

Minority Festivals and Psychological Analysis of Cultural Identity

——Taking Dai Water-sprinkling Festival as an Example¹

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Abstract: As the globalization times going on, cultural identity related to national spiritual power and "soft power" in international competition has become an important research area. Ethnic festivals, which are a collection of ethnic cultures, are effective carriers of their inheritance, and cultural identity of the people is closely related to the promotion of ethnic cultures. Taking the Dai Water-sprinkling Festival as an entry point, this paper analyses the psychological mechanism of Dai people's cultural identity from the psychological level. It forms the psychological basis of cultural identity with "collective memory", fully uses the emotional connection of the festival, and enables the public to have a sense of belonging in the "carnival", thus strengthening cultural identity and enhancing cultural consciousness.

The ethnic festivals can be regarded as a cultural collection of ethnic groups, which reflects their habits, beliefs, psychology, ways of living and village organizational models, etc. The study on their festivals plays an important role in inheriting ethnic cultures, protecting cultural diversity and strengthening ethnic cultural identity. In previous studies, most scholars conducted researches from the historical origin, cultural connotation, development changes, social functions, tourism development and other aspects of ethnic festivals, while few scholars discussed the relationship between ethnic festivals and ethnic cultural identity. Zheng Xiaoyun believes that a culture can only be affirmed and retained, developed and improved when people agree on its existence and development prospects[1]. On the contrary, as an important part of culture, festivals, if not recognized and involved, will gradually become a disappearing culture. The more people know about their ethnic festivals, get emotional satisfaction and get involved in the behavior, the stronger their sense of identity with ethnic culture will be. Among many ethnic festivals, Water-sprinkling Festival is one of the important festivals of Dai. From the perspective of the "others", it plays an important role in promoting the pride and cohesion of the Dai people. Taking Dai Water-sprinkling Festival as an entry point, this paper attempts to analyze the relationship between Dai Water-sprinkling Festival and cultural identity from the psychological level through literature research and field investigation. It expounds the psychological mechanism of the Dai people's cultural identity to the Water-sprinkling Festival, hoping to provide a reference for the inheritance and development of ethnic culture in the era of globalization.

1. Psychological Interpretation of Cultural Identity

The word "identity" is derived from the Latin "idem" (representing the same) and later developed into the word "identity" in English. "Identity" is translated into "identity in status", which is more generally accepted[2]. "Identity in status" focuses on the status of an individual's social status or social role, while "identity in acknowledgment" is more dynamic, which refers to the process of "identification" in which an individual's attitude and behavior converge to others or groups. When

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talking about "identity in acknowledgment", we must talk about "identity in status", and the two have the meaning of "one body and two sides". From a Psychological perspective, Sigmund Freud expresses "identity" as a process of emotional and psychological convergence between individuals and others, groups or imitated characters. On the basis of Freud's research, E. H. Erikson further points out that "identity" is actually an explicit or implicit answer to the question "who am I"[3]. "Identity theory" is first put forward from the research of psychology, and its logical source comes from human's self-cognition[4]. People are social and need to acquire a sense of belonging in groups, and the sense of belonging originates from the individual's identity with others or groups. Thus, identity is the inevitable psychological and spiritual elements of human society, and it is the basis for individual's existence[5]. Psychological research on identity (or identity in status) is more concerned with belonging in a spiritual sense. It defines the concept of identity in status as the individual's psychological process of self-identification, recognition of belonging groups, accompanied emotional experience and integration of behavioral patterns[6]. Identity includes two aspects: self-identity and social identity. On the one hand, self-identity refers to the individual's recognition of himself and the continuous construction in the continuous interaction with others. On the other hand, social identity is the individual's recognition of the group, and tends to be consistent with other members of the group in terms of understanding, emotion, and behavioral performance. Individuals are attached to and involved in the specific social groups to which they belong. Self identity and social identity are interacting to form a complete identity of the individual. Cultural identity is the recognition and tendency of the individual to his own culture, and has the dual attributes of social identity and self-identity. When answering "who we are," we are all influenced by our culture. Culture is the "root", which makes us "unconsciously" identify and maintain connection with the culture, and construct the individual's self-structure and meaning of life. Combined with psychological understanding of identity, this paper holds that cultural identity is an integration process of cognitive recognition in culture, belonging in emotion and active participation in behavior. Specifically, its psychological mechanism contains three levels of meaning. The first is to recognize the similarities between our own cognition and our ethnic culture, and to recognize its content and attributes; The second is to generate positive emotional factors such as pleasure, trust and passion based on identity, with a sense of intimacy, identity and even belonging; The third is to actively participate in behavior, practice the content and norms of our ethnic culture, so as to protect and inherit the culture we identify with our own efforts.

2. Collective Memory: the Basis of Ethnic Cultural Identity

Collective memory is proposed by Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist. He believes that collective memory is a thing or object that people share, inherit and construct together in a group or modern society. Collective memory, with individual memory as the carrier, constructs with each other. Dai people have celebrated the Water-sprinkling Festival since they were born, and their ancestors would tell them about its origin when they were young. These stories have been told again and again, and passed down from generation to generation, which has become their common memory.

My parents told me about the origin of the Water-sprinkling Festival, which is a folk tale, and many children heard about it from their elders. It is said that there used to be a devil on a mountain. The devil went to the village to rob little girls as his wives. People in the village hated him, but there was no way because the devil would not die. Later, among the girls the devil snatched, one of the youngest girls was very clever. One night, she drunk the devil and got a secret. This was the devil's hair that could cut off its head, but if it fell to the ground, it would catch fire and set the crops on fire. Thus, the brave little girl carried the devil's head, and everyone kept watering it until the fire was completely put out. From then on, the devil was eliminated, people in the village were very happy. To celebrate this great event, to commemorate and inherit the spirit of wisdom, courage and responsibility, the Dai people celebrate the Water-sprinkling Festival in mid-April every year. Water sprinkling represents blessings, and the more water is sprinkled, the more blessings are received. (Interview materials)

Ancestral memories are passed down to the next generation orally. As a "collective consciousness", the origin story of Water-sprinkling Festival hides in the hearts of every Dai people and becomes their general cognition to it. Meanwhile, they are in the "cultural circle" of this festival, and the experience of this festival's program and the interpretation of the ceremony can construct their common memory to the Water-sprinkling Festival. Moreover, the "performance" or "carnival" of the annual festival can arouse and enhance the collective memory of the group's "fundamental emotion".

Water-sprinkling Festival is the New Year for Dai. No matter how far away, many people who are away from home will rush home and reunite. It's very grand to celebrate this festival together. We bathe, wear new clothes, pick a kind of plant on the hill where few people live, and then eat peacock dinner and street dinner together. Anyway, it's very grand. Water-sprinkling Festival is sacred in our hearts. (Interview materials)

Many Dai people illustrate the core of the festival from their individual memory, which shows their identity. Collective memory is composed of the memories of many individual memories and transcends the particularity of individuals, which reveals the identity of a society or group that is different from other societies or groups[7]. The Dai people's memory to this festival is continuously constructed in the mutual construction or connection between individual memory and collective memory. Dai nationality and Water-sprinkling Festival have long been imprinted in the minds of the public as an inseparable whole. Water-sprinkling Festival has also become a cultural symbol of the Dai people's identity. With the growth of the Dai people from generation to generation, it has penetrated into their lives and become their deepest collective memory. These collective memories condense into the common psychology of the Dai people, become an important factor of their pride and cohesion, and become the psychological basis for them to identify with their culture.

3. "Collective Jubilation": A Sense of Belonging, A Sincere Cultural Practice of Behavior

The "primordialism" represented by Gertz holds that the emotional bond of a nation is "primordial" and is a part of the natural attributes of human beings. From the perspective of "primordialism", the Water-sprinkling Festival of Dai is considered as their emotional destination of the "primordialism" of a common culture, so the this festival is an important carrier of the ethnic emotional connection. The theory of the hierarchy of needs put forward by Maslow, a humanistic representative of psychology, believes that human beings have two kinds of needs. One is the need of lack, which is related to human survival and indispensable, among which the need for belonging and love is a need of lack. Psychologist Adler also believes that "the most powerful motivation of mankind is the desire to belong to society." Finding a group and getting emotional satisfaction in the group is the most powerful spiritual motivation of an individual or group. Cultural psychology holds that the sense of belonging is the degree to which an individual or group identifies with a thing or phenomenon and to which it is closely related. The sense of belonging is the intrinsic connection between the individual and the group he belongs to, and the psychological reflection of identity. During the Water-sprinkling Festival, Dai people sprinkle water, dance, throwing sandbags, and raced dragon-boats happily, etc. This "collective jubilation" has greatly satisfied the Dai people's psychological needs of emotional communication and sense of belonging, thus producing a strong sense of ethnic cultural identity psychologically.

Water-sprinkling Festival is held in cities, towns and villages, but with different dates. The festival held in the city is big, interesting and grand. Meanwhile, The villagers in the stockade will also go to the city to play, hold dragon boat races, and to cheer up their players. Villagers will also go to the city for "sales". They sell lots of delicious food, all of which are very special and delicious.

When the Water -sprinkling Festival comes, we rehearse dancing and hold Guangbang drum competition, play for several days, and we are very happy. As a person of Dai, I feel very proud. If I can't go home at school, my parents will video with me. I'm very excited, and my roommates will admire me and think that our ethnic festivals are colorful. I will tell my roommates about the Water-sprinkling Festival and our ethnic culture. (Interview materials)

Dai people get emotional communication and connection during the festival, which makes them belong to this group and culture psychologically, and the whole culture constructs their identity. With the development of society and the flow of population, traditional festivals are also changing. However, the emotional experience of individuals in the festival is always fresh and lasting. The cultural identity established psychologically makes them never forget their ethnic identity no matter where they are. In the era of globalization, the state and the government strongly advocate and formulate policies to protect and promote ethnic culture, so that the Dai people are more proud. In the interview, the author has learned that many young people of Dai are worried about the problem of "being assimilated by the Han", so they become practitioners of national cultural protection and inheritance.

Now some of us are gradually assimilated by the Han. There are fewer and fewer people who can speak Dai language in our village, and children even can't speak Dai language. In the past, we did not have lessons of Dai language at school, but now we started it again. This year, we have also opened evening Dai language classes, and many people go to study. Everyone realizes that the country is getting better now, and more and more agrees with our own culture. One of my friends loves Dai culture so much that she is now learning to speak and write Dai language. She hopes to protect and pass on our ethnic culture through her own efforts. (Interview materials)

During the investigation, the author has found that several reporters mentioned that their recognition and love for the ethnic culture were "instinctive" and "innate", and their identity of minorities and culture were natural. For the Water-sprinkling Festival, the Dai people have participated in it since childhood, have internalized the contents of collective memory into the "collective subconscious" and formed the most fundamental psychological basis for identifying with cultural identity. The positive feelings of belonging and pride gained by the Dai people in this festival, along with the publicity from media and the policy support from government, further enhance their identity with ethnic culture. As an individual "convergence" group, identity is the psychological process of pursuing "identity". Only when individuals truly internalize their own culture will they be involved in behavior. This is the so-called "A Sense of Belonging, A Sincere Cultural Practice of Behavior".

4. Conclusion

Nowadays, globalization is becoming more and more intense, and the modern products such as multi-culture and mass media will surely affect ethnic cultures. Some traditional festivals of ethnic minorities have undergone "variability" after being made public by newspapers, television and movies. Indeed, media can spread national culture and make ethnic culture "visible", which plays a certain role in protecting and developing ethnic culture. However, the cultural content presented by the media is sometimes not accepted by the native people, but causes harm to their culture and emotions. For example, in the article "An Anthropological Interpretation of Movie A Bride of Huayaoil", Zhu Lingfei talked about that minorities are in a weak position to a great degree in the discourse system of media culture, and the image presentation of their own images may deviate from their own imagination and definition[8]. As important cultural items of ethnic minorities, ethnic festivals help to promote ethnic belonging, stimulate ethnic pride, promote the formation of ethnic cohesion, and achieve cultural and ethnic identity. In the tide of globalization, to inherit and develop ethnic cultures under the influence of multi-culture and modern media, it is necessary to make full use of festival cultures. From the psychological mechanism of cultural identity, the minority people should be exposed to the ethnic festivals since childhood and carry out the cognitive construction of cultural identity in the social collectives. We should make full use of the emotional connection of festivals, enable ethnic members to have a sense of belonging, enhance cultural identity, achieve cultural awareness, inherit, develop and realize beauty and harmony of the whole world.

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