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# Research on the Urbanization Paths in Ethnic Regions of China based on Eco-civilization

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## ABSTRACT

Economic growth is the core power to promote and shape the urbanization development, which helps to promote the economic development and social progress in ethnic regions of China. Ecological civilization focuses on improving the relationship and ending the confrontation, separation, mutual exclusion and conflict between man and nature, ethnic regions of China should promote the construction of ecological civilization from multiple aspects and realize sustainable development. Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is one of five ethnic regions of China; the urbanization in Xinjiang is unique in its functions, layout, dynamic mechanism, realizing path, and system background. Thus, it is necessary to select different paths according to different local conditions, to achieve multiple functions of economic development, ecological security and social stability.

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## Introduction

Urbanization is the spatial agglomeration and differentiation process of human production and lifestyle caused by economic system evolution. Its occurrence mechanism and development path are closely related with economic development, and eventually depend on industrialization level and economic structure. Practice indicates that urbanization is synergy results of economy, population, culture, environmental and social factors, none element can drive urbanization independently, but economic growth is the core power to promote and shape the urbanization development.

The city, as a signal of the human civilization and a carrier of the society and economy development, is an area which concentrates population, industry, bankroll, productivity, science and technology. Moreover, it is also a center for both the economy and society activities and a focus of various contradictions. However, a series of problems, such as the population explosion, the lack of housing, the traffic jams, the environment pollution, the ecological damage etc., generate with the urbanization. A new concept named as eco-city is proposed during human beings overcoming the difficulties and it has been widely concerned by both of the academia and the governments. Furthermore, the theory of eco-city is applied into practice, making a remarkable effect among the fields of society, economy and ecology. Essentially, an eco-city is the urbanization process based on eco-civilization.

The beginning of urbanization was late in China, there is also quite imbalance in China's urbanization due to the history. The urbanization rate is high in east China whereas it is very low in the ethnic regions of west China. At the present, the lagging of the urbanization development and the differences of the urbanization among regions in ethnic regions of China have restricted the economy development as well as social progress. As the application of extensive mode of economy development, numerous problems, covering environment, economy and society fields, appeared with the development of economy and society in the ethnic areas of west China, especially the ecological environment pollution and damage. Urbanization under the eco-civilization construction will create an eco-city

with the sustainable development of nature, economy and society. Advantages are certainly brought to the ethnic areas of west China through eco-cities construction, e.g.: the influence of drought on both the water and the climate can be reduced or avoided through impoundment, the nature disaster can be abated through conversion of cropland to forest making an improved living conditions and a stable society.

The urbanization in ethnic regions of China is a hot topic in the field of ethnology researching recent years. It has already been testified that urbanization helps to promote the economic development and social progress in ethnic areas. Thus, it is quite necessary to investigate the mode of eco-city in the ethnic regions of west China.

The ethnic regions of west China in this paper refers to five ethnic autonomous regions, they are Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Tibet Autonomous Region.

## Paths of Civilization Construction in Ethnic regions of China

Technical rationality has played an extremely important role in the past 300 years of the industrial civilization development. Under the guidance of the technical rationality, the economy has grown, social wealth has increased, and the people's living conditions have improved much more. At the same time, more and more mineral resources have been exploited by human beings through new scientific and technological means, more and more lands have been rudely cultivated than before, more forest has been felled than before, more industrial pollutants have been discharged than before. Such production mode and lifestyle of mass production, consumption as well as mass emissions damaged to the world's ecological environmental exploitation (Daly H.E., 2004). While focusing on high speed economic development, people begun to pay much attention to the increasingly serious ecological problems.

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### **Eco-civilization pursues the harmonious development between man and nature**

“Eco” in Greek means residence or habitat, the original meaning of which is “home of organism”. However nowadays “eco” means the relationship among organisms, and the relationship among organisms and all the biotic environmental factors. Ecosystem is the cradle of all living things, including humans, and a provider of a wide range of human necessities and services. It supports the survival of all lives on the earth, and is the foundation for the survival and economical development of human society. It has the highest value which is irreplaceable (Westman W. 1977). It has become increasingly clear that the only way to solve the growing problem of resources and the environment lies in building the ecological civilization, and implementing the development strategy to make the economy ecologically growing. This includes from the prevention at the source to the control of the whole process, changing the way of production and living to demand endlessly from nature, moving toward the direction of recycling natural resources, developing renewable resources, restoring the natural ecology and expanding the environmental capacity. We need to control human activities within a range the ecosystem can withstand. By doing so mankind not only enjoys the rich achievement of industrial civilization, but also lives by the natural ecological services primitive civilization offers, and strives to maintain a “harmonious stable state” of ecological civilization for the earth.

Ecological civilization focuses on improving the relationship and ending the confrontation, separation, mutual exclusion and conflict between man and nature, resolving the clashes between man and nature the clashes between man and its society centered around the “economic interests” and brought about by the conventional anthropocentrism (Hallstand S., 2006) ; and promoting the constant progress of the material production and spiritual life of human beings.

#### ◆ Eco-civilization pursues the harmonious development between man and nature

Achieving the harmonious development between man and nature is the most basic feature of eco-civilization, the basic premise of sustainable development of human society, and also the fundamental interest of mankind. Eco-civilization is centered around the interaction between man and nature, puts nature as the foundation of human survival and development, emphasizes on that the common evolution of man and nature, not just to measure the relationship between man and nature through the scale of human interest, but also to respect the right and recognize the value of nature. It also advocates that production activities should be conducted to best suit the natural status, so that the relationship between mankind and nature becomes more harmonious and unified.

#### ◆ Eco-civilization is an organic system of rich connotation

Eco-civilization is one of the greatest consensuses of our time. It has permeated into the political arena, promoting environmental justice and the establishment of ecological laws; it has permeated into the economic arena, changing the traditional model of economic development to achieve sustainable development; it has permeated into the culture arena, promoting ecological aesthetics and ecological culture; it has permeated into the social arena, promoting green consumption and environmental friendly living. In addition, eco-civilization is also related to the spiritual achievements such as social values, philosophy, ethics, view of nature, etc.

#### ◆ The goal of eco-civilization is to achieve a coordinated and sustainable development of human society

Eco-civilization maintains that nature, people and society are an indivisible organic unity. It takes the whole nature as the material cornerstone and spiritual source of the development of human society, and converts the relationship between man and nature into the internal relationship of social development. The harmonious development of people, nature and society reflects the values of eco-civilization, reflects a high degree of uniformity of the economic sustainability, ecological sustainability and social sustainability.

### **Paths of civilization construction in ethnic regions of China**

In order to comprehensively building a harmonious society, ethnic minority regions should promote the construction of ecological civilization from multiple aspects and realize sustainable development.

#### **Inherit and promote eco-ethics of ethnic groups**

The rational factor in China's traditional eco-ethics in minorities is an intuitive and simple sentimental concept, without a comprehensive exposition on the relationship between man and nature. The integration of ecological ethics of minorities and the modern ethics is a rational choice for the reservation of ecology and the harmonious development in ethnic regions (Baoli Bai, 2007). The shared prosperity and a harmonious society of ecological civilization have to be ultimately achieved based upon the ecological ethics from minorities through the absorption of the theory of modern science to fit their specific situations. With the development of society, ethnic minorities have been unable to adapt to ecological ethics in pursuit of a modern society for the purpose of maximizing the economic benefits of large-scale material production activities. Therefore, the inheritance of traditional eco-ethics from minorities must be uplifted so that it is built on the basis of modern science.

#### **Improve policies and regulations related to protect the ecology of the ethnic regions**

Basically the Mongolian grassland kept its primitive natural status until the middle 18<sup>th</sup> century. As early as the dynasty of Genghis Khan, the destruction of ecological environment is listed as national prohibition, e.g. The hunting of immature animals are prohibited, trees were not allowed to be cut indiscriminately. “Those, who destroy the farming-land, will be punished ... the whole family will be executed if one forgot to extinguish fire and burn the grass land” was also a law at that time. The system of ecology compensation funds should be improved in the minority regions, which makes the ecological compensation vertically from the government more specific and reasonable. Especially the minority areas may fully take advantage of the “the law of autonomy of the ethnic regions” and the advantage of privilege of setting new laws of the government (especially the privilege of making changes accordingly). The national laws and regulations may be detailed, specific regulations may be added for execution to increase the operability and vigorously protect the construction of ecological civilization and the continuous development of economy and society. For example, in 2008, more than 1 million Yuan RMB was provided through the regional & county level finance of Ali to compensate the losses of the local people by protecting wild animals. This is another example of “pay the bill” by government since the adoption of “Tibet Autonomous Region, Provisional Measures for Property Loss & Personal Injuries by Prominent land Wildlife” in 2006.

#### **Developing “no-carbon industry” , “low-carbon industry” or circular economy in ethnic regions**

China's borderline stretches 22 thousand kilometers long, of which 19 thousand rests in ethnic autonomous regions. China shares borders with 14 countries and has more than 30 ethnic minority groups (Jingfu Guo, 2010), which are adjacent to the same ethnic groups across the border, sharing similar language and culture. With favorable location and ethnic advantages, ethnic regions have potential of developing export-oriented economy and low-carbon or non-carbon industries based on frontier trade. By developing these industries, it can not only improve their economic strength, but also realize sustainable development.

Cultural industry of ethnic minorities has wide market prospect by providing consumers with ethnic, exotic and primitive spiritual cultural product and art service. Dynamic Yunnan is a large-scale dance drama, dynamically incorporating traditional beauty and modern flavors with a reintegration of the most original and rustic dance elements of Yunnan. A 70-percent cast of performers are the ethnic people from all villages of Yunnan province. Authentic costumes and props which are taken from real life, unsophisticated singing and primitive, enthusiastic dancing, which fuses traditional dance and modern dance, recreates fairy ethnic flavor of Yunnan from reality. It is appraised by the experts as "resurrection of ethnic dance" with significant economic and social benefit.

Frosch A. and Gallopoulos (1989) proposed the concept of industrial eco-system. They pointed that "traditional industrial activity patterns should be transmitted into to a more complete model: industry ecosystem. In this system, energy and material consumption are optimized, waste discharge is minimized, and the waste of a production process becomes the raw materials of another production process". Industrial eco-system is also the choice for the ethnic region to develop industry based on natural resources; it is the model of circular economy.

#### **Urbanization Paths of Ethnic Areas—In Case of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**

The hot spot of urbanization which is one of the most important hot issues in China for urban and rural economic and social development embodies characteristics of the social development in China. It is also recognized as the inevitable road to modernization in China. Throughout the history of urbanization in the world, most of the countries are not able to avoid detours for speeding up urbanization because of the wrong developmental theories and models. It's very important significance that speeding up the process of urbanization in contemporary China. Promoting the healthy development of urbanization layout, making more of the farming population enter the non-agricultural industry and city areas of employment from agriculture and rural, will be an important strategic task of urban and rural economic and social development, fundamentally solving agriculture problem, the comprehensive construction well-off society and harmonious society in China.

Xinjiang is located in the northwestern border of China, which is an important strategic base of energy resources, an important gateway of China's opening up to the western countries, and China's security shield of the northwestern frontiers. Bordering on eight countries, Xinjiang is located in the hinterland of Eurasia, with such cultural and geographic features as multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-ecological coexistence, as well as a lot of resources. Urbanization in Xinjiang is not only an important channel to transfer surplus rural laborers and realize economic agglomeration, but also an effective way to protect the fragile ecological environment of the oasis and promote national integration and social stability. Because of the special cultural and geographic features, the

special functions of urbanization, and the special external environment of Xinjiang, the path to urbanization in Xinjiang is different from that in the mainland (Ma Yuan, 2011). It is necessary for Xinjiang to select a different path to urbanization with Xinjiang characteristics.

#### **Xinjiang's urbanization is unique**

The urbanization in Xinjiang is unique in its functions, layout, dynamic mechanism, realizing techniques, and system background. Thus, it is necessary to select different paths according to different local conditions, to achieve multiple functions of economic development, ecological security and social stability.

#### **Urbanization in Xinjiang differs in different regions.**

The urbanization in Xinjiang differs in different regions. And the problems of ecological security and social stability have been highlighted in the process. The urbanization level in south Xinjiang is lower than that in north Xinjiang, and that in regions where the minority groups live is lower than that where Hans live. The developments of urbanization in different regions in Xinjiang promote the local economy differently, urbanization threatens the ecological environment, and the problems of social conflicts and national integration become underlying factors affecting social stability.

#### **The path of urbanization in Xinjiang is the result of the driving forces and the braking forces**

To choose the path of urbanization in different regions mainly depends on local resource endowments, location, environment, economic foundation and government's policies and other factors. In the process of path selection of urbanization, different areas have obviously different situations and different driving forces and braking forces. The dominant driving forces and braking forces will be the key to determine the path of urbanization. The government in the process of urbanization in Xinjiang plays a very important role. The function of ecological security and social stability needs to strengthen the implementation mechanism of government.

#### **Urbanization in Xinjiang serves the different functions**

The realizing methods of urbanization in Xinjiang serve the different functions of it. From the perspective of economic development, the paths of urbanization in Xinjiang include the path of center centralization, the path of resource development, the path of border crossings, the tourism-based path, the path of agricultural industrialization; From the perspective of ecological security the paths of urbanization include the path of ecological migration and the path of development limitations; From the perspective of social stability the paths of urbanization include the path of political frontiers, the government-motivated path and the path of local integration.

#### **Urbanization path in Xinjiang is diverse and dynamic**

The path selection of urbanization in Xinjiang is diverse and dynamic, and it must be adapted to local conditions. The major contradictions are different in different regions and different stages, so the paths of urbanization are different. Whether the urbanization's primary purpose is economic development, or ecological security or social stability, it is just a means to achieve urbanization. The paths of urbanization in Xinjiang are not only diverse but also dynamic. A region may have obvious characteristics of the path of urbanization, with the urbanization depending on one major path; it may also choose different paths of urbanization in order to achieve different function goals.

**Conclusion**

We should change the development mode of extensive urbanization into intensive one, adopting rational urban configuration and well manage the relationship of the speed and quality to realize a good and fast urbanization. Green development with eco-civilization, with people first as the core, demands that the strategy of urbanization should be essentially changed from growth-oriented to human-being-oriented mode. In other words, urbanization should take people as the core, and highlight that people are the subjects of target, value, motivation and responsibility, etc. in this process.

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