

Rational Reflection on the Logic of Government's Cultural Service Policy Formulation in Chinese Mainland Minority Autonomous Areas

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Abstract: Objective: Under the complex social background of unbalanced economic and social development in Chinese mainland, the balance of government cultural services in minority autonomous areas urgently needs to be solved. Method: By means of field investigation and empirical analysis, this paper analyzes the universal and realistic contradictions and problems faced by the government's cultural product structure and service mode in China's ethnic autonomous areas. Results: Influenced by the government's overly centralized and arbitrary policies, the ethnic characteristics in the autonomous areas of ethnic minorities have gradually disappeared, and they have been replaced by a generalized and popular culture. Conclusions: The formulation of government cultural policies in developing countries needs to conform to the cultural characteristics of ethnic autonomous areas and the psychological needs of local people. The formulation of government policies should change from the general logic of completing tasks to the new logic and new pattern of social coordination, strategic guidance, open governance and purchasing services.

1. Introduction

Ethnic areas mainly refer to ethnic autonomous areas established in China according to the Constitution, including autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties. According to the data published in the 7th China Population Census on May 11th, 2021, the population of ethnic minorities in Chinese mainland is 125.47 million, accounting for 8.89% of the total population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2021). About three quarters of them live in five autonomous regions, 30 autonomous prefectures and 120 autonomous counties (banners). According to the data of China's National Ethnic Affairs Commission, the total area of Chinese mainland's national autonomous areas accounts for about 61.1% of the mainland land area (China's National Ethnic Affairs Commission, 2006). Based on the above data, the cultural service of the government in the autonomous areas of ethnic minorities is "half of the country" in the modernization of government governance in China.

However, for a long time, due to the vast area and wide distribution in Chinese mainland's ethnic autonomous areas, a considerable number of people live in remote areas such as frontier, plateau,

mountain forest and grassland, and all ethnic groups are living in large mixed communities and small settlements. Especially in the ethnic autonomous areas located in plateaus, mountains and frontiers, the residence is relatively scattered, and the cultural inheritance and development are more subject to subjective and objective factors such as insufficient funds, resources and talents. Although the country and economically developed areas continue to implement large-scale cultural assistance, which alleviates the contradiction of insufficient cultural supply in these ethnic autonomous areas, the long-term external force and the external input of large-scale cultural products and services, to a certain extent, dilute and dilute the national cultural genes or the cultural elements on which ethnic groups mutually identify and identify, which may lead to the gradual blurring of the cultural track of some ethnic groups which lasted for thousands of years in the tide of modernization. This is a very normal example: the author found in the field investigation that the original “Duige”-style and artistic normal cultural inheritance methods such as She nationality, Zhuang nationality and Li Miao nationality gradually faded, and even disappeared in a large number of small-scale ethnic minority gathering areas, and was replaced by general public cultural products and services such as popular square dance, modern pop songs and dances or Han drama. Some written symbols or artistic elements, which were full of national memory and empathy, are now difficult to identify or read as decorative symbols and patterns, which are only for tourists to watch.

The culture of the Chinese nation should have coexisted with diversity, differences and characteristics of all ethnic groups, which is in sharp contrast to the negative policies of “apartheid” and “racial discrimination” implemented in some parts of the world. However, along with the ever-widening development differences among provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities in China in recent ten years, the economic, political, social life and civilization of all ethnic groups have been basically close to the same, and the mutual consistency is far greater than the differences or characteristics. As a result, it is difficult to accurately identify different ethnic groups based solely on economic form, political and cultural life. We should seriously consider whether the “consistency” brought about by the rapid economic development and unified policy formulation reflects and conforms to the psychological characteristics of modern production and lifestyle in minority areas. Is the modernization process in minority areas necessarily at the expense of national characteristics?

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions has an answer worthy of reference, pointing out that “cultural diversity is the basic feature of human society and an important driving force for the progress of human civilization”. In fact, if human society loses its cultural diversity, then modernization will be homogeneous, uniform, dull and tasteless. Similarly, if modern China loses its colorful national culture, it will also lose its internal mechanism which is pluralistic, unified, flowery, colorful and fascinating, and the core charm of development and its driving force will gradually decline and disappear.

After fully affirming the importance of long-term, sustained and healthy development of national characteristic cultures, the problems to be further solved are: which fields and ways will enhance or reduce national cultural characteristics in ethnic areas? And how to avoid disadvantages and turn disadvantages into benefits to promote the long-term healthy development of national characteristic culture. In fact, nowadays in China, not all cultural services in ethnic autonomous areas can or will play a positive and beneficial role in the construction of ethnic culture. As mentioned above, the massive input of general non-characteristic cultural products and services has already impacted the national characteristic culture in some ethnic autonomous areas.

At present, “economic interests” are always the first choice of the government and various management subjects, but as a government, the cultural service of the government is one of the basic functions that must be performed, and social benefits should be put first in the process of

cultural formulation.

2. The Relations That Need to Be Dealt with Emphatically in the Transformation of the Cultural Service Function of the Government in Ethnic Autonomous Areas

The above has analyzed and expounded the important position and function of government cultural service in ethnic autonomous areas as the “main channel” in the whole national cultural construction, and also pointed out many common contradictions and problems faced by government cultural service in ethnic autonomous areas at present. To solve these contradictions and problems, we need to focus on the following three pairs of relationships.

2.1 The Relationship between Cultural Unity and Diversity

Fei Xiaotong put forward the concept of “the pattern of diversity and integration of the Chinese nation” when talking about the complex ethnic relations in China (Fei, 1999). In the field of cultural services, the “pluralism and unity” of politics is the “unity” of cultural services. Its “unity” is embodied in the unification of Chinese mainland, which unifies, standardizes, batches and averages the cultural services provided by governments at all levels for different groups. In fact, the characteristics of ethnic minorities in Chinese mainland are very obvious, and even in the same city and country, most of them still show the characteristics of multi-ethnic integration. Therefore, to understand the “diversity” of government cultural services in ethnic autonomous areas, it is often impossible to talk about a single ethnic group in isolation, a priori and arbitrarily. In more cases, it is necessary to carefully grasp the particularity of its cultural services based on the characteristics of cultural needs and the psychological characteristics of people in a specific “region” of ethnic autonomous areas.

2.2 The Relationship between Government's Dominance and Local People's Autonomy

Under the traditional business system, to understand the government's cultural service is “government-led”, it is always customary to directly understand the government's cultural service as the welfare provided by the government to the local people, and it is always logical to directly define the government's cultural service function as government-run and government-run. This situation may not constitute a prominent contradiction in non-ethnic areas, but it may cause substantial problems in ethnic autonomous areas. In ethnic autonomous areas, the welfare mode implements cultural service supply indiscriminately and from top to bottom. The government has multiple identities as policy leader, project decision-maker, product organizer, service provider and performance judge. This dislocation of functions almost invariably leads to the neglect of different degrees of national cultural characteristics, because the government cannot form monopoly on the cultural ecology of different ethnic groups even with relevant institutions. For example, in mainland China, the “She Song”, which has been sinicized and ornately decorated, only breaks the mother and child's fields, events, and the natural tie that blood is thicker than water, so that the thick and close relatives' national culture falls into the empty and pale popular or entertainment-only songs. Those who were charmed by it gradually developed their dependence on the bizarre free entertainment service, but gradually forgot the warmth of the simple “She Song” sung by their mothers, so that the “Mother She Song” is now almost endangered.

2.3 The Relationship between “Cultural Assistance” and “Cultural Poverty Alleviation” for Ethnic Minorities and Correct Government Cultural Services

At present, the “cultural poverty alleviation” project being implemented in mainland China is, in the final analysis, a kind of inappropriate discourse which implies a certain derogatory meaning to the supporting objects, but this phrase has once become a common expression of mutual assistance in the cultural field between regions and groups. It is difficult to apply the economic price judgment rule to the poverty and wealth of culture, especially in the autonomous areas of ethnic minorities in Chinese mainland, where there are vivid, rich, diverse and colorful cultural forms, which are the areas with the richest Chinese cultural styles and connotations, and also the driving force for multi-ethnic integration and innovation. The reason why people in these areas have long been trapped by the tide of market economy mistakenly think that they are “poor” in culture is that compared with relatively developed areas, they are relatively lacking in facilities, equipment, capital, transportation, media and other material and technical conditions. The spiritual world of the people in the simple national autonomous areas may be far richer and purer than the capitalists who are full of brains and stink of copper, or some officials who are eager for quick success and perfunctory, or so-called experts who talk big and are unrealistic. Therefore, we must not confuse the material “poverty” with the cultural “abundance” in ethnic autonomous areas. Therefore, when the government provides cultural services to ethnic minorities with relatively backward material and economic conditions, it should adopt a correct attitude and fully respect the ethnic customs, psychological characteristics and service choices of local people.

3. Constructive Comments and Suggestions

In the important period of Chinese mainland's rapid modernization, it is very important to respect, protect and carry forward the culture with national characteristics. If the government in ethnic areas fails to keep pace with the times and transform the government's cultural service function, it may have a negative impact on the long-term stable and healthy development of ethnic culture and indirectly affect the modernization process of the country. At present, the modernization transformation of government cultural services in ethnic autonomous areas needs to pay attention to the following four key links.

3.1 Government-Led Shift from Arbitrary Decision-Making to Social Coordination

In particular, the government's public service needs to greatly change the inertia of arbitrariness in the past (Foucault, 2018). In ethnic autonomous areas, its special features are reflected in three aspects: First, most of the ethnic areas in mainland China are multi-ethnic integration areas, and the government cannot and does not need to fully grasp the cultural needs and integration changes of ethnic groups within its jurisdiction. In this case, the government's independent decision-making will cause potential blindness or error risk; Second, the government's independent decision-making will inevitably lead to the singleness of the way of providing cultural services, which is difficult to adapt to the complex ethnic relations and the traditional customs, demand preferences and behavioral characteristics of different ethnic groups in ethnic autonomous areas, and may lead to the inefficiency or ineffectiveness of some cultural services; Third, the government's independent decision-making can not effectively mobilize the enthusiasm of all ethnic groups, and it is difficult to stimulate the rich internal potential energy. Under the background of expanding demand, the government can only simply increase the supply of cultural products and services from the perspective of quantity, which will inevitably accumulate structural shortages of cultural products and services in qualitative aspects. Independent government decision-making is transformed into

social coordination. The typical way is to “ask the government for the people”, coordinate the people of all ethnic groups in the area to decide the production and service supply of cultural products independently, and independently develop high-quality cultural services with their own characteristics and consistency.

3.2 Government Policy Shifts from Omnipotent to Leading

In the past, the government played an “all-round” role in government cultural services, and even the public welfare cultural institutions under the government only followed the orders of the government. On the one hand, the tactical work with no details has dragged down the government to exhaustion; on the other hand, the public welfare cultural institutions that seem to belong to the professional field cannot really establish their dominant position in the cultural service system, and thus they cannot share tactical responsibilities for the government. Tactical all-round government in the field of cultural services may be barely maintained in non-ethnic autonomous areas, but it may be difficult to sustain in ethnic autonomous areas. This is because the national characteristic culture in ethnic autonomous areas is like a splendid flower sea, and the so-called “all-round” of the government can only take into account a few waves. For example, this contradiction is more prominently manifested in the fact that the functional orientation of citizen cultural centers in ethnic autonomous areas has been repeatedly questioned. If citizen cultural centers fail or are incapable of promoting the innovation and development of ethnic characteristic cultures in the areas under their jurisdiction in a professional way, and only stay on simply completing the specific tasks assigned by the government, then such cultural centers that cost a lot of financial assistance, that is, so-called institutions with establishment, are really hard to be true.

3.3 Government Management from Closed Control to Open Governance

In China, restricted by the political system and mechanism, “the socialized development of government cultural services” has been promoted for many years, but the results are not remarkable. Social companies and teams with professional standards in the field of government cultural services are still very scarce. The main reason is that the government has not really dealt with the relationship between “governing the feet” and “governing the world”, and seems to be too nostalgic for the rights possessed by funds, projects and talents. In fact, these rights are equal to complicated affairs and huge responsibilities, which are unbearable for the government for a long time. In recent years, although the “streamline administration, delegate power, strengthen regulation and improve services” reform in the field of public services of the Chinese government has been deepening, the cultural policy of the government has lagged behind. In the “streamline administration, delegate power, strengthen regulation and improve services” reform of cultural service, if the government's functions are not changed, the public welfare cultural institutions cannot become the service subjects who can independently undertake legal responsibilities and professional affairs, and the society is even less likely to germinate and grow. At present, the dilemma in the field of cultural undertakings in mainland China is that the development of social professional service organizations is slow, which in turn restricts the optimization of the variety structure of government cultural services and objectively increases the difficulty for the government to provide high-quality cultural services. The key to the construction of an open governance-oriented government in the field of cultural services lies in the government putting down the shelf of “self-respect”, decentralizing the power that belongs to the people, and changing the closed field and object control into “something to discuss and do” among the subjects under the leadership of the government. We should know that the contribution of culture to the national governance ability, the compulsory nature of different powers and the preaching nature of politics are also different from the worship of common folk

beliefs. Instead, they convey the conceptual consensus and attitude towards life beneficial to the development of ethnic groups in epics, myths, folk songs, carols, singing and festivals. It is in the long-term development that ethnic minorities gradually discover and accumulate their own cultural elements, gradually condense them into unique cultural forms, and then gradually form public cultural consciousness, and then take the initiative to put them into practice. This process, just as Habermas said, “Public management should be able to connect the two things of national strength and personal happiness.” (Habermas, 2004).

3.4 Government Protection Shifts from Government Consumption to Purchase Service

With the rapid development of economy and society, the investment of governments at all levels in cultural services has increased synchronously. Although the central government's transfer payment to the government in cultural services in ethnic minority areas has increased year by year, it should be noted that the continuous expansion of the amount of investment does not necessarily have a synchronous relationship with the improvement of capital use efficiency. Basically, it can be said that the government has spent a lot of money in the field of culture, but failed to achieve the expected results, or the satisfaction of clients' sense of acquisition has not been improved simultaneously, which is tantamount to the government's “self-pouring and self-drinking” and “spending alone”. There is only one measure to change this embarrassing situation, that is, to change the past practice of establishing projects and using them by the government, and to purchase cultural services openly and fairly for the whole society, so that the government funds for cultural services can flow to the whole society in the sunshine. The government can also keep the leading power in the planning, project establishment, supervision and evaluation of cultural service funds, and hand over the specific use of cultural service funds to the whole society in a standardized and transparent way. This transformation is more important for the governments in ethnic minority areas, which is more conducive to eliminating the complexity, selecting the best and eliminating the bad, and can effectively prevent the use of human weakness to design and develop so-called cultural and artistic products that look fancy but are actually inferior.

4. Conclusion

The formation of minority characteristic culture, first, must have experienced long-term development and gradually accumulated and formed in the long river of history; Second, its basic cultural forms that can be “identified”, some of which have gradually evolved into pure forms of the nation in the historical process, and the “purpose” contained therein (Kant, 1986) needs to be detected in a certain historical length, but it seems to be speechless and self-evident to the members of the nation; Third, the basic form of national culture, which is the basic form of nation in a certain sense, always maintains a certain historical stability. However, as a “meaningful form” (Bell, 2004), the vibrant national cultural form must always change with the times and meet the new era connotation, otherwise it will be difficult to be effectively expressed and reasonably extended in the new historical environment. Based on this understanding, if the government of ethnic autonomous areas wants to perform its cultural functions focusing on public cultural services, it should not only accurately grasp the specific cultural forms of specific ethnic groups, but also deeply understand their deep “aims”. In a word, this paper is intended to arouse the reflection on such phenomena in Chinese mainland and other minority areas in developing countries, with a view to providing reference for the transformation of the government's cultural service function in ethnic autonomous areas.

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