

On Cultural Paradigms¹

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

15 October 2025

Ref: On "[From Hunters to Farmers: Cultural Paradigms and Strategic Management](#)" by [Thomas Walenta](#) (PM World Journal, October 2025)

Sir,

Thomas Walenta's article "From Hunters to Farmers" presents a thought-provoking metaphor contrasting Western "hunter" and Chinese "farmer" paradigms. The essay insightfully links cultural heritage with strategic and managerial behavior and deserves recognition for highlighting the often-overlooked role of deep-seated cultural paradigms in shaping management logic.

Yet several points left me dissatisfied, inviting further consideration.

1. Early Europeans and Chinese were not merely hunters but hunter-gatherers and also fishers.

At times, hunting may have dominated their schedule, but at others, gathering and fishing were equally or even more important for survival.

Personally, I believe gardening was another activity, but as this leaves traces in people's minds, but not in the fossil record, it's more an opinion than scientific knowledge.

Our forebears in both regions were not just the brute beast-killing savages they are sometimes portrayed as, but highly skilled, forward-looking survivors, demonstrating deep environmental knowledge, toolmaking ingenuity, and social cooperation. These early communities laid the foundations for later forms of organization, exchange, and risk management that still resonate in modern collective behavior.

2. Our Eurasian cultural evolution is not a dichotomy but a trichotomy.

Both European and Chinese civilizations arose from the interaction of three ancestral roots:

- Stone-Age hunter-gatherers
- Late Stone-Age agricultural farmers

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- Bronze-Age pastoral steppe nomads

Each contributed enduring adaptive logics – opportunistic mobility, cyclical stewardship, and networked exchange – that continue to influence economic and managerial conduct.

Reducing this to two categories risks overlooking the steppe nomad tradition, whose mobility, trade orientation, and alliance management strongly resonate with today's cross-corporate and project-based economy and left its mark in languages we speak from Iceland to India².

Recent ancient DNA research reveals a notable contrast: in many Neolithic and Bronze Age European contexts, mtDNA³ lineages (maternal) show significant continuity with early farmer populations, while Y-chromosome lineages (paternal) increasingly reflect steppe or pastoralist ancestry – a pattern sometimes interpreted as evidence for sex-biased migration or replacement in prehistory^{4, 5}.

This asymmetry hints at violent episodes in prehistory, faintly echoed in mythologies such as the biblical story of Cain and Abel—symbolizing the confrontation between the settled farmer and the wandering herder.

To a more subtle and complex degree, China went through similar phases of replacement and admixture, producing its own blend of ancestral heritages that continue to shape collective behaviors and institutional preferences⁶.

One should also note that much of the cultural, demographic, and linguistic make-up in both areas was reshaped again during later migration periods, such as the Völkerwanderung⁷ and the Slavic expansion⁸ in Europe.

3. Cultural paradigms are fluid, not fixed.

What may have validly described a culture a generation ago may have already turned into a stereotypical cliché because it was treated as static.

The modern world's interdependence—driven by technologies such as the deep-sea container and the international money exchange systems—has tightly interconnected national economies. Global supply chains, mass migration, digital interconnection, and omnipresent media continuously reshape collective identities. Cultural boundaries are

² (Haak, W.; Lazaridis, I. et al., 2016)

³ mtDNA: Mitochondrial DNA is transferred only from the mother to her children. Y chromosomes are transferred only from fathers to their sons.

⁴ (Goldberg, A.; Günther, T. et al., 2017), (Saupe, T.; Montinaro, F. et al., 2021)

⁵ (Skourtanioti, E.; H. Ringbauer et al., 2023)

⁶ (Ning, C.; Li, T. et al., 2019)

⁷ (Heather, 2010)

⁸ (Curta, 2009)

porous; hybrid identities emerge, blending traditional and modern elements and defying simple East–West distinctions.

4. No culture is a monolith.

Within any nation exists a mosaic of subcultures – rural and urban, border and inland, maritime and continental – further differentiated by ethnicity, religion, and historical experiences. Recognizing this internal diversity prevents overgeneralization and allows a more nuanced understanding of managerial and behavioral variety within nations.

Walenta’s metaphor remains a valuable heuristic for exploring strategic mindsets. Yet its explanatory power would grow if it incorporated the triadic cultural roots, the fluid and hybrid nature of modern cultures, and the internal diversity within nations. Doing so would better reflect the dynamic, multilayered reality of today’s global management environment.

Respectfully,

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