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Research paper



An Anthropological Approach to Discourse of Natural Heritage and Rural Tourism

Fereshteh Alizadeh[1], Fatemeh Ahmadi[2]

[1] *Department of Tourism, Faculty of Humanities Sciences, Islamic Azad University Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran*
[2] *Department of Management, Islamic Azad University Qeshm Branch, Qeshm, Iran*

Abstract

As a cultural subject, rural tourism is a novel concept which is the result of a dialogue between modernism and today's newfangled world; but the study of nature's social life and the relationship between human and nature is very old and its origins are far older than the knowledge of ethnography in a way that during centuries, different fields such as anthropogeography, cultural ecology and ethno-biology has been originated from this relationship. If we accept that one of the main incentives of rural tourists is the pleasure of seeing landscapes and natural heritage, studying the theoretical dimensions of the natural heritage can help the tourism policy makers to plan. As mentioned before, rural tourism is still young and its theoretical dimensions has not been studied very much.

Keywords: *anthropology, tourism, natural heritage, rural tourism.*

1. Introduction

What is the relationship between rural tourism and natural heritage? To what cause are the scientists of different fields interested in this subject? Which necessity of today's human being is satisfied by natural heritage? What are the roots of natural heritage in modernism?
This paper tries to answer these questions and study the subject of natural heritage from a cultural and ethnographic point of view [1]. First the rural tourism is mentioned as well as some of its cultural dimensions. Then besides the genealogy of the expression, natural heritage, we state the two conceptual paradox in this expression, presented by Merry Douglas. After that, the concept of "objectification" and "materialization" of the ideas are investigated as two important process in generating a symbolic or mythical identity in the nature; that how one can "materialize and objectify" their subjective ideas into an objective and to some extent natural to get the idea out of the individualist condition into a pluralist matter, in a way that, as Durkheim believed, the idea can survive and endure [2]. In another part of the article, the function of natural heritage and land is investigated and it is pointed out how subjects such as language and national flag are considered the next step as metaphoric and reputational subjects [3].
After discussing the objectification and materializing the ideas, two more subjects, "integrity with nature" and "awareness on nature" are mentioned. Integrity with nature as we mean points to the sorrow that modern human has fallen into due to their disconnection with nature and the scattered inartificial identity; the sorrow that guides the urban human back to integrity with nature. Such return is expressed as a painting of the nature or as holidays and ceremonies. "Awareness on nature" which is discussed separately, is also a subject uniquely assigned to modern era in which the urban human regretting the nature, chooses it as a study subject and raise their own awareness on its values in the forms of history and culture [4].
In the section, studying the roots of "the environmental movement in the second half of the twentieth century, different reasons for such event is pointed out such as "the destruction of natural resources", the fear of "economic-based development" and the emerging of the concept, "the third world" [5].
In the final section, "cultural turn" or, as Fredric Jameson and some other postmodern theoreticians termed, "acculturation of the nature" is investigated; how all economic, military, and political organizations are aggregated with culture and expressions such as "art economics", "media war" and "cultural industry" entered the terminology and most importantly in this stage, natural resource and heritage have entered people's daily life separately from the intellectual dialogue and become a comprehensive subject [6-8].

2. Rural Tourism

We should count rural tourism as human's most peaceful movement, because on one hand it is effective on culture and economics and on the other hand it is a factor generating mutual understanding between different ethnos and strengthening basics of peace and commensalism of humans.
Although in past decades most tourists were the upper class of the society and did not play an important role in social and environmental aspects of life due to economic and practical difficulties, nowadays this has changed and average as it is called "the white collars" have joined this activity and become a large population [9].
In this situation, rural tourism has the largest share. However some may consider rural sightseeing is just a single and individual trip, with a little research in reports and tourism statistics, one can see that rural tourism in tourist markets has a significant share in the national growth and leads to a transition of urban investment into rural investment.
In addition to entrepreneurship and raising income, rural tourism has an important role in developing regional cultural and social interactions. In this cultural interaction the gust and host culture

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are in confluence and the process of "criticizing the weak element" and "choosing the strong element" causes a change. Indeed, during this process some conflicts may occur when tourists express activities which are different from the country culture. For instance: enjoying daily activities of the villages such as taking a walk, hiking, visiting farms, wearing fashionable cloth, spending money on leisure time, make up, relationship between people and so many other cases that may whether positively or negatively change behavior and thoughts of villagers [10].
On the other hand, rural tourism is a supportive factor for constancy of the rural culture, because when tourists travel to villages to visit or study their manners and traditions, in order to please them, villagers or regional managers try to preserve these cultural traditions and heritage or even revive some of the forgotten traditions. Villages like Mashhad Ardehal or Abiane are good examples for this argument [11]. Rural tourism is effective in preserving the environment and natural heritage because natural heritage and landscapes are proper factors absorbing tourists and as mentioned before, for entrepreneurship and raising the incomes in the region, regional managers try to preserve these landscapes and heritage. Agricultural policies are also in relations with rural tourism. It can cause constancy in population by stopping local immigrations and also is a motivation for saving the environment and natural heritage. Thus, it plays an essential role in local and regional development [12].
Rural development plans can be effective on regional balance if set based on tourism, however some villages change the properties of rural life and approach the urban lifestyle, the first thing, in order to achieve development. These acts include making multistory cement structures, making roads and relatively modern restaurants. We have frequently seen villagers destroying the historical structures of a holly shrine and replace it with a modern structure in order to increase the physical space. In this way they may even destroy environmental and natural heritage. However development plans based on tourism mostly insist on preserving the views and landscapes and even traditions and manners [13].

3. Natural Heritage as a Modern Cultural Problem

"National heritage" is a legally clear concept which cultural organizations such as UNESCO and cultural heritage preservation organizations employ to describe a part of natural resources such as beautiful natural and ancient places, mountains, plains, hills, waterfalls, seas, lakes, plants, animals and other valuable natural resources of a country. Niagara Falls and Mount Damavand are natural heritage because they worth naturally, historically, economically, culturally and socially. This attitude clears some parts of the conceptual and moral space of natural heritage and shows its denotation. But this expression has a vaster meaning and brings up a connotation too. Now we address some of the connotative anthropological assumptions hidden in this expression [14].
If we look at the expression, natural heritage, in a paraphrase way, this expression, as a "key cultural concept", contains two internal paradoxes and this is what makes it denotative and important as well as interesting and significant [15].
First paradox is the cultural and moral load which is a result of companionship of "heritage" and "natural". It means the paradox raising from the processes of "naturalization" of culture and "culturalization" of nature. Natural heritage is one of the various natural symbols. As Merry Douglas stated in the introduction of the classic book "Natural symbols" (1970) the concept of natural symbols are paradoxical concepts because this concept believes that "the nature emerges as symbols and symbols are based on made ups and our experiences, meaning they are results of our minds or some standard product. Therefore symbols are against the nature" [1-3].
The second paradox is the novelty of this concept against the archaism of ontology of the nature. Maybe it is found irrational that human has lived and been fed thousands of years in nature yet they are not aware of its benefits theoretically. As written in David Throsby's valuable book, "Economics and Culture": "the origins of considering ecology as an investment, in fact, returns to political economists of nineteenth century such as David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus." And then he continues that the antecedent of the concept "Natural investment" is far more recent:" The antecedent of editing and schematization of the recent concept of natural investment to describe "Nature's free endowments" returns to late 1980's and the birth of the minor, ecologies in 1990's" [9-11]. The concept of natural heritage, accounted for as a sort of natural investment originated from human environment cannot have antecedent later than the concept of natural investment.
One may believe the first theoretical and objective issue of natural heritage is originated from such paradox of its archaism against novelty. This issue is a statement of the relation between natural heritage and the modern era. Such quest is worth investigating and philosophically and anthropologically thinking on and also so vast that cannot be mentioned totally in a small investigation.
Briefly it can be stated that natural heritage is like a cultural heritage resulted by modernism evolution or today's newfangled world. Meaning that today's human interested in a subject called nature as a cultural issue is a result of the development of the new civilization and its resulted awareness. Today's human, on one hand, wants to drive nature in a way of their own advantage and on the other hand restrain nature to be free of its disasters such as flood, earthquake, volcano activations and drought and subdue it to live peacefully beside humans and prank life of today's human with beauty and health. And such will and desire to master nature will fulfil with the help of knowledge and technology. Although those against modernism "has shown that the more we have subdued the nature, the less we have known ourselves and trying to rule, the knowing element or the subject has become less valid" (Ahmadi, 1994: p11)but the result of modernism efforts is that, for today's human, nature is not nature anymore but a piece of its culture. Therefore natural heritage can be a model of the nature that enables todays human to preserve, use and interpret it in a suitable way. Natural heritage, in the modern dialogue framework, belongs to the subject of nature and culture and is affected by our particular historical current circumstance of the modern and post-modern present. That what pertinence such historical circumstance has and where the place of natural heritage is, will be the question we discuss further. Doubtlessly one of the obvious semiological aspects of this is objectivity and materialization of some of our today's cultural aspects. Man has always exploited nature in order to materialize their abstract, immaterial and subjective believes and nature have always been the expressive symbol and sign for giving the proper fulfillment to man's believes. Therefore there is no reason why man should not be using nature to objectify their modern believes. But how?

4. Natural Heritage and Cultural Objectification

Natural heritage is an objective and tangible concept. For instance every Iranian person can bring Mount Damavand, Alborz Mountains, Caspian Sea or green jungles, north of Iran, to his mind. And proudly recall the beauty, richness and variety of their homelands. And most importantly, instead of single compounds and elements inside Iran, they will recall the general concept of "Persia" as a cultural symbol to remind them their national identity. Here, our effort is to describe this objectification and materialization traits of the concepts of identity and nationality. It seems that the concept of natural heritage rises from this ground and needs putting more thoughts to it. First, we explain the concept of objectification in culture and then we look to the natural heritage from the cultural objectification point of view and analyze it.
From the anthropological viewpoint each culture has two distinguished aspects: a material and objective aspect and an immaterial

and subjective aspect. Industries, things, goods, nature, land and parts of a culture are all counted as material attributes. Yet, values, believes, norms and all connotative aspects of a culture are subjective, meaning that they are issues that members of a culture have interiorized them during the process of acculturation and consciously or unconsciously have made it their culture. Between material and other aspects of a culture there is always a sort of combination and inside solidarity. Material aspects are always used to serve the objectifying or objectification of the immaterial aspects. And vice versa, immaterial aspects serve to paraphrase and interpret the material aspects. If man cannot exteriorize and materialize ideas, further than communicating difficulties with that idea, they cannot turn them into a plural and community matter. Man always tries to pluralize their individual emotions. Arts and artworks are all originated from such efforts. Humans always want to create something that gathers women and men, minor and major, public and private, and starts a conversation, and be adored and that is how a tree, a star or other components of nature becomes a symbol or a myth to transform internal, subjective, individual ideas into external, subjective and plural issues and survives. Here the nature and the culture intercourse or in other words nature becomes a cultural issue to enable man to transform their subjective latent into tangible and plural matters.

This point is stated in Durkheim's book "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life" (1912) and also in another one of his works "Primitive Classification" in collaboration with his nephew "Marcel Mauss". Durkheim's logic states in these two works that humans when trying to objectify and materialize their "subjective ideas" or "cultural subjects", they turn to natural elements like plants and animals. In his opinion man in order to transform their idea from a subjective condition into an objective condition and bring continuity and life to their idea, needs to present it in the form of a tree, an animal or even stars. Expressing Tootami or Anee Misami systems (believing in life of things and natural elements) are signs of this attitude. That is the reason in religions and belief systems there is a sort of "externalization" and "materialization" for ideas and religious believes. Even god, that is the biggest key concept in religious systems, needs objectivity. In a comparative and intercultural study, titled as "Imagining God", different ways of incarnation and objectification of the concept and believe of god in different cultures and religions has been described. It explains how cultures incarnate and materialize the concept that believing in god is an immaterial subject to more easily identify and touch god and communicate its holiness. That is how Christianity identifies Jesus Christ as the son of god and Islam explains god as a light[1].

Nature plays an important role here too. As in many culture believing in god is sprained with an element in nature. For example, in Totem religions, they an animal or a plant has been venerated. This is not a place for more examples, however curious readers are referred to the valuable book "The Golden Bough" (1890) by James Frazer who very clearly has demonstrated how different cultures objectified and continued their cultural believes. The role of cultures in objectification, materialization and as a consequence, continuing religious and mythical concepts, is one of the identified cultural forms in anthropological literature. Next, we address the role of nature and land as one of the natural attributes in objectifying the concept of nation and nation-government, and also investigate the role of nature in forming the cultural and political identity.

5. Natural Heritage and Objectifying the Concept of Nation-State

One of the important practices of natural heritage is its role in forming and objectifying the concept of nation and state. All of the nations-states are identified by their lands, meaning that people with no land will not be considered as a nation. Even if this nation has significant population, single race, language and religion and other attributes, they will be considered as an unidentified independent government-nation. A clear example is the population of Kurds. Therefore all peoples of the world are looking for a specific land to form their own national identity. One of the main incentives of the Zionists in occupying the lands of Palestine is achieving a national and land identity. Thus, it can be stated that land is the most important objective symbol of a nation. And this is how the love of motherland exists in all cultures and is so vast that it looks as it is one of the natural instincts of the human beings.

The importance of the role of "objectification" of the land and its attributes (including mountains, summits, fields, waters and mines) in objectifying the national identity should, more than anything else, be expected to find in the imaginativeness of the concept of government-nation.

Benedict Anderson, in his famous book, "Imagined Communities" (1983) calls all new government-nations, imaginary entities, meaning that government-nations are not materialistic and tangible and integrated concepts yet more like a scattered various and distinguished population groups with an imagination of a unified nation in mind. As an instance who do we mean when we say Iranian? Muslims, Jews, Armenians, or Kurds, Balooches or Lors? What is the cause of calling an Arabic person from khuzestan and a Farsi person from Tehran, Iranian? Further than the land called Iran, other things, known as the national unity are imaginary issues or images. These national symbols and signs help us to consider all scattered and different groups living in a land as a unified nation. Symbols and signs governments ordain to strengthen the national unit. All these signs, including national anthem, national flag, national code and even national television or automobile, are to objectify and project the concept of nation.

As mentioned before, the objective factor defining different races and big groups of people as a nation is the land. National anthem, national language and font and national symbols are all signs and elements that members of a nation and even us ordain objectively as signs of nationality and government. For instance if somebody's and their ancestor's origins is not Iran, they do not have Iranian identity, even if they speak Farsi, believe in Shiite Islam and love Iran or even inhabit in Iran. Despite all traits, they are called migrants in the friendliest way, yet not an Iranian. This is how being born in a country and land and historical belongings to land is identity making. This is exactly the identity making and objectifying nature of a land that we starts wars when a little part of the lands of a country is occupied, but such sensitivity is expressed less for language, flag, font or many myths and famous people when occupied by other countries. When the territories of a country change, the country falls into a chaos, the unity of the races is destroyed and many claim their independence and severance. Thus to conserve cultures and nations, the issue of natural signs and heritage including land and homeland becomes important.

6. Integrity and Unity with Nature

The cultures' tendency to nature and natural environment, further than incarnation and objectification of the believes, chase a second goal which is the integrity and unity with nature. Man believes themselves as a component of the nature which will be returned to nature one day. But the urban and industrial life has kept them apart from the nature. Man does not want any distance with nature. They want the nature inside their life, experiencing it every day, therefore the sorrow rising from this gap and from the ripping of their natural and inartificial identity multiplies their need for returning to and integrity with nature.

In primal eras, the hunter human beings totally lived inside and with the nature. Their food, clothes and shelter were supplied directly from the nature and it can be said that human played a role as an animal. In this primal era of human's life their independence from the nature was not very tangible. As time goes on, and hu-

[1] Allah is the light of skies and earth – Holy Quran

mans become a victor ruling the nature, they find more and more of their independence and in the opposite, they feel their need for integrity with the nature. This is why human tries to keep nature in their life and simultaneously keeps it distantly. Thus when they build cities they employ natural symbols such as trees and flowers. Cities are not like villages that are formed because of a natural element such as a river or a fertile field. Urbanism was one of the first and foremost statements of independence of humans from nature. They even the ground and asphalt coat it, changing not only the looks of the nature, but also its functionalities. Wind cannot blow naturally because of the buildings changing its functionality; air get polluted, waters are not wild and natural anymore. And here, humans go differently to the nature. So they use and communicate with the nature ceremonially and bring aesthetical dimensions to the nature such as nature paintings, or bring philosophical dimensions into the nature and create new connotative systems to be able to create nature inside their lives. Centuries of subjugation and surrendering to the nature and setting their life with the harmony of the nature, now, has become independent and taken control of an important part of nature. The human under the mastery of the nature, respecting it out of fear and making myths about its wind and rain, has taken its control in time using knowledge, experience and technology. But now, the morally and materially nature needing human has recreated parts of nature with a new approach and selectively entering it to their life. This is how the human far away from the nature has again returned to nature with a new approach.

7. Awareness on Nature

Apart from the independence from and again returning to nature, there is a third event that is awareness on nature (this time nature becomes a subject). As animals and plants are unaware of the nature neither is human as long as they are not separated and when they become independent something called environment awareness has been achieved. Like a person whose breathing is stopped and now he starts to notice something that is not there anymore and that is the air. When the air gets polluted and one suffers from asthma, they discover the value and advantages of the cleanness, however such awareness did not exist during rural life and man can discover nature when they look at it from the urban and industrial life and an awareness is risen and at this moment the nature becomes a subject and man studies the nature and defines their relation with this subject and arranges it and even sees it as a history and realizes that it has a history and have changed in time and also will change in the future and has to think how it will be changing. And how to save If there is a heritage from the nature during the history and has an application for their children.

8. The Environmental Movement

Three comprehensive movement has started to be formed from the middle of the twentieth century most of which are known as "New Social Movements" which are:
Environmentalism, anti-racist movements, and feminism. One of the cultural fundamentals of the natural heritage lies in environmentalism. This movement was formed based on some important factors. First the concern about the destruction of nature by human beings and excess exploitation of the natural resources. Second, the fear of economic-based development which excessively stores treasures and would not consider the cultural and social aspects and measured everything with economics and as a consequence would not consider communities' environmental, social and natural commitments. And the third was the emerging of the concept of "the third world". The third world were countries that chose factors of "the western development model" to reach progress but because of the incompatibility with these factors did not advance and now they have been labeled by the title of "not developed" or in the best way they were called "developing" countries. As a consequence of such lost, the criticism attitude upon the western model of development has risen especially to the economic renewal theories and concepts such as endogenous development, sustainable development and balanced development has been formed. All of this concepts are in one model of development which are mutually joint by the development plans with "natural environment".
The aggregation of these factors and so many others such as World War II, natural heritage and resources destructions, oil as the blood of development and global warming and the environmental hazards caused the emersion of the environmentalism movement. That was how natural environment entered the communities as a concern or a global problem, apart from the dialogue of scientists and politicians. In fact this movement started a dialogue with a new language, a language to interpret and see the environment again. And in this dialogue environmental movies, literature, stories and novels entered normal people's lives. Therefore the interest on the environment was not an elite dialogue but a "public discourse" and a part of "people's way of speaking" about themselves.
In this time, reviewing the nature in artworks increased although artistic works had been looking at the romantic and aesthetic aspect of the nature before. For instance the Romanticism movement revives a nostalgic emotion of pre-modern era: returning to peaceful villages and green and deindustrialized hills. Thus, reviewing the nature by modern arts especially in Romanticism the criticism view against industrialization grew. Now, the environmentalist art tries to warn about destroying nature and illustrate the values of nature in human being's life and reveals the place of nature in believes and values. This is how nature becomes meaningful in a new path and one of its consequences is the emersion of the concept called natural heritage. Since one of the ways to anthropologically perceive the subject of natural heritage, is knowing more about acculturation of the nature, we will discuss this subject.

9. Acculturation of the Nature

The expression was employed by Fredric Jameson and some other post-modern theoreticians. The process was sometimes defined by other titles like "Cultural turn". The problem is the importance of the culture in all aspects of current human life. The process of acculturation or aggregation of economics in culture is more tangible and objective than other aspects but not limited to economics but also political parties. The growing importance of ethnics and ethnicity in politics, cultural diplomacy in international relations, acculturation of the subject of military and wars[2], art economics, science economics and all of this are narrating a fundamental development in all structures of the society through culture.
The process of acculturation is a sort of counter movement against the process of institutional differentiation in modern era. Parsons counted "institutional differentiation" as the most important axis of modernism. In this process, all political, social and cultural institutions were independent and the index of modernism was the amount of independence between economic, political and cultural institutions from each other.

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for example, people of the world see the Iraq war from media and involve in the war. All of them are spectators of war without being directly involved in it. The definition of war here is some images, news, media war, and this is media which influences the fate of war and introduces the real winner to the world. It is media which determines US is winner or Saddam. During history, people have not watched war, therefore, instead of going to seek armament, people prefer to refer to news networks, and BBC or Aljazeera become important. Buying a satellite channel is more important than a warship. You need a network which constantly shows your ships and missiles; therefore, these marches and maneuvers are important today.

But the changes after 1960's such as communication revolution, knowledge-based society, information society, cultural industries, tourism and other factors caused adjacency and aggregation between these institutions.[3] The result of such revolutions was as Baudrier said the era of goods exchange is ending and the era of signs and symbols exchange has begun. In this condition "Mediazation culture" will rise and the society will be full of images. In a more simple way, symbols and massages have never been a part of a human economics and this is just a sign of the post-modern era that the science economics and culture economics are created and gradually as titled by Daniel Bell "post-industrial society" emerges and huge industries lose their effectiveness on society which was achieved since the "industrial revolution" and developed countries are proud of, not the big industrial complexes besides their cities, but their museums, big art galleries and cultural and intellectual products. And every year lots of tourists and audience visit them. Today a big amusement park has an annual 20 million visit and each tourist brings in money which is a big share of the countries' economy. This tourist can affect hospitality industry, aviation and transportation and also food industry. An amusement park, a gallery or a scientific gallery can create hundreds of jobs without pollution and natural resources destruction.
A part of acculturation is by tourism. With the help tourists give to the economic growth there is a great vulnerability for changing the arrangement of the lands and redefining the concept of nature. The goal of tourists is experiencing and enjoying such cultural experience, meaning that experiencing in aesthetics, history, geography and natural and environmental sightseeing. The first thing for a tourist is to enter a land. That is why governments should redesign deserted lands and look from their customer's view to transform it into a desirable product. In fact governments sell the joy of visiting their lands' to (their customers) tourists and make profit. In such view the nature is redefined and is born as a natural heritage. But this time, the nature does not have a natural meaning but also it is looked at as a cultural phenomenon which will serve politics, economy and society.

10. Conclusion

All in all, acculturation is one of the universal processes of the current era during which different social aspects are conversed and semeiotic and interpretive dimensions of phenomena become more important. Nature is one of these phenomena to be acculturated. Such cognitive nature's symbols can be seen via media, messages and images of wild life, fields and lands constantly brought to our houses and also via the importance of environmentalism in the public dialogue and the efforts of governments and nations in reviewing and redefining resources and natural investments. Natural heritage is just one ring in the chain of natural acculturation. Not only nature has created a new image by recreation in urban textures, but also has changed from a real issue into a virtual issue by "virtualization". Maybe our nostalgic emotions in nature is not for the real pure nature, but a nostalgic emotion for the "virtual nature" that media has shown us. Jungles are not somewhere far away from us, but in the sides of our cities. Seas are not a dangerous highway of the ships, but a place for roaming of pirates.

for example, culture economy forms like tourism economy or art economy; cultural industries emerge, for example, previously an orchestra performed music for 200 people in a hall, nut now, CDs and cassettes are produced in millions of copies and they have a large and independent market, and a concept like "intellectual property" form. We see that the market share of CD and software is higher that automobile market. The goods with semantic and symbolic aspect are more valuable than other goods. According to Bodriar, the transaction of symbols is more important than transaction of goods. When you buy a CD and its internal symbol, you want to use its music and video. Symbols and messages have not such economic value previously.

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