

Origin and Comparative Analysis of Ethnology and Anthropology

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Abstract: This study aims to clarify the origin context, historical evolution and core differences and connections of ethnology and anthropology, so as to make up for the lack of systematic comparative research on the origin stage of the two disciplines. The research adopts the methods of literature research, historical analysis and comparative research. It sorts out the social background and academic motivation of the emergence of ethnology and anthropology, traces the core disciplinary founders and landmark theoretical achievements in their initial stage, and conducts in-depth comparative analysis on the two disciplines from the dimensions of research objects, core paradigms and academic objectives. The results show that ethnology and anthropology share the same historical origin of exploring human culture and society, but form distinct disciplinary characteristics in the process of development. Ethnology focuses more on the systematic investigation and analysis of specific ethnic groups and their cultures, while anthropology has a more extensive research scope covering physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archaeology and linguistics. The research reveals the homologous and divergent development track of the two disciplines, which provides a theoretical basis for the cross-integration of the two disciplines in subsequent academic research.

Keywords: Ethnology; Anthropology; Origin of Disciplines; Comparative Analysis

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

The globalized context has intensified interactions among diverse ethnic groups and cultures, making the understanding of human cultural diversity and social evolution an urgent academic and practical demand. Ethnology and anthropology, as two core disciplines dedicated to exploring human society and culture, have

laid important theoretical foundations for interpreting ethnic relations, cultural adaptation and social development. However, the blurred boundary between the two disciplines in academic practice often leads to confusion in research orientation and method selection. Clarifying the origin context and intrinsic differences of ethnology and anthropology is not only conducive to improving the disciplinary system of both fields but also provides effective theoretical support for solving practical issues such as cross-ethnic communication, cultural heritage protection and regional development. The exploration of their origin and comparative analysis can help scholars grasp the disciplinary characteristics and development trends accurately, thereby promoting in-depth integration between the two disciplines and better responding to the challenges brought by cultural diversity in the globalized era.

1.2 Review of Domestic and Foreign Research Status

Foreign research on ethnology and anthropology has formed relatively mature academic traditions. Scholars in Western countries have conducted in-depth discussions on the origin of the two disciplines, focusing on the connection between their emergence and social movements such as colonial exploration and cultural evolutionism. However, existing foreign studies tend to focus more on the internal development of a single discipline, with insufficient systematic comparison of the origin stage of ethnology and anthropology. Domestic research on the two disciplines started relatively late, and early studies mainly focused on introducing foreign theoretical achievements. In recent years, with the deepening of domestic ethnic studies, scholars have gradually paid attention to the localization of ethnology and anthropology, and carried out some comparative studies on the disciplinary connotation and research methods of the two. Nevertheless, domestic research still has shortcomings such as inadequate sorting of the origin context and superficial comparative

analysis. Most studies lack in-depth exploration of the intrinsic logical connection between the origin of the two disciplines and their disciplinary characteristics, which makes it difficult to provide sufficient theoretical support for the cross-integration of the two disciplines. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a systematic comparative study on the origin and core connotations of ethnology and anthropology.

1.3 Research Ideas and Methods

This study takes the origin and comparative analysis of ethnology and anthropology as the core research line. First, it defines the core connotations and categories of the two disciplines to lay a theoretical foundation for subsequent research. On this basis, it sorts out the origin background and early development context of ethnology and anthropology, and combs the key factors affecting their formation and development. Then, it conducts in-depth comparative analysis on the two disciplines from three core dimensions: research objects and scope, core paradigms and research methods, academic goals and value orientations. Finally, it summarizes the homologous and divergent development characteristics of the two disciplines and puts forward relevant suggestions for their cross-integration. In terms of research methods, this study mainly adopts literature research method to systematically sort out and analyze the relevant literature at home and abroad, including disciplinary history, theoretical monographs and academic papers. It also uses historical analysis method to explore the origin and development of the two disciplines in the specific social and academic context. In addition, comparative research method is used to identify the differences and connections between the two disciplines, so as to ensure the comprehensiveness and depth of the research.

2. Definition of Core Concepts of Ethnology and Anthropology

2.1 Core Connotation and Category of Ethnology

Ethnology is a discipline that takes specific ethnic groups as the research object and focuses on exploring the origin, formation, development and evolution of ethnic groups, as well as the laws of ethnic relations. Its core connotation lies in the systematic investigation and in-depth

analysis of the material culture, spiritual culture, social organization and living customs of ethnic groups. The research category of ethnology covers multiple fields such as ethnic history, ethnic culture, ethnic economy, ethnic religion and ethnic relations. It emphasizes the field investigation of specific ethnic groups, and through on-site observation, in-depth interview and other ways to collect first-hand data, so as to reveal the unique cultural characteristics and social operation rules of ethnic groups. Ethnology pays attention to the integrity and continuity of ethnic culture, and focuses on exploring the adaptation and development of ethnic groups in the process of interacting with the natural environment and other ethnic groups. Its research results can provide important reference for formulating ethnic policies, protecting ethnic cultural heritage and promoting ethnic regional development.

2.2 Core Connotation and Category of Anthropology

Anthropology is a comprehensive discipline that takes human beings as the research object and explores the biological evolution and cultural development of human beings. Its core connotation is to understand the essence and laws of human existence and development from a holistic perspective. The research category of anthropology is relatively extensive, including physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archaeology and linguistics. Physical anthropology focuses on the biological characteristics and evolution process of human beings; cultural anthropology explores the diversity and commonality of human culture; archaeology studies the historical development of human society through the excavation and analysis of cultural relics; linguistics focuses on the origin, evolution and cultural connotation of human language. Anthropology adopts a cross-cultural comparative perspective, emphasizing the understanding of different human groups and cultures, and explores the common laws of human development while paying attention to cultural diversity. Its research methods are diverse, including field investigation, laboratory analysis, historical document research and so on, which can provide a comprehensive theoretical perspective for understanding human society and culture.

3. Collation of the Origin of Ethnology and

Anthropology

3.1 Origin Background and Early Development Context of Ethnology

The emergence of ethnology is closely related to the social changes and academic trends of the times. It originated in the context of the increasing frequency of cross-ethnic exchanges and the rising demand for understanding ethnic cultures. The exploration of unknown regions and ethnic groups has laid a practical foundation for the emergence of ethnology. In the early stage of development, ethnology was influenced by evolutionism, and scholars tried to explore the evolutionary laws of ethnic groups and cultures by sorting out the cultural phenomena of different ethnic groups. With the deepening of research, ethnology gradually formed its own disciplinary characteristics, emphasizing the field investigation of specific ethnic groups and the in-depth analysis of ethnic culture. In the process of development, it has absorbed the theoretical achievements of sociology, psychology and other disciplines, and continuously improved its disciplinary system. The formation and development of ethnology is also closely related to the needs of national construction and ethnic relations coordination, and has gradually become an important discipline for understanding and solving ethnic issues.

3.2 Origin Background and Early Development Context of Anthropology

The origin of anthropology can be traced back to the exploration of human nature and human evolution. The development of natural science, especially the theory of evolution, has provided an important theoretical basis for the emergence of anthropology. In the early stage, anthropology focused on the research of physical anthropology, exploring the biological evolution process of human beings. With the expansion of research scope, cultural anthropology gradually became the core field of anthropology. The colonial expansion in the early stage promoted the exchange between different cultures, making scholars pay more attention to the diversity of human culture, which provided a practical background for the development of anthropology. In the process of early development, anthropology formed a holistic research paradigm, emphasizing the comprehensive understanding of human beings from biological

and cultural perspectives. It absorbed the research methods of natural science and social science, and formed a diverse research method system. With the changes of the times, anthropology has continuously expanded its research fields, involving global issues such as environmental protection, cultural communication and social justice.

4. Comparative Analysis of Core Dimensions of Ethnology and Anthropology

4.1 Comparison of Research Objects and Scopes

There are obvious differences in research objects and scopes between ethnology and anthropology. Ethnology takes specific ethnic groups as the core research object, focusing on the cultural characteristics and social operation rules of a certain ethnic group or ethnic community. Its research scope is relatively concentrated, emphasizing the in-depth investigation and research of specific ethnic groups. Anthropology, on the other hand, takes human beings as a whole as the research object, covering the biological evolution and cultural development of human beings in different regions and periods. Its research scope is more extensive, involving multiple fields such as physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archaeology and linguistics. **Table 1** shows the specific comparison of research objects and scopes between ethnology and anthropology.

Table 1. Comparison of Research Objects and Scopes between Ethnology and Anthropology

Dimensions	Ethnology	Anthropology
Core Research Objects	Specific ethnic groups and their cultural communities	Human beings as a whole (biological and cultural attributes)
Research Scope	Ethnic history, ethnic culture, ethnic economy, ethnic religion, ethnic relations, etc.	Physical evolution, cultural diversity, archaeological remains, language evolution, etc.
Research Focus	Cultural characteristics and social operation rules of specific ethnic groups	Common laws of human biological evolution and cultural development

4.2 Comparison of Core Paradigms and Research Methods

The core paradigms and research methods of ethnology and anthropology also have significant differences. Ethnology adopts a cultural relativism paradigm, emphasizing the understanding and respect of the cultural characteristics of specific ethnic groups, and opposing the evaluation of other ethnic cultures with a single cultural standard. Its main research

method is field investigation, supplemented by historical document research and case analysis. Field investigation is an important feature of ethnology, which requires researchers to stay in the research site for a long time, collect first-hand data through on-site observation and in-depth interviews, and conduct in-depth analysis of the cultural phenomena of ethnic groups. Anthropology adopts a holistic paradigm, emphasizing the comprehensive understanding of human beings from biological and cultural perspectives, and exploring the interaction between human beings and the natural environment and social environment. Its research methods are more diverse, including field investigation, laboratory analysis, cross-cultural comparison, historical document research and so on.

4.3 Comparison of Academic Goals and Value Orientations

The academic goals and value orientations of ethnology and anthropology are different due to their different research objects and scopes. The academic goal of ethnology is to reveal the origin, formation, development and evolution laws of ethnic groups, clarify the characteristics of ethnic culture and the rules of ethnic relations, and provide theoretical support for solving ethnic issues and promoting ethnic development. Its value orientation is mainly reflected in respecting ethnic cultural diversity, protecting ethnic cultural heritage, and promoting equal exchange and mutual learning among ethnic groups. The academic goal of anthropology is to explore the biological evolution and cultural development laws of human beings, understand the commonalities and differences of human beings, and provide a comprehensive theoretical perspective for solving global issues such as cultural conflicts and environmental protection. Its value orientation emphasizes the holistic care of human beings, advocating cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, and promoting the sustainable development of human society. These different value orientations determine the different application fields and practical significance of the two disciplines.

5. Conclusion

Ethnology and anthropology share the same historical origin of exploring human society and culture, but form distinct disciplinary characteristics in the process of development.

The core connotation of ethnology lies in the in-depth investigation and analysis of specific ethnic groups and their cultures, with a relatively concentrated research scope; anthropology takes human beings as a whole as the research object, covering a wide range of research fields. In terms of core paradigms and research methods, ethnology focuses on field investigation based on cultural relativism, while anthropology adopts a holistic paradigm and diverse research methods. Their academic goals and value orientations are also different, with ethnology focusing on ethnic development and ethnic relations, and anthropology focusing on the overall development of human beings. The homologous and divergent development characteristics of the two disciplines determine that there is a basis for cross-integration between them. In the future academic research, it is necessary to give full play to the advantages of the two disciplines, strengthen cross-disciplinary cooperation, and better respond to the practical challenges brought by cultural diversity and globalized development. This study systematically sorts out the origin and core connotations of ethnology and anthropology, and conducts in-depth comparative analysis, which enriches the comparative research results of the two disciplines. However, there are still limitations in this study, such as the need for further in-depth exploration of the specific paths of cross-integration between the two disciplines, which will be the focus of subsequent research.

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