but it is like a "crab".

In addition, Waverly's boyfriend Ricky in *The Joy Luck Club* comes from a low-context culture. When he is invited to dinner with the Waverly's family, his behavior clearly explains the difference between Eastern and Western cultures. Waverly's mother, Zhong Lindong, because of her influence on high-context culture, likes to use implicit expressions. She makes a contrary evaluation of her own dishes because of modesty: "This dish is too insipid, tasteless. It's really hard to swallow." However, this is not what she really wants to express. On the contrary, she wants to be praised by others. Ricky does not realize the true meaning of his girlfriend's mother. He says, "You know, just put some soy sauce." Ricky makes the mistake mainly because he does not understand the Chinese expression.

3.3.5. Conflict between Superstition and Science

"Yin and Yang Five Elements" is one of the representatives of Chinese ancient culture. Yin and Yang are the two basic properties in the universal system, the "five elements" (gold, wood, water, fire, earth) exist among them.

The mother of *The Joy Luck Club* have influenced by Chinese traditional culture since childhood, they believe the five elements are closely related to the character's fate. For example, if the "fire" is too prosperous, it will lead to temper, like Shuyuan's husband; "water" is too much, and it will lead to a expensive interests, the result is nothing doing well; "wood" is too easy to bend, such people is soft, and ignorant, like Aunt Anmei and daughter Rose. Rose has no will of her own, her American husband decides things when her husband is frustrated and asks her to make a plan, she is indecisive, this is misunderstood by her husband and eventually lead to the crises in marriage. And the mother thinks that all is doomed, because Ross is born to be lacking wood.

Suyuan often explain person's character through the five

elements. As her daughter June relates:

Too much fire and you had a bad temper. That was my father, whom my mother always criticized for his cigarette habit and who always shouted back that she should keep her thoughts to her self... Too liter wood and you bent too quickly to listen to other's ideas, unable to stand on your own. This was like my auntie An-mei... Too much water and you flowed in too many directions (Amy Tan, 1989:18).

Immigrant mothers, after arriving in the United States, still believe in Feng Shui, Mother Yingying moves to a new home, a house which built on a hillside.

She is dissatisfied and believed that:

The house is built on a steep hillside, and the bad wind blows from the top of the mountain. Your strength is blowing down the mountain. The aisle in the room is as narrow as the neck. It was like being stuck, the kitchen was facing the toilet, and good luck was rushing. I read a bad sign to the whole room... This house will fall sooner or later (Amy Tan, 1989:135).

Later daughter Lina's marriage breaks down, which makes her feel that there is a problem with the feng shui of her residence. She thinks that "qi" is also very important, so she does everything possible to change the living environment: the mirror that is originally hung to the front door, because "qi" comes in from the front door and will be folded back by the mirror opposite; so she adjusts the direction of the corners of the sofa, chair, and table to find the balance of Feng Shui. This practice of the mother is obviously not understood with the Western science advocated by her daughter. Lina is puzzled by this, she can't understand the relationship between the locations of the buildings and happiness, so the practice is treated as superstition.

4. Three Causes of Cultural Conflict

4.1. Chinese Culture Experienced by The Joy Luck Club Mothers

From the above chapter we can see that the conflicts between mothers and daughters are obvious. Everything has its exact reasons behind it. It is believed that mother should do the responsibilities for these conflicts because they always take Chinese culture as the center, such as the Three Obediences and Four Virtues, Resign Oneself to Adversity, and the mother's ethnic complex.

4.1.1. Three Obediences and Four Virtues

Confucianism is the dominant thought in China from Warring States to the 20th century. Three obediences means that a woman is required to obey her father before marriage, her husband during married time, and her sons in widowhood. The four virtues are fidelity, physical charm, and property in speech and efficiency in needlework. Under these cultural constraints, women should be obedient, and they are not allowed to express their desire but just obey the orders. This point is embodied in *The Joy Luck Club* clearly.

In mother Yingying's childhood, the family goes to the Tai Lake to spend the Mid-Autumn Festival. Yingying asks her Amah who the Moon Lady is when the moon comes out. Amah tells her Moon Lady is Chang-o, but when Yingying continues to ask questions, Amah says: "Haven't I told you that it is wrong to think of your own needs? A girl can never ask, only to listen" (Amy Tan, 1989:68).

Another representative is Anmei and her mother. She sees her mother's painful sufferings from the culture. In traditional Chinese culture, if a woman's husband dies she cannot marry

again, and should keep an obedience to her husband and family. Once Anmei's mother goes to visit the Six Harmonies Pagoda, she meets Wu Tsing and was raped by him. Anmei's mother has no choice but accept and becomes the third wife of Wu. Which makes the breakdown of relationship with her family. At that time if a widow marries again after the death of her husband, it is a great shame for the original family and her husband's family. Because the social moral standards require a woman to keep her fidelity for her husband.

From above we can see that Xu Anmei's mother lives in the era of men are superior to women. At the time, women's status is very low and they are male's accessories. As a woman of that era, rights and freedom are basically deprived. She marries two men, one is a learned person. Once that person is dead, she becomes a widow with a low social status. Even more frightening is that she can't remarry, so she is cast aside by almost everyone. Women of that era have no way out.

4.1.2. Resign Oneself to Adversity

Linda, in *The Joy Luck Club*, before she goes to the United States, her identification is compliant with the traditional sense. Her family is poor, when she is young, the marital marriage with Hong's family is made by the family and the matchmaker. In the face of unknown destiny and marriage, it is impossible to choose, and it can only be attributed to "compliance" and "acceptance". Before married to Hongjia, she can not able to get a little care from her family. Instead, she is treated as a "outsider". In the face of these attitudes of their family members, Gong Linda has to accept it silently, and thinks that it is the right thing. Until she gets married with her husband, she has the first question about herself:

I'm alone at the window, meditating. I can't help asking myself, what is life? For example, the water of the Weihe River... but can I be like the Weihe River. Can it be the same if it changes indefinitely? Even under the red silk scarf, I still understands very well who I am... I will never forget myself. "The symbolic candle of marriage, which is more authoritative than the prohibition of divorce in Catholic Church... This red candle seems to use its candle oil forever, sticking me to my husband and Hong family, there will be no day of relief" (Amy Tan, 1989:46-47).

This confusion is ephemeral and immediately returns into the traditional self-identification of women, she recalls her mother's education before marriage. Although Gong Linda leaves Hong's home and travels to the United States, when Gong Linda looks back on the year, she reviews that the red wax represents the feudal traditional marriage.

Even Yingying who born in a rich family, when she recalls her life in China before she goes to the United States, she still reflects the Chinese women's traditional self-identification. She loses her man's child, only as a silent complaint against the husband's abandon. Then she promises to marry the second husband, St. Clair, but she has always defended her loyalty to Chinese virtues. Her single life ends with the death of her ex-husband.

A letter from Tianjin tells me that my husband is dead... he was killed by a young maid... I think I have forgot him early, but once I got the news of his death, I still feel the pain of my heart... After the pain, I feel an infinite emptiness... I decided immediately to let St. Clair marry me" (Amy Tan, 1989:224).

Her husband's death signs the demise of the original identity, there are no stumbles for the new choice for life.

4.1.3. Mother's Ethnic Complex

For a generation of Chinese female immigrants, the direct

image of the country's complex is the memories in China, the mountains and waters, grass and wood, happiness and sorrows. No matter who they are, the joys and sorrows in China have not prevented them from the endless remembrances for China. And for the second generation of Chinese female immigrants, most of China's impressions come from mother's memories. After adults, the emotional attachment for mother has sublimated into the emotional belonging to the national country. As Amy Tan wrote in the first episode of *The Joy Luck Club*: "To my mother and I would like to commemorate her mother." Through memories, mothers connected American and China, past and now. And the daughters through the mother and mother's imagery, memories to find the roots, to find and determine the self, and to become the continuation of the mothers. The image of the mother is sublimated into the "homeland" and "attribution" in the cultural imagery. Chinese female immigrants with missing identity are looking forward to their common emotional attribution.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, many symbols that represent traditional Chinese culture are implanted such as mahjong, red candle, cheongsam and Chinese traditional Feng Shui thoughts, eating habits, festival customs, etiquette etc. In the western context, the female immigrants used traditional Chinese culture and people to tell the story of China and they struggled to find the ethnic spirit, which expressed the Chinese nostalgia.

Mahjong is a "specialty" of Chinese traditional culture. In *The Joy Luck Club* mother's attitude towards Chinese Mahjong illustrates the ethnic complex. Wu Suyuan builds the club as a symbol for the nostalgia of China. After her death, her daughter June is invited to play mahjong. When Auntie Lin asks whether June has played mahjong, she tells her she has played Jewish mahjong. Then Lin says in disgusted tones that it is not the same thing with Chinese mahjong, which makes June thought of her mother's attitude towards Jewish mahjong. Once she asks her mother what the difference between Chinese and Jewish mahjong was, the mother says it is completely different.

Jewish mahjong, they watch only for their own tile, play only with their eyes. Chinese mahjong, you must play using your head, very tricky. You must watch what everybody else throws away and keep that in your head as well. And if nobody plays well, then the game becomes like Jewish mahjong. Why play? There's no strategy. You're just watching people make mistakes (Amy Tan, 1989:22).

This shows the mother's pride of Chinese traditional culture. And she is proud of Chinese people's wisdom. Although Chinese mahjong and Jewish mahjong are quite different, the more different is the mothers' attitudes towards race and ethnic complex.

In the end of *The Joy Luck Club*, June visits China when she sees the twin sisters who have been separated for many years.

I had seen my mother, two mothers, waving to me, holding my photo in my hand. I finally saw the part of Chinese blood that belonged to me. This is my home, the gene that melted in my blood, the gene of China. After so many years, my blood started to boil. We all liked mothers: the same kind of eyebrows, the same lips, I saw my mother, looking at her in surprise, her dream begins to become a reality" (Amy Tan, 1989:255-256).

At this time, the mother's image overlaps with the homeland. Which reflects Chinese female immigrants' emotional attachment to the motherland. As Yu Guangzhong

says: "You can't really understand China until one day you are no longer in China". For the majority of Chinese women when they look back at the motherland on the other side of the ocean, they really understand China. In their minds, they really feel the nostalgia for China and the mother's attachment have been sublimated into a homesickness that is difficult to be separated from, and the country's complex, let them although away from homeland they still keep thinking and have their own hearts.

4.2. American Culture Experienced by The Joy Luck Club Daughters

America is a typical immigrant country with lots of immigrants from all over the world. But before America becomes a population melting pot, it is mainly made up by European whites and the white's culture dominates the cultural stream. Therefore, their race's superiority comes into being gradually.

The conflicts between different races and cultures take place frequently. There is no doubt that the conflicts between the mothers and daughters are caused by the different cultural center. Firstly, the mothers are proud of the Chinese culture while the daughters insist on their American values. Secondly, the government's policies deepens the daughters' prejudice to mothers and Chinese culture.

4.2.1. Individualism

Individualism first appeared in French in the 19th century. It has different annotations in different modern dictionaries. In *the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, it is defined as "the belief that the rights and freedom of individual people are the most important rights in the society; the behavior or attitude of someone who does things in their own way without being influenced by other people." In the English language dictionary it is defined as "belief in the importance of the individual and the virtue of self-reliance and personality and independence."

The prevalence of individualism in the United States has a profound historical foundation. The first source of individualism is the Jewish-Christian tradition, especially the way in which tradition eventually merges into modern Protestantism. Judaism and Christianity regard God as an omnipotent and detached legislator, whose responsibility to God exceeds that of all social authorities, and God's commandment is a universal standard. The conscience movement of Christianity gives individualism a positive connotation. Later Protestant and Enlightenment movements are both sources of support for individualism.

The second source of individualism in the United States is the power-based political theory deeply rooted in the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution of the United States*. On July 4, 1776, Jefferson declared in the *Declaration of Independence* that "all men are created equal", and the United States has devoted itself to such a theory since then. Everyone is equal, he regards man as a single person with independent thought and emphasizes his individuality, thus individualism has political basis. It is also a distinct feature of the United States of America that power is in the hands of the majority.

The daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* are brought up in America, they are influenced by the American cultural individualism. Therefore, when June's mother Wu Suyuan asks her to be a Chinese Shirley Temple she refuses. She becomes tired of the given tests and piano lessons, so she thinks ways to resist her mother so that her mother gives up

the plan. She believes that she is herself and dislikes to do things under other's force. So she resists against her mother strongly. Another daughter Waverly also fights for herself. When her mother shows off, she is very angry because that her mother regards her as a capital to show off. She attributes her success as a successful chess champion to her own efforts, rather than her mother.

4.2.2. Equality. Independence. Freedom

Equality, independence and freedom are the typical American values since the American Independence War. These values can be shown in *the Declaration of Independence*:

That these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, Free and Independent States,...All men are created equal; they are endowed by Creator with certain unalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Equality is also an important characteristic of American values, which is stressed that everyone is equal and has the common rights.

Independence and freedom are also the dominant characteristics of American values. Since the American Independent War, people have looked forward to breaking away from the control of the colonies. In the process of the American Independent War they drafted *the Declaration of Independence* and announced their desire of freedom and independence. These spirits inherit by one generation to another.

American daughters are growing up under these values, so they are contradictory to her immigrant mothers. Therefore, there is no doubt that conflicts are unavoidable in their communication. For example, when Wu Suyuan plans everything for her daughter June, she meets a lot of problems. Because the mother brings up daughter in the form of Chinese traditional ways but she ignores the fact that her daughter is educated in the American style. June receives the American education, so it's natural that she likes the equal style and hopes to be treated as equally.

4.2.3. Race Prejudice and Government's Policies

For a long time, the white mainstream society in the United States has maintained its hegemonic domination, and it tries every means to exclude Chinese-Americans. The weak immigrants have been in a silent state. Chinese women are typical representatives of the silent group, under the dual oppression of patriarchal system and Western mainstream culture, the majority of Chinese women are in a marginalized environment. Although the daughters are born in the United States, they are flowing in Chinese blood. As descendants of Chinese immigrants, on the one hand they want to get rid of the shackles of Chinese traditional culture, on the other hand, they are Chinese daughters which dooms that they cannot integrate into the American mainstream society. Although they are born in the United States, they receive American education from an early age. They still cannot be accepted by the American society.

Four Chinese daughters in *The Joy Luck Club* are June, Waverly, Luna, Rose. Except June, others marry to a white or cohabited with a white, and in the process of getting along with each other, they always look down their own self and look up to others attitude. Rose is very proud to praise her white husband in front of her mother. She says that Ted can attract her because the differences between his brother and other Chinese boys. Also his parents are from New York not China. As seen from these elaborations, Ted attracts Rose not just because of his appearance, the most important thing is

that he is a white instead of Chinese. Rose wants to determine herself identity by getting married to an American white. But obviously, whether it is Ted himself or his mother Mrs. Jordan do not really accept her from the heart. In the eyes of Mrs. Jordan, as a colored person, Rose not at all worthy of his son Ted's love, and thinks that an Asian daughter-in-law will influence her son's great future. After marriage, everything is determined by the white husband. Rose completely loses herself.

Chinese daughters in order to get rid of discrimination in a racial society, they long for marrying a white and gain the acceptance of the identity. But the discrimination and oppression of the American society leads to the disillusion of their dreams.

The Chinese Exclusion Act is a bill signed by the United States on May 6, 1882. It is based on the amendments to the *Burlingame Treaty*. The amendments to the regulations allows the United States to suspend immigration, and Congress quickly implemented the decision. The bill aims at a large number of Chinese people's response to China internal turmoil and the opportunity to get railway construction work in the western United States. It is the first immigration law for specific ethnic groups pass in the United States.

Chinese Exclusion Act is one of the most severe restrictions on immigration in American history. It prohibited Chinese workers who are hired as miners from entering the United States within 10 years, or they will be imprisoned or expelled. Many Chinese are brutally beaten just because of their race. A small number of non-labor Chinese want to immigrate to the United States must obtain a permit from the Chinese government, but this is extremely difficult.

The bill also affects Chinese who have settled in the United States. Any Chinese who wants to reenter the United States after leaving the United States must obtains a permit. Moreover, the bill deprives Chinese immigrants US citizenship, thereby permanently alienates Chinese. After the passage of the bill, there are few opportunities for Chinese-Americans to reunite with their families or start a family life in their new home.

5. Tendency towards Cultural Fusion

5.1. Cultural Negotiation

Despite the frequent bumps and friction between mothers and daughters, the blood connection between mothers and daughters cannot be changed. As the years go by, there has also been a gradual change in both mind. Great maternal love makes them finally begin to listen to each other and learn to change themselves to understand and tolerate each other. Mothers gradually accept and integrate into American culture, trying to understand the inside heart of their daughters. Because of the influence by two cultures, daughters can't achieve true Chinization or complete Americanization. They have been confused about their identity. At last, They began to face up the part of Chinese culture in their blood, and they also feel Chinese culture and the mother's significant influence on them, they finally recognize themselves identity. The contradiction between mother and daughter gradually be alleviated and let us see the possibility and necessity of cultural exchange between China and America.

On June's 30th birthday, her mother Wu Suyuan gives a piano that symbolizes the contradiction between mother and daughter as a birthday present to her daughter. At that moment the daughter feels happy. She thinks that this is a sign

of forgiveness, she has pressed the sense of guilty for many years and finally relieved. "At the end of the novel, June represents her deceased mother returns to China and finds her twin sister who are abandoned in China. Then she really understands the mother's pains and the parts of Chinese blood. Her blood vessels suddenly jumps from the depths of the bone marrow, she feels a deep pain. She thinks that Mom is right, at this time she completely becomes a true Chinese people. In addition, she repeats the story of the swan feathers over and over again and tell this story to Rose's daughter, this is a biography of Chinese culture.

When Rose and Ted's marriage is in crisis, the mother Anmei does not stand by. She warns her daughter that the psychiatrist cannot cure her heart. The disease has made her even more confused. She teaches her daughter to stand up bravely and fight for her own equity. Daughter Rose listens to her mother's opinion and refuses to sign the divorce agreement. Gong Linda at the beginning because Waverly and her American boyfriend run away, she takes off shoes and hits her daughter. But later, she gradually accepts the American son-in-law and teaches him how to eat crabs. St. Clair discovers the marriage of her daughter Luna and Harold who are implementing the AA system in the name of equality, she tells her daughter what will happen if she continues to ignore these imbalanced consequence. After the mothers communication with the daughters, the daughters feel the mother's deep love, and gradually begin to understand the mothers. Mothers also try to accept some American culture that they don't want to accept before. The interpretation and communication between mothers and daughters are also the integration and exchange between Chinese and American cultures.

In the novel *The Joy Luck Club*, the author Amy Tan demonstrates the exchanges and integration between China and America through the development of the relationship between the four mothers and daughters. The reconciliation also indicates the possibility of cultural coexistence.

5.2. Significance of Reconciliation

Multiculturalism has been the cultural norm in America for a long time. American people have recognized the diversity of culture and accept that the White culture can not be defined as the dominate cultural mainstream. Nowadays, globalization witnesses the communication between different cultures.

In *the Joy Luck Club*, the contradictions and conflicts between mother and daughter actually caused by the differences and misunderstandings between the two cultures. In the end, the daughters' understanding and recognition of the mothers is essentially the recognition between Chinese culture and American culture, which achieves the resolution of the hegemonic relationship between the Eastern and Western. The constructive thinking breaks the myth of Western cultural centralism, indeed establishes the basis for cultural exchanges.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan through the relationship between mothers and daughters, daughters and white society, she tries to explore Chinese -American cultural identity and cultural attribution issues. *The Joy Luck Club* not only reflects the survival trajectory of the Chinese people in the United States, but also shapes the new Chinese image. Amy Tan through the daughter's growth in a unique cultural context expresses her position and attitude towards multiculturalism. Despite the existence of inevitable cultural collisions and

conflicts, despite the gap, misunderstandings and contradictions, as long as there is love, it can be mutually tolerant and coexist. The novel through the description of misunderstanding, conflicts, communication, understanding between mothers and daughters shows that Chinese and American cultures are merging in the process of constant impact. Which also expresses the author's belief to the harmonious coexistence of Chinese and American cultures.

6. Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the spiritual journey of Chinese Americans viewed from the cultural connotation of *The Joy Luck Club*. By analyzing the novel, we get a better understanding about the cultural conflicts between different cultures. Through the perspective of international communication, cultural conflicts between four couples of mothers and daughters, between wives and husbands are discussed from the view of Chinese obedience to parents and American independence, Chinese women's submissiveness and American women's independence, Chinese family honor and American individual achievements, Chinese high-context culture and American low-context culture, Chinese superstition and American science. The cause of conflicts discussed from the different cultures experienced by mothers and daughters. Chinese traditional culture such as Three Obedience and Four Virtues, Resign Oneself to Adversity. While American emphasizes Individualism, Equality, Independence and Freedom. Through the novel, Amy Tan describes contradictions and oppositions between two different cultures and foresees the possibility and necessity of natural incorporation. So it is unavoidable that we will come across different cultural conflicts in daily life and work, especially when our society is entering a time of globalization, people have more opportunity to communication with others. Therefore, this study argues for a proper attitude towards diverse culture, and tries to explore the possibility of founding a rich and colorful multicultural panorama.

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