

Identity and Order: A Reciprocal-based Anthropography in Village Festivals and Events

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Abstract: Reciprocity, as one of the basic characteristics of human society, plays a connecting role in social life. Meanwhile, the indispensable events happen every day in villages. Taken the ethnography as research methods, this article aims at exploring the forms, characters and essence of reciprocal exchange behaviors in a village events field. The findings show that the exchange encompass in multi-layers covering labor, material, skill, emotion and so on, reflecting in the performance during festival activities in the villages. Actually, this reciprocal exchange behaviors stand for cultural identities of villagers towards their self-emotions and social orders, which are mainly embodied in trivial daily life, and gradually form an agreed-upon, customary reciprocal exchange rules, namely cultural orders, identified and adhered by the villagers for a long time. In the field of festival activities, the cycle of reciprocal exchange behaviors repeated, which constitutes not only a good operation of the village orders and cultural identity but also continues to evolve in the cultural changes of the festival activities?

Introduction

Reciprocal exchanges have accompanied the civilization of human beings throughout history, which become an inevitable requirement for win-win cooperation among countries nowadays. Reciprocity refers to a series of accepted standards in the process of exchange between parties, that is, when one provides assistance or gives certain resources to another; the latter is obliged to return to those who have helped. Individuals must form a relationship of exchange activities in order to adapt to the development and changes of society. In social psychology, the theory of social exchange explains the quality and development of the relationship between people, a reciprocal connection is a constraint of mutual exchange, once established and not easy to be erased [1]. In anthropology, “Kura” trading circle of Malinowski [2] is an institutionalized ritual exchange system representing the hidden motivations and emotions of people, to extent, the determined form of social relations and the responsibility of reciprocity among people. Salins [3] identified three important variables that determine the general attributes of gifts and exchanges: the proximity of kinship, groupness, and generosity. Wang [4] believes that resources for mutual assistance fall into four categories: loans, gifts, labor, and information. Although the rapid urbanization and economic-driven environment, the original reciprocal exchange relationship is still carried in remote villages, especially in the event, the rules and covenants of the village are vividly reflected in these reciprocal exchanges.

Study Area and Methods

The research based on a field survey of traditional villages, four traditional villages in Ning'er Hani and Yi Autonomous County of Pu'er City were selected as the research field. They were

Nakeli Village in Tongxin Township as the first batch, Kunlushan Village in Ning'er Township, Bengza Village and Shangxuande Village in Mengxian Township as the second batch. The village events including wedding, funeral, festivals and other activities according to the ethnic norms, ethnography methods such as participatory observation and field notes were applied to those activities.

Basic Rules of Reciprocity with Example

Take the funeral in Bengza Village as an example, except the host, other helpful participants including a Master (“Jiaoguan”), 1-2 bookkeeper for whole ceremony. At the cemetery, a young elder coffin helper, 2-3 house cleaner, 6-8 supervisor for the house after the exhumation, 8-10 coffin carrier. In the kitchen, 2-3 chefs, 8-10 males killing pigs, 4-5 males killing chickens, 6-10 females cutting meat, 4-6 females washing vegetables, 3-5 females preparing condiments, the above helpers can repeat or rotate. At the dinner, the helper was called “Kanfan”, including 4-6 females setting the tableware, 2-4 males taking the dishes to the table, cleaning after meals also.

In a village festival, usually three days including dinner. First day “Preparation Banquet” for the event helper; Second day “Formal Banquet” for guests and friends on the day of the festival; Third day “Thanksgiving Banquet” for the helper again, commonly known as “Sour Soup Dinner”- a sour mixed vegetables dish specially prepared by the host for the hard work of helping people. The host will record the behaviors of the people and guests who come to help, and one day, they will return to the other with corresponding behaviors.

The division of labor based on reciprocity can be conducted from above. First of all, the personnel composition mode of the general festival event: The Principal (responsible for the overall division of labor) + Chef (responsible for dishes) + Associates (doing miscellaneous work, coordinating various things) + Guests (participating in activities) + Special Personnel (such as Sacrificial person, Host, band and etc.). Second, the division of labor is clear: relatively heavy tasks requiring a large amount of strength are generally undertaken by men, and other light and complicated tasks by women. Furthermore, the organization is organized time-sequentially, such as the “Killing-Pig Dinner” at the end of the year, each household entertains the whole village in order, all villagers are invited to each household to help rotated. Finally, a reciprocal exchange, people who help each other through their own labor, skills, etc. will get food as feedback. When your family is doing business, other people will contribute either labor or money; conversely, when something happens to my family, the other family will also return in this way.

Content of Reciprocity

Material exchange. The bookkeeper records either money or the goods exchange of the guests. The host keep a record of the helpers, relatives and friends, so that they can return to the others with the same gift money or more in the coming day. There is also a certain goods exchange between the villagers in the work activities, for example the vegetables and rice shortage can be met the needs at that time and paid back with the same goods in other events. Meal as the short term exchange offers by host for the helpers; wine, fruits and other items brought by the guests is in return of the feast.

Labor exchange

During the village festival activities, the helpers are more likely to use their own labor force to help the host family completing various tasks in the festival activities. For example, in the “Killing-Pig Dinner” activities, the helpers are finely assigned to different group with different tasks, i.e. killing pigs, washing vegetables, cutting meat, cooking, treating guests, washing dishes, cleaning up, etc. some tasks are in succession requiring everyone to pay labor and help others to complete. When one event finished this time, the host will be the helper next time, this process occurs and repeats constantly in the daily life of the village forming a conscious agreement as reciprocal exchange of labor.

Skill exchange

There are some special works in the events which need people with special skills to do basing on someone's recognized and trusted experience. Taking "killing pigs" as an example, it is the work requires expertise to get more and better blood from the pigs when killing; it is also a team work forming through long-term cooperation, sometime one skill team in one village. The prestige seniors the village are usually invited as moderators or witnesses in the weddings; Others with better cooking skills as head chefs, women with household skills in the daily life as helper in the kitchen. Such skill-based exchanges activities form a skill exchange and complemented system in the village's festival activities that the traditional skills of the village can be continued and developed.

Emotional exchange

During festival activities, villagers take the gathering opportunity to chatting, gossiping and playing cards, to enhance communication and mutual feelings between each other. There is an emotional expression between women and men with gratitude and affection, promoting the construction of harmonious village and the establishment and consolidation of emotional intimacy. In the process of reciprocal exchange during the events, there is a psychological contract, a sense of affection, and a cultural atmosphere; and the contract, affection, and cultural atmosphere are just one of the important factors for the daily order to proceed. Whether it is celebrating life or mourning death, transplanting rice, building a house or moving to the new house, the exchange of "emotion" is carefully recorded for future repayment.

Function of Reciprocity

Identification

According to Malinowski, the "Kula" trade is not purely utilitarian, but mainly the fame brought by them [5]. The aims of gathering during the event, also dealing with some important villager matters, the quantity of present family members reflects status and neighbor relationships of the family in the village, the more the better. The helpers in each event with various names in different place, such as "Guanjia", "Zhangshi", "Jiaoguan", "Jiaohanren", "Jiaozhang" and etc., shows their ability and fame in village, everyone must obey his instructions. It is an orientation-based group, no matter what status they are in the society outside, in this event-formed organization, there are only the helpers in different workgroups.

Trust establishment

Before the events (3 or 4 days), the host family must invite the helpers, fixing the helping date and tasks, usually bringing the gift specially to those with skills, the helpers make decision and express their attitude to the host's affairs, such as blessing or comfort. This negotiation and invitation process are the establishment of trust, on the one hand, the host believes that the helpers can complete various tasks smoothly. On the other hand, the promises of the helpers mean the assurance of presenting and make no appointments with others. Some helpers go by themselves without invitations, it is a continuation of the order of life that does not require invitations. Everyone abides by this norm, at least one person from each family will take the initiation to help. This help goes beyond life and comes from the awe of life, for it's natural to be old and sick.

Maintenance interpersonal relationships

Short-term exchange behaviors are deprived from sentimental considerations, people may not know whether they will get a return in the future; however, long-term exchange behaviors also form the intimate interaction between people, it is an effective form of establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. When someone intentionally undermines this kind of reciprocity, deliberately refraining from participating in the festival activities and not returning them, they will

be punished and tested by people's verbal arguments. In the process of helping each other, the relationship of the neighbors is closer and communication is integrated.

Forming a village cultural norm

When similar reciprocal exchange activities are carry out in the medium and long term, the village culture will gradually form a habit and custom in this reciprocal exchange behavior. The mutual assistance culture of villagers constructs the party's behavior habits, and vice versa. The characteristics of the event, i.e. specialties of "Pig-killing", the kneeling worship of wedding, the custom of gift ceremony, the occupation choosing ritual of one-years old, the procedure of the funeral, etc., are highlighted in the process of the festival, helping people and guests to communicate with each other during the participation and forming a customary culture.

Constructing the field of idea exchange

The festival event has become the main field of communication, where host family, helping people and guests are collide with each other in their interactions and conversations. This communication collision is conducive to the formation of shared ideas, and the sense of commonality of reciprocal exchanges has gradually continued to develop. Talk about the craftsmanship of the dishes, which is conducive to improving the cooking skills; talk about the stories in the city, and talk about the village's interesting things, which is conducive to the exchange of ideas and the establishment of awareness. The gathering of family, relatives and friends, the elderly, children, etc. will also build a field of communication between relatives and families. Talk about the performance of children, talk about ways to improve performance; listen to the elderly tell stories of the past, you can know more life experience. Thoughts and concepts gradually accumulate and precipitate in this field of communication. Village order is gradually formed and continuously circulated in these organized festival activities, and the reciprocal exchange has become an order followed by villagers and a relative stability. The psychological characteristics are passed down from generation to generation.

Problems of Reciprocity and its Reason

From the perspective of the exchange activity process in the festival event, the exchange is a first pay for the unknown reward behavior. At the same time, it is an important part of the formation of village culture and the maintenance of village order. With the development of informatization and urbanization, the reciprocal exchanges in villages are restricted somehow.

Shortage of cultural-carrying personnel

With the improvement of education level, changes in labor methods, technological progress and other factors, the structure of resident population in the village varied - more young people going out while the elderly, women and children left in the village. The labor exchange gradually decreases for the shortage of labor force in the village. The exchange order formed by the elder generation is difficult to maintain in the process of changing personnel mobility. When host family needs help in organizing an event, the family left only the elderly and children cannot join in. Gradually, this reciprocal behavior will be lacking, and the sustainability of reciprocal exchange will be undermined. The true social process must be based on a kind and reciprocal exchange between each other, a society without reciprocity is obviously unsustainable. [1]

The atmosphere of festival activities is gradually fading

With the development of science and technology, the way of livelihood has also changed with more young people working in the cities. Convenient transportation and logistics system enable people to purchase some food which need long time preparing during festival activities before. The decreasing population also affects the number of people participating in certain festivals, and finally weakening the atmosphere of the event, such as New Rice Festival and Threshing Festival. Young people living in the cities for a long time, their affection of participation in village affairs has decreased and is difficult to integrate into the village festival exchange activities due to the

influence of new things.

Reduced face-to-face emotional communication

The use of mobile phones reduces the face-to-face invitation opportunities, while shortening the time and space distance, but also weakening the opportunity for people to exchange emotions. Fields such as shared space-time, emotional disclosure, and establishment are no longer coexisting, coexisting, and sharing together. Changes in the way of livelihood and the mobility of people have brought about new reciprocal exchanges. The exchange of information, ideas, technologies, etc. has continued to converge and form a new order in this flow. The order of the village's reciprocal exchange gradually formed in the process of time and space and was recognized and continuously practiced by people. This cultural order does not seem to have disappeared because of changes in social culture, but the relative reduction of traditional forms or the new carriers and forms are constantly evolving, deriving, continually integrating, developing, and renewing.

Summary

The constantly developing and changing human society brings about the constantly changing the environment for reciprocal exchanges. The form and content of reciprocal exchanges will also show diversified states, and a new order culture will gradually be formed. In response to this kind of change, we should look at it with dialectical thinking and developmental perspectives. Just as children grow up, their bodies and minds will change, but our inner feelings, spiritual qualities, and some things in consciousness will continue to be preserved in the bones. The changes in festival activities are reflected in the details of daily life with a reciprocity exchange rule. These rules are a cultural order recognized by the villagers and adhered to for a long time. The essence of exchange is the cultural identification of villagers for their emotions and village order. The act of consciously giving and helping each other connects, restrain, and promote the unity of the village. The covenant of civilization required for village rejuvenation, the village society is developing harmoniously in this reciprocal exchange, and the etiquette of reciprocity exchange will be excavated, organized and promoted, which will eventually extend the cultural identity of the village.

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