

Original Paper

The Application of Ethnic Culture in Strengthening the Consciousness of the Chinese National Community

Weiting Yu¹

¹ School of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Fund Project

*Southwest Minzu University Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program Project
Funding (Project No: S202310656138)*

Received: October 29, 2023 Accepted: February 11, 2024 Online Published: February 29, 2024
doi:10.22158/assc.v6n1p160 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/assc.v6n1p160>

Abstract

The consciousness of the Chinese national community is a shared value consensus among various ethnic groups condensed from historical cultural memory and contemporary cultural forms, playing a role in cohesion and unity among members of the Chinese national community. Taking the ethnic group as an example, by deeply exploring the historical traces of the consciousness of the Chinese national community and combining the spiritual values of traditional cultural resources, the key symbols of Qiang ethnic culture are reasonably developed and utilized. Starting from reality, the close connection between “cultivating the consciousness of the Chinese national community” and “daily life” is explored, ultimately achieving the application of Qiang culture in strengthening the consciousness of the Chinese national community.

Keywords

consciousness of the Chinese national community, ethnic culture

1. Historical Imprints of the Consciousness of the Chinese National Community in Qiang Ethnic Culture

1.1 Dayu Culture Is an Important Part of Qiang Ethnic Culture and an Important Direction for Tracing the Consciousness of the Chinese National Community

Dayu culture, as an important part of Chinese civilization, carries rich historical connotations and has profound influence on the formation and development of Qiang ethnic culture, which is one of the important directions for tracing the consciousness of the Chinese national community. (Yang & Zhang,

2023)

The important status and profound influence of Dayu culture in the history of the Chinese nation are further manifested in the historical memories accumulated and shared by different regions and ethnic groups over the past nearly four thousand years. These regions are the carriers of the evolution of our Chinese civilization, and these ethnic groups are also important branches of our Chinese nation. In the process of evolution of Qiang culture, Dayu culture is not only a historical cultural heritage, but also an important part of the inheritance and development of Qiang ethnic culture. As the settlement of ancient Qiang people and modern Qiang people, the northwest of Sichuan Province is regarded as an important town related to Dayu culture, which is the birthplace of the legendary figure Dayu according to the “Biography of Shu Kings”: “Yu was born in the area of Mount Wen in Guangrou County of Wenchuan County, which was called Lierpan.” (Zheng & Wang, 2015) Lierpan is now Shiniu Village, Yuli Town, Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County, North Sichuan. In Beichuan, there are still precious historical sites related to Dayu such as “Yuxue Gou”, “Xier Chi”, and “Wangchong Mountain”.

As an important representative of ancient Chinese civilization, the core concepts of Dayu culture have profound similarities with Qiang ethnic culture. This similarity is not only reflected in values, cultural traditions, and other aspects but also runs through the practical life and social development of the Qiang people, inseparable from the religious beliefs of the Qiang ethnic group. This cultural commonality not only enriches the diversity of Chinese culture but also deepens the cultural identity between the Qiang people and the Chinese nation, laying a solid cultural foundation for building a harmonious society and common development. Firstly, Dayu culture emphasizes the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature, emphasizing the protection and utilization of natural resources. This corresponds to the traditional concept of respecting and relying on nature in Qiang culture. In the traditional culture of the Qiang people, nature is often regarded as a sacred existence, respecting mountains, rivers, and advocating harmonious coexistence with nature. In addition, in the religious beliefs of the Qiang people, because the relationship between heaven, earth, mountains, rivers, and trees in the natural world and the production and life of the Qiang people is the most closely related, these are the objects of their natural worship. The Qiang area is mostly mountainous and hilly, with certain limitations in living environment and production methods. However, the Qiang people often use natural resources reasonably through the construction of water conservancy projects, land development, etc., while also paying attention to not destroying the ecological balance, thus ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. Taking Beichuan as an example, as one of the main distribution areas of the Qiang people, Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County is also known as the “Hometown of Chinese Dayu Culture”. It has good air quality, rich ecological resources, and good ecological environmental protection. There are various species in Beichuan, with 515 species of wild vertebrates, including 74 national first and second-level protected animals such as giant pandas and golden snub-nosed monkeys; 2150 species of wild plants, including 13 national first and second-level protected plants such as Gongtong and red bean sprouts, and as many as 795 species of Qiang medicine. (Qiang, n.d.).

These fully prove that Beichuan is a rare precious gene bank of plants and animals. This way of respecting and utilizing nature is in line with the concept of Dayu culture, reflecting the commonalities between the two in ecological civilization construction.

Secondly, Dayu culture emphasizes diligence, hard work, and the spirit of hard struggle, always inspiring the sons and daughters of China to grasp the present with a fighting attitude and win the future. This is consistent with the values of diligence and struggle emphasized in Qiang culture. The Qiang people have always attached importance to labor, advocating the traditional virtues of diligence and becoming rich, respecting labor, respecting laborers, and regarding labor as a virtue and honor. Faced with harsh natural environments and geographical conditions, the Qiang people have still demonstrated diligence and wisdom in many aspects such as agricultural culture, handicraft production, construction engineering, and animal husbandry. For example, one of the representatives of Qiang architecture, the watchtower - the Qiang people ingeniously used the natural defensive advantages of the terrain, used local resources such as stones and wood, designed unique stairs and doors and windows, achieved the construction of complete defensive buildings, and formed a cultural symbol with national characteristics. In addition, in Qiang literary works, we can also see the spirit of Qiang people's bravery, hard work, and strong will. For example, the mythological story "Aba Bumo" tells of people suffering from illness without medicine, suffering from diseases, and Aba Bumo collected common grass and insects to treat people. The mythological epic poem "Muzhu Sister and Dou Anzhu" tells of the three smart and beautiful daughters of the heavenly gods. Mu Jiezhong secretly descended to the earth and fell in love with the diligent, kind, honest, and brave Qiang shepherd Dou Anzhu. When the heavenly gods found out, they were furious and prepared to kill Dou Anzhu. With the help of the clever Mu Jiezhong, the brave Dou Anzhu finally solved the difficult problems posed by the heavenly gods and obtained the permission of the heavenly gods, marrying Mu Jiezhong. After they left the heavenly court, they came to the Qiang stockade together and used their diligent hands to build houses, cultivate land, and live a happy life together.

Furthermore, Dayu culture emphasizes family harmony, respect for elders, and advocates filial piety and family values. This corresponds to the family values and the traditions of respecting the elderly, loving, and helping each other in Qiang culture, and is consistent with the values of emphasizing family and tribal communities in Qiang culture. There are popular sayings in Qiang areas: "Building new houses, everyone helps", "New wedding celebrations, relatives and friends help", "Important agricultural matters, the whole village helps". The family values and filial piety traditions of the Qiang people are consistent with the concept of family harmony and respect for the elderly in Dayu culture, reflecting the similarities in family ethical concepts between the two. In addition, it is worth mentioning that in some areas close to Tibetan areas, there are many villages where Qiang, Tibetan, and Han ethnic groups live together, and the unity, friendship, and mutual assistance between Qiang, Tibetan, Han, and other ethnic groups have also formed traditions. In a Qiang folk song "Xiudiao House", it sings: "Qiang, Han, and Tibetan brothers gather on Qiangshan, intending to build houses for

the Qiang people. Han people move stones, Tibetan people mix mud, and Qiang people build walls. The sweat flows together, the laughter flies together, and the strength is used together... After the new house is completed, the host of the Qiang family entertains guests, and the Qiang, Han, and Tibetan brothers invite them to sit at the main seat... Thanks to the help of Qiang, Han, and Tibetan brothers.” (Chen, 2008)

1.2 The Qiang Ethnic Group Is not an Isolated Individual but one Fifty-Dixth, and the Qiang People Sympathize with Various Ethnic Groups

The cultural exchange between the Qiang ethnic group and various ethnic groups is multi-level and multi-faceted, covering language, religion, art, economy, marriage, and other aspects. On the one hand, this promotes “diversification” development, making each ethnic culture distinctive and mutually distinctive, injecting rich and colorful spiritual resources into Chinese culture; on the other hand, it promotes “integration” development, enabling ethnic cultures to interact, communicate, blend, learn from each other, complement each other, and depend on each other, ultimately forming an integrated, indivisible organic whole.

As a carrier of culture, writing is one of the main tools for cultural inheritance and expression, and the inheritance and development of Qiang culture cannot be separated from the Chinese language. Before the 1980s, the Qiang people did not have a written language suitable for their own ethnic language. Currently, Qiang phonetic writing is still in the stage of creation and promotion. According to historical records, there were many exchanges and integration between ancient Qiang and Han ethnic groups in language and writing. As Chen Bin’s “Commentary on Calligraphy” says, “In the Chinese Zhou Dynasty, there is the Xia Yu ‘Guilou Stele’,” “The ancient Qiang script, the Shenyu Stele, was written by the Qiang king Xia Yu, which is the ancient Qiang language. The ancient Qiang script records the ‘Xia Shu’ and ‘Xia Xiaozheng’, which are the ancestors of modern Chinese. Therefore, many Qiang ethnic songs and poems today are based on ancient sounds, and translation needs to correspond to ancient Chinese. There are many ancient Qiang vocabulary in ancient Chinese.” (Yang, 2009)

Rooted in the past, the Qiang and Tibetan ethnic groups have deep historical origins. The academic community generally believes that ancient Qiang does not specifically refer to a certain ethnic group but is a general term for the “Qiang” in the Shang Dynasty oracle bone inscriptions, the “Rong” in the Western Zhou Dynasty bronze inscriptions, and the “Di Qiang” since the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, mainly distributed in northwest and southwest China. (Ma & Qiang, 1984). Ancient Qiang is not only an important ethnic source of the Han ethnic group, but according to the records of Sino-Tibetan literature, ancient Qiang is also an important ethnic source of the Tibetan ethnic group. In addition, there are many cultural exchanges between the Qiang and Tibetan ethnic groups, forming some common factors in arts and handicrafts. In adjacent areas, the festivals and customs of the two ethnic groups also have some similarities. Taking Beichuan as an example, Taolong Tibetan Township is located in the northwest of Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County, 110 kilometers away from Mianyang. It is the only Tibetan township in Beichuan, with a Tibetan population of 817, accounting for 24.98%. The

humanities and customs are relatively intact, and there are still relics of the ancient tea-horse road. A significant activity during the local Wangguo Festival is the “thousand people sharing the Baban feast”. Thousands of people eat meat, drink wine, chat, sing folk songs together, and the masses of Tibetan, Qiang, and Han nationalities bless each other for the arrival of the new year and look forward to the coming year, creating a warm atmosphere. (Li & Yang, n.d.)

In the early 1980s, Mr. Fei Xiaotong proposed the concept of the “Tibetan-Yi corridor” as a historical and ethnic regional concept. Regardless of the geographical scope or the distribution of ethnic groups, the significant characteristic of this region is cultural diversity. The causes of this diversity are not only reflected in the geographical and ethnic distribution but also have multiple historical reasons. (Shi, 2014). Based on this, in recent years, the academic community has put forward related concepts such as the “Tibetan-Qiang-Yi corridor”, the “Tibetan-Qiang-Yi cultural corridor”, and the “Tibetan-Qiang-Yi cultural industry corridor”. It is precisely because the “Tibetan-Qiang-Yi corridor” region has many ethnic groups, the ethnic branches are relatively complex, and its original culture is relatively intact. Its diversity, richness, and uniqueness are sufficient to be fully displayed in the context of ethnic interaction, communication, and integration.

2. The Utilization of Qiang Ethnic Cultural Resources in Strengthening the Awareness of the Chinese National Community

In today’s society of multicultural integration, Qiang ethnic culture, as one of the colorful cultures of the Chinese nation, carries rich historical and cultural connotations and unique ethnic characteristics. By thoroughly exploring and fully utilizing Qiang ethnic cultural resources, the cohesion and sense of identity of the Chinese nation can be strengthened, promoting the unity and harmonious development of people of all ethnic groups nationwide.

The Qiang ethnic group possesses a rich variety of traditional festive activities, such as the Qiang New Year and the Ox King Festival. These activities are not only important carriers of Qiang culture, reflecting the rich folk culture of the Qiang people and their love for life, but also important channels for inheriting the common culture of the Chinese nation. Taking the grandest festival of the Qiang people, the “Qiang New Year,” as an example, the activities during this festival mainly focus on celebrating the harvest, sending blessings, and praying for peace. During the Qiang New Year, there are not only distinctive sacrificial activities but also entertaining activities such as feasting and drinking. Visitors can not only see the gorgeous traditional costumes of the Qiang people but also enjoy cultural performances such as Qiang flute and mouth string. Additionally, the Qiang New Year attracts a large number of tourists every year. Tourists gather with local Qiang people, singing and dancing together, experiencing the festive atmosphere, and enhancing communication and understanding among different ethnic groups. This scene of unity and progress not only reflects the Qiang people’s love for and inheritance of traditional culture but also promotes cross-cultural exchanges and integration, highlighting the common cultural emotions and values of the Chinese nation. By continuously holding

such traditional festive activities, the enhancement and cohesion of the awareness of the Chinese national community can be strengthened.

Qiang traditional arts are an important carrier for promoting the awareness of the Chinese national community. Qiang traditional arts include painting, carving, embroidery, and other forms, among which Qiang embroidery is the most famous. Renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship and unique style, Qiang embroidery is acclaimed both at home and abroad. As a representative form of ethnic art, it not only showcases the wisdom and creativity of the Qiang people but also embodies the common aesthetic taste and cultural essence of the Chinese nation. By inheriting and promoting traditional Qiang arts, the common artistic values of the Chinese nation can be promoted, enhancing the sense of identity and pride of the entire nation in traditional culture. Qiang embroidery, as a representative of Qiang traditional art, frequently appears in art exhibitions both domestically and internationally. For example, an article titled “National Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritor Yang Huazhen: Stitch by Stitch, Embroidering a Happy Picture of Tibetan-Qiang Life” published in the overseas edition of the People’s Daily tells the world the story of China’s civilization through intangible cultural heritage. This not only showcases the unique charm of Qiang culture but also helps more people understand and identify with the common cultural traditions of the Chinese nation.

The historical and cultural relics of the Qiang ethnic group are historical witnesses to promoting the awareness of the Chinese national community. The Qiang region boasts numerous historical and cultural relics such as stone carvings, ancient temples, and ancient cities. These relics, as witnesses to Qiang history and culture, not only carry traditional values of the Chinese nation but also represent the long history and rich cultural heritage of the Chinese nation. By protecting and utilizing these historical and cultural relics—transforming them into tourist resources to promote exchanges and integration and establishing learning bases for educating and enlightening future generations—the national identity of the entire nation can be deepened, enhancing national pride and cultural confidence. For example, the ancient Qiang city ruins and Qiang villages in northwest Sichuan not only vividly reflect the living conditions and cultural characteristics of the Qiang people but also, as treasures of Chinese culture, attract visitors from all over the country, serving as an important source of cohesion and confidence for the Chinese nation.

Qiang ethnic cultural resources play an important role in strengthening the awareness of the Chinese national community. Cultivating the awareness of the Chinese national community is inseparable from daily life. By promoting social and cultural activities, inheriting and promoting traditional culture, embracing and exchanging diverse cultures, and efforts in public education and ideological construction, the cultural identity and cohesion of the entire nation can be enhanced, promoting the construction and development of the awareness of the Chinese national community.

3. Conclusion

The awareness of the Chinese national community is the foundation of national unity, the basis of

ethnic solidarity, and the soul of spiritual strength. By deeply exploring the historical imprints of Qiang culture in the awareness of the Chinese national community, investigating the ways in which Qiang cultural resources are utilized to strengthen the awareness of the Chinese national community, and grasping the connection between “cultivating the awareness of the Chinese national community” and “daily life,” we can ultimately achieve the practical application of Qiang culture in building the awareness of the Chinese national community.

References

- Chen, S. S. (2008). In Qiang Ethnic Culture (p. 228). Southwest Jiaotong University Press.
- Li, Y., & Yang, Q. C. (n.d.). Taolong Tibetan-Qiang Township in Beichuan: Thousands Enjoy the Ba-Ba Banquet, the Whole Township Celebrates “Wangguo Festival”. Sichuan News Network.
- Ma, C. S., & Qiang. (1984). Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House.
- Qiang, B. C. (n.d.). Autonomous County People’s Government. Retrieved from <http://www.beichuan.gov.cn/>
- Shi, S. (2014). The Historical Ethnic Mobility in the Tibetan-Yi Corridor. *Ethnic Studies*, 2014(1).
- Yang, G. C. (2009). The Qiang Ethnic Group: A Great Ethnic Group in the Eastern World, Xiqiang Culture. *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 1.
- Yang, Y. J., & Zhang, N. (2023). The Shaping of Dayu Culture and the Awareness of the Chinese National Community. *Chinese Cultural Forum*, 2023(2).
- Zheng, P. S., & Wang, B. J. (2015). *Beijing: Beijing Convergence Culture Source Culture Co., Ltd.* (p. 7).