

Construction of National Identity of Ritual Culture-based College Students*

Dong Long

Zhuhai College of Jilin University
Zhuhai, China 519041

Abstract—National identity is a kind of mental activity that the citizens confirm which country they belong to and what characteristics that country has. Today, in the era of globalization and post-industrialization, all countries are strengthening college students' national identity through various methods. Exploring Chinese excellent traditional culture in-depth is an important way to intensify the construction of national identity of Chinese citizens. After a thousand years of accumulation, Chinese ritual culture has become a part of Chinese excellent traditional culture. The connotation, form and characteristics displayed by the ritual culture enable it to return as an important spiritual treasure. Colleges should attach importance to education of ritual culture, deepen ritual culture cognition and experience, explore the education resources of campus ritual culture in full, establish network platform for ritual culture education, so that the ritual culture may better serve the construction of national identity of college students.

Keywords—national identity; rite; culture; citizen

I. INTRODUCTION

National identity is a belt that binds the individual citizens and their country together. Today, in the era of globalization and post-industrialization, all countries are constructing the citizens' national identity and strengthening their sense of community through various methods. The development of internet technology and the flow of people across different regions in current era integrate the culture and values of all countries in the world and make them collide with each other. Some negative cultures of western countries may generate negative impact on the construction of Chinese college students' national identity taking the advantage. College students are the builders and successors for China's development in the future. Their national identity concerns China's development of political process, future and destiny. The construction of national identity is indispensable from the support of Chinese excellent traditional culture. As a part of Chinese excellent traditional culture, ritual culture should be valued and promoted in today's cultural integration and collision, so as to play a positive role in the construction of college students' national identity. After a thousand years of accumulation, Chinese ritual culture has become a part of Chinese excellent traditional culture. It processes and inherits

*Project Information: Research on Moral Education in the Schools of Guangdong province (2017GXSZ147)—"Study on Construction Path of College Students' National Identity from the Perspective of Citizenship Education".

ancient culture, which can not only illustrate the country's rich cultural connotation, but also reveal the mainstream ideology of current society. Educators make the Chinese ritual culture be recognized in college students' mind and practice through various methods, and make it become the spiritual core of college students' national identity.

II. COLLEGE STUDENTS' NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

Homeland is the political community for the maintenance of national culture and realization of national mission; identity refers to the individual member identifies which group they belong to and generates a sense of belonging towards that group. In brief, national identity is the mental activity of individual citizens to identify "which country they belong to and what characteristics that country has". In a deep sense, national identity is divided into two aspects: the first is cultural level of national identity, namely the citizens' cultural recognition and mental belonging towards territory, sovereignty, mainstream of traditional culture, belief and other aspects; the second is political level of national identity, namely the citizens' basic identity toward national political power, political system and governing concept. [1] In the context of globalization and post-industrialization, college students have broader vision and they can get access to the culture and ideas of various countries by way of network and other technical means. In addition, some western countries carry out their values and ideological system continuously in the globalization process taking advantage of science and technology. Some decadent cultural life and values of western countries have great impact on Chinese traditional culture, and even have certain negative influence on Chinese students' national emotion, ideal and faith, as well as value orientation, which weaken the college students' national identity to some extent. In recent years, domestic scholars have studied college students' national identity; Xie Ling, Lv Fang, Wang Jiayi and other scholars pay attention to the cognition and behavior of national identity of the college students with different characteristics, and the results show that college students with different nationalities and political status have quite different national identity. Du Lanxiao and Fang Weiwei have investigated the national identity of undergraduate college students from 70 colleges and universities in different regions of the country, and the results show that domestic college students generally have good national identity, but it also finds through investigation that some college students lack firm

belief in Marxism, reasonable cognition of socialist system with Chinese characteristics and sufficient confidence [2]. In the process of globalization, low cognition of different dimensions of national identity is unavoidable. Globalization will not only bring changes to the objective life of college students, but will impact the college students' ideology to a certain degree. At present, some western countries implement "peaceful evolution" policy on Chinese college students using globalization and break down the original national concept of our country, having impact on Chinese traditional culture and direct influence on the formation of college students' national identity. Under such circumstances, the educators should be more aware of the seriousness of the situation, and shall take initiative to improve teaching method and innovate the way of education, strengthen the sense of Chinese college students' national identity, so as to enable the college students to construct the system of national identity consciously.

III. ANALYSIS OF FUNCTION AND VALUE OF RITUAL CULTURE IN PROMOTING NATIONAL IDENTITY

Rite is a kind of ancient and universal social and cultural phenomena generated along with human history. After thousands of years, rite has become an important culture of human and the important form for human to inherit culture and accept life education [3]. Western ritual culture is originated from the religious rites in the society, for example, the religious prayer, celebration and other rites. Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, once pointed out that rite is an essential part of western religious culture. Chinese ritual culture, which originates from ancient sacrificial activities, evolves into the customs in people's lives gradually, and later it sublimes into "Li (rite)". Guan Zi, an ancient people, once said that "Cāng bīng shí zhě ér zhī lìjié, yīshì zú ér zhī róngrǔ", meaning that people will not have higher level of spiritual pursuit until their material life is satisfied. As we can see, rite is a kind of social behavior which people follow in daily life. It is the outward extension of the cognitive model of belief, the symbolic activity taken place at certain place and time according to established procedures and methods against specific group of people [4]. In the course of exploring traditional Chinese cultural resources in-depth, ritual culture comes back to people's view as a kind of important spiritual treasure, and the value and connotation revealed by it can strengthen people's national beliefs.

The ritual culture which acts on college students' national identity can be classified into rite of passage, celebration ceremony and memorial ceremony. The rite of passage refers to that college students pass the important node in their personal growth process successfully, and step into the next cycle of life in psychology and in action. In college, the rite of passage includes the school opening ceremony, graduation ceremony, party/league member oath-taking ceremony, award ceremony and other ceremonies. The celebration ceremony is the heated celebration activities held by the school to celebrate the significant festive events and the outstanding achievements that have obtained, which can strengthen college students' sense of belonging and achievement. Celebration ceremony includes the anniversary celebration of party building, anniversary of the founding of China, anniversary of the

founding college, festivals and the activities for celebrating the outstanding achievements the college achieves in certain aspect. Memorial ceremony refers to the various memorial activities held by the college according to the state arrangement, including the date of birth, date of death of great man in revolutionary. In addition, the colleges will also hold ceremonial ceremony on the date of birth or death of the people who has made great contribution to the school in the history of the school. Ceremonial ceremony is mainly held for remembering the achievements of scholars of the past, spreading culture and spirit to college students. The three kinds of ceremonies have become public culture along with the growth of the college. All kinds of the ceremonial culture have rich connotation, and the holding of appropriate ceremonies by the school regularly can better highlight the cohesion of traditional Chinese culture.

Ritual culture is characterized by symbol, performance, inheritance and procedure. It reflects education and regularity when acting on college students' national identity. Landman, a philosophical anthropologist, holds the opinion that "culture and education are indivisible although they are not one thing" [5]. The evolution and inheritance of ritual culture is belonging to education and for education. As a path for the education of college students' national identity, the ritual culture in colleges is mainly the transmission of cultural knowledge from the point of view of subject and connotation, delivering political culture and core values to college students. For instance, at the opening ceremony of colleges and universities, enable college students to have new pursuing goals through ceremonies, carry forward the university culture, educate college students in terms of ideal and faith through school history, school motto and outstanding alumni. They are the participants of the activities in these ceremonies, and will pass on the ritual knowledge after their mind is infected in the course of ceremony. In the graduation ceremony, it's more patriotism, making clear responsibility, responsibility assuming and gratefulness education. Ritual culture is playing an indispensable role in campus education. As for the regularity acting on national identity, ritual culture presents the characteristics of periodicity and routine, and it is a kind of recurring stylized and institutionalized behavior. From the entrance to graduation, there are many ceremonies, such as school opening ceremony, graduation ceremony, various awards ceremonies, party building commemorative activity, memorial event for the founding of China, anniversary celebration for the founding of school, Youth Day and Memorial Day of the Movement on December 9th. The construction of these college ritual cultures is conducted according to the timing of college life, which is reflection of the regularity of college ritual culture.

It can be seen that ritual culture can play the role of carrier in the construction of college students' national identity. The ritual culture in college campus is not only the symbol of Chinese national culture, but also provides emotional basis for college students' national identity. Schools can play the role of national identity orientation and behavior regulation in actual life through carrying out various ritual culture activities. In this process, college students will accept ritual cultural education consciously and actively, internalizing the patriotism as their

own belief and value pursuit gradually. Therefore, ritual culture has the function of transmitting correct values, gathering students' patriotic feelings, and helping college students to form good sense of self-identity in the course of constructing college students' national identity.

IV. PATH FOR RITUAL CULTURE TO ACT ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' NATIONAL IDENTITY

From the perspective of the essence of ritual culture, ritual culture not only concentrates certain cultural content, but also is a kind of sedimentation of civilization and culture, and it is more of the representation and embodiment of culture reflecting on people's specific behavior. From the angle of the integrating degree of rite and experience, why the ritual experience, but not ritual feeling or meditation, is used? They may exist in all the rites, but not the main form of existence, which is experience. In other words, the common places of experience and rite have determined that ritual experience is the key to measure the effect of ritual education. The effect of various ritual activities should be stressed against deepening the cognition and experience of ritual culture of college students.

Among the various ritual activities in college campus, when the ritual activities obtain profound emotional experience and transfer into the mentality accepting ritual education consciously, the ritual activities can gradually transform the unity of cognition and experience of experiencer and participator. Otherwise, ritual activities will be just a form. In the ritual activities, college students are the experiencer and participator, and the procedure and seriousness of ritual activities will offer certain educational meaning to the college students. The cognition of ritual culture runs through the whole process of ritual activities, and only when the college students experience the value of ritual activities from heart and generate the feelings of identification, trust and rethinking toward ritual activities, can ritual activities have the effect of education.

From the perspective of ritual culture's role of inheritance, the education resources of ritual culture in college campus is the accumulation for inheriting Chinese excellent culture. The ritual culture accumulated in the institution of higher education for cultivating talents not only has great significance for the formation of college students' patriotic behavior as well as the guidance and promotion of patriotism, but also can play the role of value convergence, spirit cohesion and emotion sublimation in the course of constructing college students' national identity. From the perspective of citizen education, the problem solved by college student citizenship actually is the problem of the relationship between college student as a citizen and the country, and what it reflects is the citizen group of college students' understanding, cognition and experience of such relationship mentally and physically. Ritual culture education in college campus is a part of citizen education. Various ritual culture education activities in colleges will enable college students to generate a sense of civic patriotism mentally and physically, and then sublimate to the citizen's patriotic feeling and patriotic action, which has realized the shaping of college students' civic spirit, having significant effect on the requirements of college students becoming

qualified citizens--the promotion of their own national identity.

With the continuous development of network technology, Internet and new media have become the important way for college students to realize human communication and to express their ideas. Network will generate profound impact on college students' way of thinking and concept of mode, and it will have direct effect on college students' national identity. Network provides platform for ritual culture, spreading ritual culture taking advantage of Internet information. Conduct identity, education and promotion of college students' patriotic thinking and behavior in this process, so as to further expand the space for college students to generate national identity. In the course of carrying out ritual education on the Internet, lead the college students to participate in such education though establishing the ritual culture education website with knowledge, interest and clear subject, setting up special subject to introduce the contents of ritual culture, thus to motivate college students' pride and confidence of excellent Chinese culture. Currently, we can establish a website with the theme of national identity relying on ritual culture, for example the special website of "Chinese Ritual Culture", establish new media interactive zone, motivate college students to pay attention to and reflect on national identity; make college students to participate in some practice activities of ritual culture through network, for example, Confucius and Chinese Culture", "Chinese Cultural Virtues" and other activities; push major national festivals through micro platform taking advantage of the popularity of mobile media, for example, "Anniversary Celebration for the Founding of China", "Memorial Day of Significant Event" and other activities. The establishment of ritual culture education network platform by colleges has far-reaching significance for expanding the generation space of college students' national identity. Various colleges and universities shall make clear the important significance of establishing ritual culture education network platform, pay high attention to it, organize specialists and scholars, ideological and political education workers, network technician and others to establish the active interactive online and offline ritual culture education mode.

V. CONCLUSION

Xi Jinping, the General Secretary, once point out at the teacher-student forum in Peking University that "Chinese civilization passes down thousands of years and it has its unique value system. Excellent Chinese traditional culture has become the gene of Chinese nation, and it is rooted in the mind of Chinese people, influencing Chinese people's way of thinking and behavior subtly." [6] Ritual culture is part of excellent Chinese traditional culture and it runs through the whole development process of Chinese history as a cultural gene, which can highlight the rich cultural connotation of China, but also display the mainstream ideas of current society. It will certainly occupy a very important position on the construction of college students' national identity in the future. At present, the effect of ritual culture acting on national identity has not shown up whether in college students' thoughts or life, having certain gap between it and the education effects expected by us. Therefore, we shall deepen

the theoretical understanding of ritual culture, actively explore the spreading and practical methods of ritual culture, and finally transform it into the improvement of college students' national identity.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ma Deyong: National Identity, Patriotism and Nationalism — A Review of Recent Empirical Studies Abroad [J]. *World Ethno-National Studies*, 2012(3):9.
- [2] Du Lanxiao, Fang Weiwei. Empirical Research on College Students' National Identity — Investigation and Analysis based on Regular Institutions of Higher Learning in 31 Provinces and Municipalities Nationwide [J]. *China Higher Education Research*, 2013(11). 81.
- [3] Deng Honglei. Philosophic Thinking on Ancient Chinese Ritual Culture [J]. *Jiangnan Tribune*, 2005 (1): 80.
- [4] Tong Jinling. Research on Judicial Ceremony [D]. Changchun: Jilin University, 2011.
- [5] Feng Zengjun. Educational Anthropology [M]. Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Publishing House, 1998: 161.
- [6] Xinhua News Agency. Xi Jinping's Speech at Teacher-Student Forum in Peking University [N]. *People's Daily*, 2014-5-4.