

Cultural Understanding of Global Governance

—A Perspective of Religious Culture

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Abstract

Culture is complex and diverse. Religious culture is the core of the structure of human culture. People of different religious and cultural backgrounds often have different behavioral orientations and action logics in the era of economic globalization. It will undoubtedly increase the cultural understanding and communication problems of global governance. This paper attempts to explore the relationship between religious culture and global governance in the core of human culture from the perspective of religious culture, especially the exchange of Chinese religions and other religions. The authors hold when religious beliefs deep in people's minds are intertwined with actual political and economic interests, the political and economic interest appeals of nations are usually manifested in the form of contradictions or conflicts between different religions. The solution is to firmly establish different cultural concepts, promote religious dialogue and religious reconciliation through multicultural coexistence, and promote good governance and good governance in global public affairs in mutual respect and cultural consultation.

Keywords

Religious Culture, Globalization, Global Governance, Cultural Understanding, Cultural Consultation

1. Introduction

The development of science, technology, economic and cultural exchanges has made our “global village” more difficult for global governance today. Although there are many reasons, lack of concern and understanding of the cultures of different nations, especially religious cultures, is undoubtedly an important factor. In other words, the role of cross-cultural exchanges and understandings of religious cultures of different ethnic groups in today's global governance has not

yet been heightened. In fact, from the perspective of religious culture, global governance and religious culture are closely related. Religious dialogue and religious reconciliation should be an important way to eliminate religious disputes that hide political and economic interests.

2. Religious Culture Is the Main Core of Human Culture

Why should we emphasize religious cultural factors in global governance? Because religious belief and practice are the core part of human culture. Culture is a more difficult concept to define. Different researchers may have different cultural definitions and different cultural classifications.

Under normal circumstances, people in most countries divide culture into material and spiritual cultures, that is, the “dualistic classification method” of culture; sometimes, people distinguish a different culture—behavior culture—from material culture and spiritual culture. It is the “triple classification” of culture; in addition, some people distinguish one culture from another in the material culture, spiritual culture, and behavior culture—institutional culture, that is, the “quaternary taxonomy” of culture.

In the view of anthropologists, culture is an inseparable whole. The reason people divide culture into different categories of “culture” is not cultural itself, but the convenience of people in order to express or describe the world in which human beings live. If we agree with the rationality of the cultural “quadratic taxonomy” and build a cross-sectional cultural stratification of the whole culture on this basis, we can easily find that culture actually has a circular structure, and this cultural cross sections can be divided into material culture, behavior culture, institutional culture, and spiritual culture from the outside to the inside or from the edge to the center. The cross-section is shown in **Figure 1**.

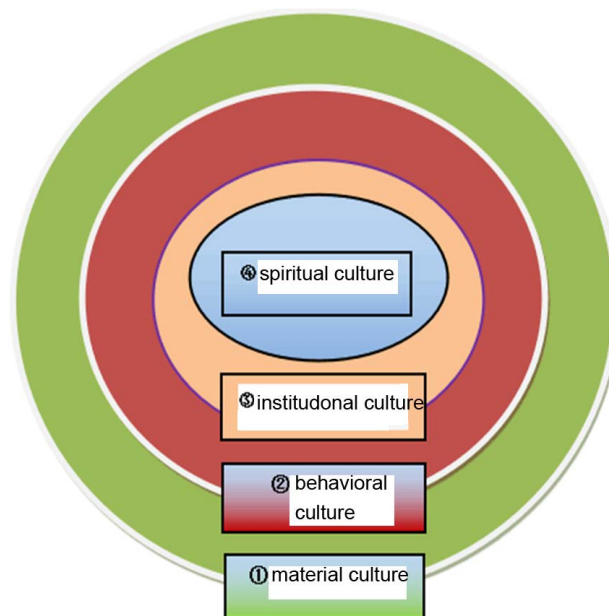


Figure 1. Cross-section of the cultural structure of the four-element classification.

From the cross-section of this cultural structure, we know that material culture, as the outermost, is the cultural layer which is most likely to accumulate or change when the different cultural circles come into contact. It is usually presented in a shared way among the ethnic groups. Thus, globalization has always been preceded by the globalization of the economy, especially the material. Or, in most cases, globalization has always developed firstly in the economic field.

In the process of economic globalization, the global flow of economic factors such as resources, funds, technology, labor, products, and markets has promoted exchanges between people from different countries and regions; and triggered changes in people's practices and behaviors. However, people's behavioral culture is shaped by different cultural systems, and different institutional cultures are the result of different spiritual cultures. "Culture is the mother of the system" reveals the important role of human culture.

Culture becomes an organic whole through itself structure. As the outermost material culture is very easy to change; but the spiritual culture, values, ethics, etc., including the religious beliefs in the innermost core, are difficult to change, and the system culture that lives between the inner core and the outer layer is also difficult to change. The behavioral culture is the practice or externalization of spiritual culture. This practice or the externalization of cultural communication and coordination is an important hurdle for global governance today.

According to Huntington, civilizations are in conflict in the world. These conflicts are mainly the conflicts between different religion-based civilizations, such as Islam and Christianity, Christianity and Confucianism, Islam and Buddhism, and so on. Under normal conditions, civilization has played an important role in promoting the development of human society, but Huntington emphasized that civilized "conflicts" have adversely affected human society. Especially after the September 11th incident, Huntington's "clash of civilizations" theory became an important basis for American political theory (Huntington, 1998). Of course, Huntington's "clash of civilizations" view was met with a strong response from Miller's "civilized coexistence" argument (Miller, 2002). However, cultural conflict and civilized communion are the two major trends in the world's development. They need to be paranoid.

For Chinese scholars, China's Confucian civilization is not in conflict with other civilizations in the world, but is inclusive. It emphasizes "harmony and difference", coexistence and communion, and harmonious development. In fact, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and other religions all experienced China's "localization" process to varying degrees. For example, the Buddhism that was introduced into China in the Eastern Han Dynasty gradually merged with Confucianism and Taoism. During the period of the Chinese Northern Dynasties and Southern Dynasties, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism became the clues of the "three religions", and after the Sui Dynasty and Tang Dynasty, they became an important part of the traditional culture of China.

Of course, there are two different types of Chinese traditional culture: one is

the “major tradition” culture (or elite culture or mainstream culture) characterized by a group of scholars and intellectuals, and the other is the lower class social people. The characteristics of “small traditional” culture group can be reflected from the negative aspects of folk art, folk belief or grass roots culture. However, China’s great traditions and small traditions can communicate with each other, and their bridge is “upstream” or “downward” of religious beliefs and their specific practices (Li, 1996). It is in this sense that we would like to say that religious culture constitutes the core of human culture.

3. Poor Cultural Exchange and Communication in Economic Globalization Increase the Difficulty of Global Governance

Economic globalization has brought about the global allocation of capital, resources, technology, and labor. However, the global mobility of the population not only brings difficulties in the understanding and communication of the cultures of various nations in the world, but also makes global governance more difficult.

Nowadays, Chinese citizens have traveled more widely abroad, but many countries have shown a “two-sided” attitude toward the arrival of Chinese tourists: on the one hand, they hoped that Chinese tourists came to travel and consume to drive local economic development and increase their income; but on the other hand, they also felt that many Chinese tourists lacked public etiquette and cultural literacy and were dissatisfied with some Chinese tourists who shouted loudly at public places, liked to join in crowds, crowded the queue, and even “do not pay attention to hygiene”. However, as a host, have you ever thought why Chinese tourists behave like what they did?

China is known as the “state of etiquette”, which shows that Chinese traditional culture does not lack etiquette culture. However, China’s resources have become increasingly scarce due to population growth and have caused changes in Chinese culture, making crowding and paralysis a normal form of everyday life. Since it is the norm, coupled with the lack of necessary understanding of tourist destination culture by Chinese tourists, it is easy to bring their normal culture to tourism.

This is not to justify the uncivilization and behavior of Chinese tourists traveling abroad, but just to clarify that tourism is actually a double-edged sword. Since you want people to travel and stimulate your economic growth and increase profits, you should pay for the negative costs incurred.

Compared with short-term tourism across borders, the cultural understanding and communication brought by international migration is more complicated. Immigrants come from different countries and regions. They carry different cultures and transplant these cultures to the countries or regions where they have migrated. They work hard to adapt to and integrate into mainstream culture in public spaces such as work and social affairs, and they retain more of their original culture in private areas such as family life and religious beliefs.

This has been particularly evident in the first generation of immigrants.

The problem is that in some countries in Europe that have to rely on imported workers because of the serious ageing of the population, how to adapt and integrate the cultural values of labor importing and exporting countries has become an urgent and thorny issue.

To a certain extent, religious culture is an important gene of human civilization. "Religious belief and language can accommodate and serve to ratify either metaphorical self-understanding." (Eldon, 2008). Some writers holds that religious identity has become problematic because of the changing cultural and religious landscape in which we live (Fontinell, 1993; Gergen, 1991; Taylor, 1989). "But, in a word, culture is what makes religion interesting." (Robert, 1997). However, when religious beliefs deep in people's mind are intertwined with political and economic interests in reality, the political and economic interest appeals of countries or nations are often manifested in the form of contradictions or conflicts between different religions.

The geo-political conflict in the era of globalization is not only a political issue or an economic issue: it is first and foremost a cultural issue whose deep roots are historically formed values and feelings (Ervin, 1993). This undoubtedly increases the difficulty of global governance across the borders of sovereign states. Therefore, religious dialogue and religious reconciliation should be an important way to eliminate religious disputes that hide political and economic interests.

4. Harmonious and Diverse Cultural Concepts and Multicultural Coexistence Help Promote Global Governance

Anthropological experience tells us that human social culture is as diverse as nature, and this cultural diversity is conducive to the self-repair and balance of human social and cultural ecosystems.

In the process of global governance, we should recognize that different cultures are important dimensions of socio-economic development in different countries or regions, and we seek for their inherent rationality, orderliness, and commonality in the widely existing cultural differences in human society. A better understanding of the other's culture will enable better communication and coordination in global governance, and ultimately achieve cross-cultural global governance in the search for common ground while reserving differences.

Fei Xiaotong's famous assertion is instructive for the cross-cultural global governance: "Each appreciates their own beauty, appreciates the beauty of others, and harmoniously coexists in a beautiful society. The world will be great." Later, Fei Xiaotong amended his 16-character quote in his later years: "Each appreciates their own beauty, appreciates the beauty of others, and harmoniously coexists in a beautiful society. The world will be harmonious but different." (Fei, 2002). The amendment expression from "the world is more common" to "the harmonious but different" reflects Fei Xiaotong's understanding of the direction

of human culture, and also help us to understand Fei Xiaotong's revealing of the significance of human cultural diversity.

The "harmony but different" cultural concept recognizes the diversity and rationality of human culture, and also lays the foundation for the harmonious coexistence of multiculturalism. It is to some extent the self-liberation and "salvation" of human beings in a strife society. The success of this liberation and "salvation" lies in mutual respect and cultural consultation.

In fact, the process of global governance is a process of cultural consultation that seeks common ground. This is an anthropologist's cultural understanding of global governance. The disciplinary characteristics of anthropology make this understanding deep and insightful, because it penetrates the complex international political, economic, and military appearances and grasps the cultural dimension and action logic of global public governance.

It goes without saying that we should cherish such cultural understanding and cultural perspectives and promote good governance and good governance in global public affairs in mutual respect and cultural consultation.

5. Conclusion

In summary, we come to the following three preliminary conclusions:

Firstly, human culture has a circle structure. Religious culture is at the core of human culture. It will have an impact on people's social behavior and communication practice in the era of globalization.

Secondly, religious culture is an important gene of human civilization. People of different religious and cultural backgrounds have different behaviors in transnational mobility and communication practices. The effectiveness of cultural understanding and cultural communication influences global governance effectiveness in economic globalization.

Thirdly, global governance is essentially a cultural negotiation. The particularity of religious culture determines that religious dialogue and religious reconciliation should become an important way to eliminate religious disputes that hide political and economic interests.

The main contribution of this paper lies in the analysis of the general structure of culture, and analyzes the difficulties and outlets faced by global governance from the perspective of the core of culture—religious beliefs and its culture. It further points out that religious dialogue and religious reconciliation should be the elimination of hidden politics. Religious disputes with economic interests are an important path, and this is the main root of global governance.

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