

# An Interpretation of Dazhen's Novels from the Perspective of Ecological Holism

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**Abstract:** In recent years, the world has undergone profound changes: The natural geographical environment on which human beings depend for survival has been deteriorating, relations among countries and peoples in the world are in constant tension and conflict, and the spiritual beliefs of human beings have been alienated and collapsed, leaving a harmonious ecological world in urgent need of restoration. As a spiritual food for human beings, world literature has a significant role to play in dissolving antagonistic relationships, rebuilding ecological ethics, and helping people return to the Garden of Eden. Dazhen is one of the most important writers in Ganzi Prefecture, whose novels, for example *Khampa and Destiny* reflect the magical land of Khampa Plateau, the ancient tea-horse road of the Han-Zang convergence and the production and life style of Khampa people. In this paper, through literature search and close reading, we focus on the following aspects: ecological holism contains the triple ecological system of spiritual ecology, social ecology and natural ecology; the natural ecology of the harmonious coexistence of people and the Khampa Plateau is represented by Khampa people's paying homage to cruel natural environment; the social ecology of the harmonious coexistence of multiple cultures is represented by Khampa people's dissolving ethnic boundaries to carry the historical mission; and the spiritual ecology of the richness and uniqueness of the subject's perception is represented by Khampa people's holding up the culture of animism and the compassion of altruism. It is concluded that Dazhen's novels have a deep ecological thought that focuses on the universe, a loving heart, and the harmony and equality of all life, which has important implications for the harmonious development of ecological, material and spiritual civilizations in China and the whole world today.

**Keywords:** Dazhen, Ecological Holism, Natural Ecology, Social Ecology, Spiritual Ecology

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## 1. Introduction

Dazhen is one important writer of the "Kangding Qijian" (Yixi Zeren, Liemei Pingcuo, Gerong Zhuimei, Dazhen, Gao Xufan, Yin Xiangdong, Yongcuo). He was born and lived in the unique geographical location of the Khampa plateau Kangding, an ethnic corridor of Han-Zang interaction and the ancient tea-horse road. Khampa plateau has a unique natural landscape and cultural deposits, the hometown of Kangding love songs and King Gesar Epics. In 1984, Dazhen studied at the Southwest Min Universities and began to write novels. After graduation, he returned to Kangding, the focus of his creation back to Kangding. He went deep into the vast Khampa region to observe people's lives and traveled all over Changdu in Xizang; Guoluo and Yushu in Qinghai; Gannan in Gansu; Diqing, in Yunnan; Ganzi and Aba in

Sichuan; and even the whole western China. [1] Then he wrote a "long novel trilogy" two of which *Khampa* and *Destiny* have been published and the last one *Home* is awaiting publication. In recent years, a reportage novel *Happy Songs Spreading all Across China*, a panoramic depiction of Ganzi Prefecture's deeply impoverished areas from poverty to prosperity also has been published. The first draft of the reportage novel *Dreams of Creating Medical Silicon Valley* reflecting the Chengdu Medical City has been completed. After being elected as the new vice chairman of the Sichuan Writers Association, he confessed: he plans to go deep into the Sichuan-Xizang Railway in the next five years and write an epic for it. Dazhen's literary creation transcends ethnicity and region to explore humanity and love and the history of the Chinese nation a hope for forging the sense of community for the Chinese nation. [2].

The ecological crisis has been a serious global problem which bothers all walks of life and human beings need resurrection [13]. The concept of ecocriticism was first introduced in 1978 by the American scholar William Ruckert in his article "Literature and Ecology: An Ecocritical Experiment" defining ecocriticism as the combination of literature and ecology. [12] Félix Guattari's "triple ecology" is related to his reflection on the "integrated world capitalism", his insight into the interconnectedness and complexity of human crises which can be averted only by focusing on the continually generated subjectivity; the interconnectedness of continuously mutating social field and the natural environment in the process of reconstruction. Thus the "triple ecology" system of mental ecology, social ecology, and environmental ecology is formed. [3] (188) Lu Shuyuan also says that in the earth's biosphere today, in addition to "natural ecology", there should also exist "social ecology" and "spiritual ecology", boiled down to "trichotomy of ecology" [4] (7). In China, Liang Shuming's three cultures, three paths, and three human ecologies have influenced future generations' recognition of trichotomy of ecology. In the book *East-West Culture and Its Philosophy*, spiritual life includes religion, philosophy, science, art, etc.; social life includes family, friends, society, country, world, social organization, ethical habits, political system and economic relations, etc.; material life is a variety of human survival for the natural world, etc. [4] (8) In *The Man and the Thinker*, German thinker Max Scheler also tried to examine the existence of man from three aspects: man and God, man and history, and man and nature. [4] (8).

With the ambition of creating epic works, Dazhen presents a panoramic view of the century-old history of the land of Khampa from a unique perspective, emphasizing the inspiration given by the peaceful coexistence of various ethnic groups, religions, cultures and nature in Khampa, and writing a human hymn of great love and tolerance by creating distinctive characters. [5] (27).

## 2. Natural Ecology—People Living in Harmony with the Khampa Plateau

The specific laws of natural ecology are designed to show that anything is possible: the harshest natural disasters or the most adaptive natural evolution. The correlation between natural equilibrium and human intervention will become more and more relevant every day. This law not only indicates the diversity of nature's ecological content, but also shows that nature's ecology is shaped by multiple factors and that it can no longer exist alone without human intervention [3] (188). Regarding nature, Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* states, "Man follows the earth; the earth follows the heaven; the sky follows the Tao, and the Tao follows nature. Humans must fear nature and follow it" [6] (8). In the ecological thought of the unity of heaven and man in Chinese culture, if there is heaven and earth, then all things are definitely born; if there are all things, then there are men and women. [7] (42) Rachel Carson inherited this idea and proposed to further expand the

human moral community to include all life, including the ecosystem.

The Qinghai-Xizang Plateau has a high altitude, low temperature and scarce oxygen, a cruel natural environment. In order to survive in such an environment, the Zang people have created a whole set of ecological wisdom adapted to the local natural environment after a long period of adaptation [8] (59). In ancient times, people living on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau knew little about nature and were unable to make scientific explanations for various phenomena in nature, thus believing that there was a supernatural power God controlling the whole nature, and thus creating a sense of reverence for God [9].

Most writers of "Kangding Qijian" live in Kangding, the plateau of Khampa, whose literary creations are marked by the traditional ecological wisdom of the Han and Zang peoples living in harmony with nature. In Dazhen's writings, the geographical environment is no longer a daunting mountain system with layers of barriers, but beautiful snow-capped mountain ranges, sun-drenched meadows and thousands of yaks on the move, reflecting the spirit of all things, the respect of nature, the conformity to nature and the equality of all beings. In the novel *Destiny*, the grassland of Maitang is surprisingly quiet at dawn, deep in the ink-blue canopy with hexagonal black cow hair tents, with the women of the herding family carrying milk buckets and chestnut colored horses in the dim light, all of which outline a harmonious silhouette of the grassland before dawn. In the novel *Khampa*, when Looney faces the huge emptiness of nature, his mood is unexpectedly open, thinking that he is in Switzerland, not far from his hometown, and the natural ecology of the Khampa plateau allows Rooney to cross time and space to be completely silent in the immediate moment. The red birch wood, sheep dung, ghee, and thymelaeaceae used in the production of the Dege printing plates in the mouth of Huang Gegen all are originated from nature without any trace of machine intervention. When the painter Luobu stepped into Kangding, the rain of spring, the big leaf rhododendron all over the mountain and green horseshoe dyed by the grass juice were all welcoming his arrival. After crossing the Zheduo Mountain, the clear winding stream beneath his feet made Luobu couldn't help but sing Cangyang Jiacuo's love song "When the cuckoo comes, bringing the breath of spring, I meet with my lover with infinite joyfulness" [10] (308). The yak, cheese and food that people rely on to survive on the Khampa plateau are all gifts from the gods of nature. Fearing the gods and integrating into nature can bring prosperity to people and animals, abundant grain, beautiful life and spiritual prosperity. [10] (308).

## 3. Social Ecology—Multicultural Harmony and Coexistence

Social ecology is concerned with the ecosystem formed between social people and their environment, correcting the distorted social patterns and rebuilding harmonious social

ecological patterns [3] (189), for example, the reconstruction of group-being patterns and the reconstruction of social interpersonal relationships.

As the mutual respect and understanding of the tea-horse markets centuries ago was the basis for trade among different ethnic groups, today's Kangding provides a model for the peaceful development of the entire world because of the long-term multi-ethnic harmonious coexistence. Chinese must realize that a lot of Western rules of judgment are not suitable for China. It is not right for any nation to break away from the Chinese family in any way, which is destined as it is destined for the main character in the book *Destiny* to go to the battlefield against Japan without any rebellion. A Chinese scholar Mai once compared the Istanbul portrayed by the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk with the Kangding depicted by Dazhen. Istanbul is a multiplied Kangding. Dazhen said that the purpose of my writing is to dissolve the boundaries between national consciousness. It would be narrow-minded to emphasize ethnic differences in human development today. I have always insisted on expressing Kangding as a sample of ethnic inclusiveness. He firmly believes that his novel deserves to carry the historical mission [1].

Dazhen's full-length novel *Khampa* presents a grand narrative of the harmonious coexistence of various ethnic groups in the Khampa region in the first half of the 20th century. The complexity of the multicultural and harmonious coexistence of the social ecology of the Kham area is presented in *Khampa*, where Han, Zang, Hui, Naxi, Yi, and even Indians, British, French, Americans, and so on, gathered here and were active in the Khampa region. In Kangding, the five major sects of Buddhism of Zang, the Zhenyuan Church one of the eight Catholic dioceses in old China, the Islamic mosque, and the Guandi Temple of Confucianism, Guanyin Pavilion of Buddhism, and Tongyuan Palace of Taoism in mainland China are all gathered under the same sky, creating a multicultural mix. The novel revolves around three main lines: the history of the rise and fall of the Yundeng Gelong family during the bureaucratization of native officers; the feud between the big businessman Er Jin'ga and Jiangyang Chieftain; and Zheng Yunlong a young Hui people, who committed murdering crime for love, slowly adapted and integrated into Khampa. Different family backgrounds, classes, cultures and ethnic groups are born together. In *Khampa*, Dazhen speaks of where the Yundeng Gelong lives. "For hundreds of years, the Zhedo River which contains the diverse civilizations of the Han, Zang and Hui peoples has been shaping the intermingling and complex meanings of the tea-horse Kangding without speaking" [10] (2). Yundeng Gelong a wise chieftain knows that Kangding is a place with two mountains and two waters, but it is "the junction of two places in the world, the East and the West, a place where various peoples live together" [10] (2), as the Dege chieftain respects the harmony between the various religious factions, which makes the Dege famous on the Khampa plateau. Kangding is the heart of this artery, constantly transmitting fresh blood from the south to the north. It embellishes the exchange and integration of twenty-seven ethnic groups

along the way, including Han, Zang, Qiang, Hui, and Naxi. [10] (346).

Yundeng Gelong says that Kangding is a veritable crossroads where Zhuge Liang became famous when he went on his expedition and also where King Gesar made tea to have a rest. The novel *Destiny* depicts a Zang soldier Tu Erji from Xikang as a medical officer with a large number of Han, Zang and Hui youths participating in the great counter-attack in western Yunnan. When the Zang blaster Zhaxi Nima's arm was shot by heavy machine gun bullets with flying blood splattered, thinking of the scene when master Ni Maiqi hollowed out the innards of the dead spirit, as a former lama he vomited more than once. Huang Xiao from Chengdu made fun of him. In front of the national disaster, Chinese nationalities are brave and fearless in spite of the risk of life in the rain of bullets. Sixty years after the victory of the Anti-Japanese War Tu Erji still guarded the spirits of comrades at a town Bamo in the northeast of Myanmar, which has maintained the Chinese ethnic groups economic and cultural interdependence.

#### 4. Spiritual Ecology—The Richness and Uniqueness of the Subject's Perception

Spiritual ecology explains the ever-generating subjectivity. It will lead us to reshape the subject's relationship with the body, illusion, the passage of time and the mystery of life and death. The core demands are to break the control of scientific ideas, to curb the excessive proliferation of consumerism, to reject the standardized shaping of human beings by technology, to evoke the richness and uniqueness of the subject's perception in an artistic and aesthetic way, to reshape the spiritual value system of human beings, and to promote the production of subjectivity. [3] (188) Everything we perceive are the manifestations of our spirit. [14] We should shoulder our spiritual obligations in resolving environmental problems. [15] If natural ecology is the external expression of ecological civilization, then spiritual ecology is the internal value of ecological civilization.

The Zang people living on the Khampa plateau for a long time have gradually formed a restricted and economical way of life in the face of the objective environment of the plateau, protecting the fragile ecological environment on which the herders depend for survival, and only by giving love to all beings can all things be freed from suffering, while the traditional Zang culture of animism and the compassion of altruism are all present in the hearts of the Zang people. In short, this harmonious ecological consciousness believes that there is a limit to the carrying capacity of the ecological environment, and human activities cannot exceed this limit, and people cannot pursue material pleasures endlessly, let alone rule; otherwise the imbalance of the spiritual ecology will cause alienation and distortion, the destruction of the natural ecology and social ecological order in Zang areas, and the spiritual ecology of Zang people is also in crisis.

The novel *Destiny* reflects the Zang people's way of life:

limiting, saving and giving love to all beings. Tu Erji's background in the war as a medic hates killing from the beginning to the end; his religious background, the natural disasters he experienced, and the brutal and bloody war he participated in all made him show compassion to soothe his spiritual world. He spent the rest of his life guarding the spirits of his comrades, and every day he went to the 556th Plateau to "circle around the spirits of his comrades" [11] (313). The red clouds that appeared over the 556th Plateau, and the bone flute that played "Do you sleep well, veterans?", are Tu Erji's guardianship of goodness and the salvation of his own soul. Starting from love and the goodness of human nature, the Khampa soldiers interpreted why "the sky is the tent of the earth" [11] (26). In the novel *Khampa*, Nayong brings a tray of milk cakes, tsampa, buckwheat cakes, honey, cubilose, tea, including the materials used to make the scripture plate in Dege, all of which are from nature. Lu Shuyuan said that the spiritual ecology of the Chinese people is deteriorating, and this deterioration is caused by a serious ecological imbalance. In the scales of survival, the emphasis on economics over culture, material over spirituality, and technology over emotion has tilted the ecological situation of some Chinese people in a terrible way, leading to cultural decline, spiritual degradation, emotional indifference, and personality degradation. [4] (346) Dazhen's novel contains many ethical taboos, and the writing of the Khampa way of not killing and respecting all nature things and the sense of community for Chinese nation is the best medicine to save the current Chinese culture from spiritual degradation.

## 5. Conclusion

In short, Dazhen's life, study experiences and the geographical environment he lived in determine that his literature is deeply imprinted with the colors of Khampa. People and nature live in harmony on the Khampa plateau, and many cultures live together in harmony. The primitive Bon religion, Zang Buddhism, Islamism, Catholicism and various Chinese sects coexist peacefully on this land, giving birth to the optimistic and heroic, frugal and restrained spiritual ecology of the Khampa people. Since the Eighteenth National Congress of the CPC, General Secretary Xi Jinping has made a series of important assertions on the construction of ecological civilization, upholding the concept of green waters and hills are golden treasures, striving to build a modernization in which man and nature live in harmony, building a community for human destiny and achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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## Biography

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