# Research on the Influence of Modernization on Oroqen Hunting Culture

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#### **Abstract**

With the development of human society, the issue about the impact of modernization on traditional culture is becoming increasingly important, which can help promote the harmonious coexistence between conventional and modern civilization. Using Oroqen nationality as a case study, this article examines the impact of modernization on Oroqen hunting culture, from the perspective of material and spiritual culture changes. In this essay, the author uses the method of literature analysis to study the literature about the Oroqen nationality, modernization thoery and sustainable development. Through the way, the paper explores the content, characteristics of Oroqen hunting culture and the defination, process, influence of modernization. Finally, the passage uses the ordinary methodology, from the angle of sustainable development capacity building theory, to recommend Oroqen future development path. It can give experience for those ethnic minorities confronting modernization.

**Keywords:** Orogen hunting culture, modernization, sustainable development

# 1. Introduction

Oroqen people, one of the 22 ethnic groups with a population of less than 100000 in China, live in the northeast China near mountains and rivers. They have been nomadic and living in hunting civilization for generations. However, since entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, modernization gradually influences Oroqen nationality, transforming their lives and production pattern. In 1958, Complying with national policies, almost all the Oroqen hunters went down mountains to settle down. In 1996, the Oroqen Autonomous Banner responded to the national call to implement the conversion from hunting to production (Wuri, 2021). After entering the agrarian civilization, great changes have taken place in the Oroqen hunting culture from multiple aspects.

At present, the academic research on Oroqen hunting civilization mainly concentrates on the cultural and linguistic protection, which focuses less on the impact of modernization on Oroqen hunting culture and the path of future sustainable development.

## 2. Orogen Hunting Culture and Features

First, the origin of Oroqen hunting culture. For generations, Oroqen people dwell in the greater and lesser Khingan Mountains in northern China Heilongjiang Province, which has abundant animal and plant resources. It provides Oroqen with living and production sources.

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Table 1. China's Ministry of Natural Resources: The Map of China

The Oroqen people's living environments largely influence the formation of their hunting culture. "The steppe area of northern China played an important role in connecting agricultural, pastoral and hunting-gathering populations in East Asia." (Jiacheng et al., 2022). Relying on abundant natural resources, Oroqen people hunt animals and gather plants in their lives. Because of Oroqen nationality's safari lifestyle, they are regarded as "Living fossils of fishing and hunting nationality in the Northern Hemisphere" and have developed rich material and cultural hunting heritage. In Oroqen people's life, they use shotguns, horses and dogs to hunt wild animals, catch fish in the river, pick mushrooms and fungus in the mountains. They make clothes in hunting animals' skin, build houses with birch bark and make floors with weeds and fur. They use horses and make birch bark boat as transportation. They also have unique ethnic festival ---- bofire festival, in which Oroqen people will dress up and sing and dance around the campfire, showing their respect for the god of fire. They believe it is fire that gives them health, hope and happiness. All in all, the geographical environment in which they live shape their lifestyle, culture, custom, diet, language and so on.

Second, the content of Oroqen hunting culture. In the long-term hunting practice, the Oroqen people have created a rich and colorful spiritual culture, including oral creation, music, dance and plastic arts. Furthermore, on account of generational hunting lives, Oroqen have developed unique culture, which contains wild migration lifestyle, handcraft skills, folk languages, brave character and good-at shooting skills. These forms reflect the various content of Oroqen hunting culture, which is an indispensable part of the characteristic culture in ethnic minorities.

Third, the features of Oroqen hunting culture. First, the primitiveness. From the perspective of its origin, it is closely related to wild and nature, which represents the simplest and purest way of mankind life. Meanwhile, it also contains the plain harmonious coexistence relationship between human and nature during their survival and life style. Second, the diversity. Since ancient times, many cultural forms have been produced, such as collection, hunting, farming, nomadism and so on (Wuri, 2021). Oroqen hunting culture have developed diverse forms, from daily lifestyle to ideology, from eating habits to traditional festivals, from living conditions to language using.

#### 3. The Defination and Process of Modernization

#### 3.1 The Definition

In 1958, Daniel Lerner published "THE PASSING OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETY: Modernizing the Middle East" and held the opinion that the transition from traditional to modern society is modernization. Since the 1950s, a group of sociologists, economists and political scientists in the United States successively carried out modernization research. After nearly 50 years, Classic Modernization Theory was formed, which is a general term for the theoretical achievements of different fields and scholars on modernization research. In this theory, generally speaking, modernization refers to the profound changes that have taken place in human society since the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. The modernization is defined as the historical process and changes from traditional economy to modern economy, traditional society to modern society, traditional politics to modern politics, and traditional civilization to modern civilization.

#### 3.2 The Process

The Oroqen people have always been living a hunting life for centuries, with less contact to the outside world. However, after the founding of New China, the Communist Party and the government invited them down from the scattered mountains. In 1952, the first ethnic minority autonomous banner "Olunchun Autonomous Banner People's Government" was founded by central government. Apart from that,in 1996, the Oroqen people----'magic hunters in the forest' of the Great Xing'an Mountains were prohibited from carrying out hunting activities in their homeland by the Oroqen Autonomous government (Maria & Yong, 2010). Under the influence of these factors, Oroqen people experience great changes from traditional to modern economy, society, politics and civilization. After the settlement and hunting prohibition, Oroqen people's production mode adjust from hunting to agriculture, moving towards a relatively modern economy. In addition, they no longer live the life of hunters and earn livings by natural resources, but live an organized, democratic and orderly life, gradually steping into modern civilization, politics and society. According to the Classic Modernization Theory, namely, modernization is taking place in Oroqen nationality. However, the process of modernization has many impacts on Oroqen nationality's hunting culture, with positive and negative side coexisting. In the following parts, the article discusses the impact from the perspective of material culture and spiritual culture.

# 4. Material Culture Impact

## 4.1 Industrial Structure Optimization

The economic structure of the Oroqen people in previous time was dominated by a single hunting economy. They mainly engage in hunting, fishing and gathering industry, which is only enough for living needs and limited by natural conditions in the past. But modernization has changed their economic and industrial development. After the settlement, social productivity has been greatly improved, and agriculture, hunting, forestry, animal husbandry, township enterprises and tourism have all been developed in an all-round way (Rui, 2019). Furthermore, handicraft production and breeding bases are expanding, which help Oroqen people gain more revenue and income. At present, there is an Oroqen fungus factory with an investment of 2.6 million yuan and an area of 6600 square meters in Oroqen Ethnic Township. The development of animal husbandry is guided by characteristic breeding, leading the decentralized breeding to professional households and villages. Oroqen nationality's economic development in the process of modernization help optimizing the Industrial structure, transforming the mode of economic growth from extensive to intensive. To make things better, the modernization improve Oroqen living conditions and standard, keeping them away from harsh and unstable natural environment. The Oroqen township economic development has made rapid progress, with pockets of the Oroqen family getting bigger and bigger. From 189 yuan per capita net income in 1978 to 8902 yuan in 2012, the per capita net income of Oroqen compatriots in Tahe county has increased by 47.1 times in just 34 years.

#### 4.2 Green and Sustainable Economy

Oroqen reside around lesser and greater Hinggan Mountains, which is named "Northern Iasper" and "Green pure land" and has vast territory, beautiful scenery and rich natural resources. In the past, Oroqen made livings by hunting animals and gathering plants, which, to different extent, having bad impact on the ecological environment. However, the process of modernization plays a role in coordinating environmental protection and economy development. Nowadays, Oroqen has created green tourism project, firmly observing the concept of "green water and green mountains are golden mountains and silver mountains". They rely on the advantaged natural resources, continuously accelerated the pace of green transformation and actively promoted cultural and tourism integration. For example, Oroqen develop forest sightseeing, rural experience and ecological science popularization, which, at the same time, promote financial income and preserve ecology. It is also consistent

with the concept of sustainable green development. Located in the hinterland of the Greater Khingan Mountain in Inner Mongolia, the Oroqen Autonomous Banner of national poverty banner has 43.4 million mu of forest land, with a forest coverage rate of 65.8%. In recent years, the local government has made full use of the "forest" to develop local economy such as edible fungi planting, Chinese herbal medicine planting and special breeding. They explore a new way of poverty alleviation with ecological priority and green development.

# 5. Spiritual Cultural Impact

### 5.1 Traditional Handicraft Promoting

Historically, Oroqen, a northern forest nationality, create distinctive characteristics of mountain forest culture in their hunting production and life. Birch is a common specie and robust creature in the northern forest, whose product has the features of light, strong and waterproof. Birch Bark products well satisfy Oroqen habit of hunting animals and frequently migrating, playing a significant role in Oroqen people life. They use birch bark to make furniture, cover house roof and create boat. Fully taking advantage of birch's characteristics of toughness, thin, easy to cut, Oroqen use the techniques of ironing, carving, cutting, weaving, folding and sewing to make exquisite patterns, complex shapes and rich varieties birch skin products. In addition, the beautiful shape and decoration of birch bark products can express the old-growth forest hunting people's understanding of life and their demand for beauty. It is an important part of the unique regional culture of the Orogen people. For the Orogen people without written records, birch bark culture carries more important cultural information (Tianbao & Xiaoli, 2020). The products and handicraft skills are crystallization of Orogen wisdom and important part of national culture, which have high aesthetic and historical value. But after 1950s, influenced by national and governmental policy, Oroqen move from mountains and gradually live a modern life. With the development of society, great changes have taken place in the way of production and life of the Oroqen nationality. They no longer live in the forest and depend on hunting for living. The hunting culture has gradually declined, and the birch bark handicraft skills have gradually declined.

The process of modernization can help protect and promote the traditional handicraftskills through policy support, economic incentives, propagandistic advocacy and consciousness changes. Until 2006, Oroqen birch bark technique was listed in the national intangible cultural heritage list. In recent years, under the support of construction of ethnic minority areas and poverty alleviation policy, Oroqen people have been making birch bark handicrafts on the family as a unit for commercial sale. They use conventional techniques, turning birch bark into ancient daily necessities and modern decorations with elaborate patterns, unique design and consummate skills. The product of Birch bark have appeared at the Harbin International Economic and Trade Fair for more than ten consecutive times, and are favored by domestic and foreign merchants. In May 2022, the 10 meter long birch kayak made by Guo Baolin of Oroqen nationality was certified in Shanghai's great world Guinness. These help a lot in preserving Oroqen traditional birch bark handicraft skill, which can inherit the Oroqen nationality intangible cultural heritage.

### 5.2 Original Culture Transition

#### 5.2.1 Language Using

Language, as a tool for human communication, changes with societies. Oroqen language belongs to the Tungusic language branch of the Manchu Tungusic language family of the Altaic language family. It has no characters. During the process of modernization and with the change of Oroqen people's life from primitive to modern, new generations receive Chinese education in school, communicate with other people in Chinese instead of original language in daily life and work. The rapid dissolution of linguistic diversity is a uniquely modern phenomenon. Modernization has brought mangy transformations to Oroqen language. It begins to decline with the limited language environment and decrease of language using. According to some statistics, in the inhabited area of Oroqen ethnic group, the number of people who are proficient in the national language is limited to the older people, while the younger people have a poor grasp of the national language.

As a matter of fact, language is the carrier of cultural heritage and also an important part of spiritual wealth. Many Oroqen ethnic dances, fairy tales, religious belief, folk songs are spread by Oroqen language, which reflects the national hunting culture characteristics, production and life style. In addition, the language also contains the terms and expressions of natural landscapes, natural phenomena, plants, flowers and fruits, wild animals, etc. in the cold temperate forest zone of China. The Oroqen language has high literary, historical and scientific value. As a result, the gradual recline of Oroqen language will bring about cultural transmission fault, not conducive to the future development of Oroqen nationality and national language security.

## 5.2.2 Lifestyle Changing

Previously, Oroqen people, who live near the forest and snow plain, went hunting at sunrise, rested at sunset and fed on venery. They know how to tame horses, catch wild animals and often wear animal skin clothes and roe deer horn cap. They are flowing with the blood of brave, hearty, plain hunters, revering nature and god. However, along with Oroqen mode of production change from hunting to farming in the modernization, tremendous changes have occurred to their lives.

They put down shotguns, walk out of the mountains, settle in brick houses and participate in agricultural production. They learn the life and language knowledge of Han nationality, regularly integrate into the modern world. Oroqen people choose different kinds of professions such as teachers, doctors, officials and younger generations receive contemporary education. In 2000, in the occupational composition of the Oroqen ethnic group, there were 168 persons in charge of state organs, party and mass organizations, enterprises and institutions, accounting for 5% of the total occupational population. And the Oroqen people have entered various administrative and public institutions of the state. They no longer live hunting life like before. Modernization offers them everything new from clothing, food, accommodation to transportation. It raises Oroqen people living standard, but, simultaneously, weaken their unique and original lifestyle peculiarity. Their distinctive animal skin clothes, birch bark boat and hunting tools no longer appears in daily life, but in museum, exhibitions and competitions, which foreshadow the decline of Oroqen venery culture.

# 5.2.3 Religious Belief Fault

"Cihai" defines religion as "one of all forms of religious rituals, believing in and worshipping natural gods, and is a distorted and illusory reflection of natural and social forces in people's rituals". Oroqen people live a pure mountain and forest life in the northeast of China. And their relatively backward productivity and lifestyle let them have a high degree of worship for nature and god. Oroqen people combine their birth, illness, death, destiny with the god. The totem of their faith is the black bear in the deep mountains. What's more, the Oroqen people believe that in ancient times, they had a blood relationship with bears, as a result, they call bears "grandfather" and "grandmother". The religion that the Oroqen people believe is Shamanism which has natural attribute and the idea of animism. In addition, the shaman was believed to draw the power and the support of the gods from incantations, so as to cause the tribe's enemies to suffer disaster. At the same time, shamans could treat illness and relieve the sufferings of the people, especially those endured by women and children who sought the shaman's aid (Xianpeng, 2007). This kind of religion is closely in connection with the unique primitive concepts of Oroqen nation. Their religious forms represent nature worship, totem worship and ancestor worship. In Oroqen people's eyes, Shamans are messengers who communicate between God and man.

The modernization has changed their religious belief and faith. After the settlement around 1950s, Oroqen people learn new language, behaviour and etiquette, gradually living a modern life dominated by agricultural civilization. And younger generations live in brick houses, receive advanced education and acquire scientific ideas. Furthermore, with the improvement of Oroqen people's living standards, medical level and cultural quality, their supersition about religious belief weaken, especially in young people. As they march towards modern civilization, Oroqen people's national features and religious faith are also being disrupted, with a serious fault between generations.

# 5.2.4 Intellectual Wisdom Spreading

The hunters in Oroqen are good at riding, shooting and have a good grasp of habits, activities of various wild animals. However, their hunting purpose is different from those for profit and violence. Oroqen people are full of gratitude to the nature and devoutly accept the prey that nature bestows and on which they rely for survival. The Oroqen people have retained the most simple and precious ecological and environmental protection consciousness of the Chinese nation. The Oroqen hunters strictly abide by the creed of not hunting pregnant and young animals, so that animals can fully reproduce and multiply. Their concept of preserving nature and coexisting with creatures and plants is not only the reflection of national wisdom, but also the precious wealth of Chinese culture.

Furthermore, Mr. Yang Jinge once said that "there are rich social and cultural values, simple and unsophisticated philosophy and aesthetic humanism in the Oroqen myth." The rich mythological themes can provide creative thinking and inspiration for modern visual communication design, and the myth element with high aesthetic value can provide new ideas for Chinese national art image (Fengjiao, 2021). At the same time, as a nation near forest and mountains, Oroqen people have ample local knowledge and skills, knowing well about the forest environment, natural rules and geographical knowledge. In the process of living, they develop the methods to deal with natural disasters and keep ecological balance. With the deterioration of climate change and the increase

of extreme weather, a large number of forest fires broke out.

In the development of modernization, Oroqen people's intellectual wisdom spreads on a larger scale. After the Oroqen people are administrated by the government and state, their intellectual knowledge can be propagated and adopted to help confront forest fires and natural disasters. Simultaneously, it can also improve people's ability to understand nature, educate people to love environment and lives. Apart from these, the legends are the encyclopedias for the Oroqen people to live, which embodies the collective wisdom of their ancestors and carries the traditional culture of this ethnic group. And they are also very precious intangible cultural heritage for human beings. By recognizing and studying the legendary stories of the Oroqen, we can continue to carry forward and promote the intrinsic cultural and social values (Zhongfeng, 2018).

### 6. Future Sustainable Development

During the period of modernization, on account of many reasons, Oroqen's hunting culture is regularly disappearing, which calls for our great attention and effective action for the nationality's future. In terms of content, sustainable development includes three aspects: economic sustainable development, ecological sustainable development and social sustainable development. And the capacity building for sustainable development contains decision-making, management, legal system, policy, science and technology, education, human resources and public participation. For the protection and sustainable development of Oroqen culture and society, suggestions will be made from five parts. Looking forward that through these actions and measures, Oroqen people can not only better coexist with modern society, but also preserve their national characteristics.

#### 6.1 Management System

The local government can establish the forest ecological protection zone of Oroqen Autonomous Banner and national cultural protection base. In the forest ecological protection zone, there can be restoration of forest and river resources, ecological science popularization and cracking down on sabotage. During this, we can not only promote environmental sustainable development and biodiversity of Oroqen region, but also improve people's understanding of nature and learn to live in harmony with creatures. In the national cultural protection base, there can be architecture of national characteristics, exhibition hall and theatrical performances. For example, Xinsheng e township of Heihe City has built a park of minority customs, which displays the Oroqen people's living and residential facilities on a large scale. It regularly organizes large-scale song and dance performances every year. At the same time, it opens a restaurant with distinct Oroqen customs, so that people can have a close contact with the ethnic culture of Oroqen through eating, watching and listening. These kinds of managements can let the public have a love for Oroqen people's living environment and national customs, helping the sustainable development of Oroqen ecosystem and culture.

#### 6.2 Legal System

With regard to Oroqen cultural resources protection, the laws and regulations haven't been developed. It is suggested to introduce systematic "regulations on the protection of national culture". Systematic protection mechanism, inheritance mechanism and research mechanism are important guarantees for the protection of national culture. Moreover, establishing national cultural development and cultural industry projects is very beneficial to promote Oroqen cultural protection and development. At present, there are just few protecting regulations on the ethnic culture and language of Oroqen. Paragraph four of Article four of the constitution of the People's Republic of China stipulates that all ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. Local government and court can make some regulations and laws on improving the protection list, maintain national buildings, set up cultural inheritors and collect documents according to actual conditions. Oroqen's shaman culture, animal skin culture, birch bark culture, folk culture, food culture, medical culture, forest knowledge, song and dance culture can be effectively protected and developed through these regulations and legislation. Learn from the experience of other ethnic minorities cultural rights protection mechanism in China and establish a coordinated legal system with operational laws, local regulations, autonomous regulations. What's more, when formulating laws and regulations, the government should give play to Oroqen people's main role, listening extensively to the public's suggestions.

# 6.3 Technological System

Modern science and technology can be used for learning, spreading and inheriting, which assist in cultural protection and dissemination. Some measures such as making use of internet technology, camera to record Oroqen folk songs, traditional dances, national costume and handicraft production process, better inheriting Oroqen intangible cultural heritage. First, traditionally, the main way of communicating birch bark manufacturing skills of the Oroqen Nationality is "oral teaching". However, the interaction, timeliness,

convenience and initiative of mobile social media can be used to increase participation of audiences, who become the spreader from audience by way of leaving message, shooting videos and updating information (Xuemin & Dehui, 2019). Furthermore, establish exclusive online library to restore Oroqen fairy tales, oral history and language using. In addition, local TV station can hold TV programs to display the song, dance and costumes of northern minorities, attracting a large amount of audience to appreciate. And every time when the Oroqen people have large-scale festivals or ethnic celebrations, local government can use live broadcasting to show the unique Oroqen people customs and their hearty character to the national audience, letting more people have a better understanding of Oroqen culture and fall in love with it. Moreover, application of computer-based three-dimensional imaging technology in the protection process of Oroqen original singing culture can make people have a huge three-dimensional feeling (Rui, Wang, & Zhao, 2020). At the same time, there can be corpus and data banks using advanced technology to collect language pronunciation, grammar, meaning so that the public can get access to learn and scholars can acquire information to research.

# 6.4 Education System

School is an important platform to inherit the national culture. Thus, we can inherit and develop the unique knowledge of minorities and carry forward the outstanding culture of ethnic minorities through this platform (Xiaofei, 2016). For example, schools in ethnic minority areas can open ethnic culture courses and publish textbooks recording the Orogen language. In addition, there are also be interest courses teaching how to make birch bark handicraft production, helping children learn intangible cultural heritage technology from an early age. Located in Heihe, Heilongjiang, known as "the Jewel of the North", Heihe University is the first common institute of higher learning of China on the Sino-Russian board line of over 4300 kilometers. Over the past decade, relying on the regional advantages and local high-quality educational resources, the music school of Heihe University has made it its mission to carry forward traditional national culture, strengthen cultural confidence of students and cultivate talents with both political integrity and professional competence to serve the development of the border area (Weibo, 2017). Furthermore, the local education bureau may hold ethnic knowledge competitions, Orogen language competitions and cultural exhibition to let younger generations have more contact with ethnic language, culture and customs. In addition, organize the activities of national culture entering the campus. Every year, the relevant departments of cultural protection regularly can go to the school to teach and perform cultural skills with ethnic characteristics for teachers and students. Through school teaching and social exchanges, the purpose of inheriting the ethnic culture of Orogen can be achieved. Apart from these, local government can build museums depositing animal skin clothes, birch bark boats, woolen boots and daily necessities to reflect the original Oroqen hunting life, deepen people's comprehending of this nationality. In the society, training institutions have also been set up and the Orogen language and culture inheritance class has been established. In the training class, anyone who is interested in Oroqen language and culture can learn, which can expand the audience of being educated.

# 6.5 Public Participation

"Folk inheritance is carried out through oral transmission among people in the Orogen ethnic group. People learn from each other, preserving and passing down valuable culture." Therefore, the modernization of Oroqen people should not only focus on material aspects, but also make a development strategy in line with their nature, and awaken their national subjectivity consciousness (Jing, 2021). The Oroqen people should be fully mobilized to participate in the process of showing national culture. Some valuable culture such as folk songs, oral fairy tale and birch bark production making exist among the public. Cultural exchange, art festivals and talent contest can be regularly held locally, providing the stage for those who are good at these things and improve people's enthusiasm for participation. Furthermore, government can help establish Oroqen folk art troupe, perform in various large-scale events, festivals, exhibitions and activities all over the country. By performing national dances, singing folk songs and wearing unique clothing in the stage, it can not only show public's talented skills, increase Orogen people's living income, but also spread the influence of Orogen culture. Encourage more people to engage in cultural communication with policies and funds. The government can also support the people to establish handicraft cooperatives and ethnic enterprises to create characteristic industries. At the settlement of the Oroqen ethnic group, the local government has helped build base of animal breeding, animal skin processing and production for the craftsman, which can inherit and develop the traditional animal skin, animal bone, birch skin, embroidery and other handicraft processing in Orogen.

# 7. Conclusion

Modernization is an indispensable part of the development of human society, which is defined in the Classic Modernization Theory as the historical process and changes from traditional to modern economy, society,

politics and civilization. These changes happening in Oproqen nationality indicates the modernization. The process of modernization has many impacts on Oroqen original hunting culture in material and spirit. The hunting culture constitutes the splendid culture of the Chinese nation and north Asian race. And it has high historical and aesthetic research value in language, custom, religion, architecture and behaviour. When confronting negative impacts of modernization on the Oroqen hunting culture, sustainable development strategy can play a significant part in cultural heritage and protection, preserving the important components of human civilization.

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