

On the National Identity and Ethnical Identity of Cross-Border Minzu

—A Case Study of Yao Minzu in the Estuary of Yunnan Province

Linying Dong

Southwest Research Institute for Minzu, Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, China

Email: 469230962@qq.com

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Abstract

The cross-border minzu in Yunnan Province has diverse history and culture, which has something in common with the same minzu abroad in terms of ethnic origin, language, religious beliefs, customs and so on. In order to deal with the problem of cross-border ethnic identity, we must correctly understand the relationship between cross-border ethnic cultural identity and political identity. Through the investigation and study of the Yao Autonomous County in the estuary of the Sino-Vietnamese border in Yunnan Province, this paper attempts to analyze the relationship between national identity and ethnical identity, that is, political identity and cultural identity, taking the cross-border nationality—Yao minzu as an example. It is considered that the national identity and ethnical identity of the same minzu do not have identity, the national identity is higher than the ethnical identity, and the construction of national identity can only fully respect the ethnic identity of minzu, including cross-border minzu. Only in this way can we finally realize the integration of national identity and ethnical identity.

Keywords

Cross-Border, Minzu, Identity

1. Introduction

Generally speaking, minzu has common characteristics in historical origin, mode of production, language, culture, customs and psychological identity. Religion plays an important role in the process of formation and development of some minzu. From this point of view, psychological identity, as one of the criteria for the definition of minzu by the Communist Party of China, plays an important role. In reality, the differences brought about by national psychological

identity may lead to contradictions between countries or regions. Academically, ethnic psychological identity is a complex problem intertwined with many disciplines, such as politics, anthropology, ethnology, sociology, psychology and so on. In the psychological identity of a minzu, it includes not only the psychological identity of the country from an international perspective, that is, political identity, but also the psychological identity of the minzu, that is, cultural identity, in the special group of cross-border minzu. The composition of its national identity is complex and diverse, and sometimes its national identity may occupy a dominant position. How to properly handle the relationship between national identity and ethnical identity among cross-border minzu is a complex issue.

2. Raising of Research Questions

After a long period of exploration and practice, in May 2005, the Communist Party of China pointed out in the exposition of the basic theory and policy on minzu issues that the minzu is a stable community of people formed at a certain stage of historical development. Generally speaking, minzu has common characteristics in historical origin, mode of production, language, culture, customs and psychological identity. Religion plays an important role in the process of formation and development of some minzu. Therefore, mental identity is one of the several elements of our minzu. The common national psychology has stability, continuity, cohesion, concentric self-awareness, external assimilation resistance, to protect the survival and development of the minzu. However, the common national psychology is also changing and developing, which is a slow and gradual process. At present, in the academic circles of minzu theory and some related studies in China, there are different explanations for the connotation of “psychological identity”.

Some scholars believe that common psychological identity mainly refers to the same psychological characteristics of the people who make up a minzu. It is mainly manifested in the sense of belonging to the same minzu, including the identity psychology of the members of the minzu as a whole and the identity psychology of the members of the minzu. Ethnical psychology is a social psychology expressed in the characteristics of common minzu culture. It is the reflection of the characteristics of a minzu’s social economy, way of life, historical development and geographical environment in the spiritual outlook of the minzu [1]. Fei Xiaotong believes that a minzu is a community of people with a common way of life, and national identity can only occur if it is in contact with outsiders who are “not of our race” [2]. Some scholars believe that the ethnical identity of the border people is identical with the national identity. For example, Qian Xuemei believes that identity is a concept derived from social experience, which has a strong behavioral driving force. Everyone’s identity is multiple, ethnic identity and national identity are only two of them, they coexist in the individual consciousness. The realistic survival and self-identity of minzu are inseparable from the state. The relationship between national identity and ethnic identity is not necessarily contradictory and antagonistic. On the contrary, the

daily management behavior of the state often actively strengthens and protects the ethnic identity of citizens. It is true that there are contradictions and conflicts between ethnic identity and national identity in human society. However, confrontation and conflict, and even national division or ethnic independence, cannot change the fact that ethnic identity and national identity coexist. National identity will not weaken ethnic identity, but is the premise of the formation and continuation of ethnic identity [3]. In the eyes of Professor Peng Zhaorong, nationality, history, culture, tradition, state, economic situation, cultural interaction, relations between ethnic branches, subject ethnic policies, natural ecology, clans, families, consanguinity, village leaders, religious rituals, customs, etc. work together to have an effect on identity [4]. Some scholars believe that in multi-ethnic China, national psychological identity can be divided into two levels, four dimensions. The two levels include national identity and ethnical identity, and the four dimensions include cognitive evaluation, emotional and behavioral involvement of national identity and ethnical identity. These two levels are consistent with the views of domestic researchers, including ethnical identity and national identity [5]. The author believes that the minzu psychological identity, that is, the ethnical identity, is mostly primitive, which forms a similar boundary of minzu origin, history, language and religious belief between the minzu and the “foreign nationality”. A kind of community recognition formed spontaneously and consciously among minzu. The psychological identity of the Chinese nation, that is, the national identity, is a derivative concept after the establishment of the modern sovereign state, which is closely related to the political, economic, cultural and other factors after the establishment of the modern sovereign state.

On the concept of “psychological identity”, some scholars think that the ethnical identity of the border people is identical with the national identity, and I think that for the special group of cross-border minzu, they share the same origin with one or even many countries abroad. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish the psychological identity of different minzu. This kind of scholars’ theory is divorced from the national conditions of our country and separates the internal relationship of the same cross-border minzu. At the present stage, on the basis of respecting the national identity, guiding the ethnical identity to conform to the development of the national identity is the inevitable requirement of building the democratic movement community of the Chinese minzu.

In January 2018, I went to the estuary Yao Autonomous County on the border between China and Vietnam to investigate and communicate with some Yao cadres by means of observation and interview, and I obtained some first-hand information and specific cases to verify the national psychological identity again. There are different angles and levels, so we should pay attention to distinguish the relationship between cultural identity and political identity. Political identity is higher than cultural identity. In the construction of national political identity, we should fully respect the ethnic identity of ethnic minorities, including cross-border minzu to realize the integration of national identity and national

identity.

3. Yao Minzu, a Cross-Border Minzu in the Estuary

Yao minzu is a group of people living in five countries: China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar. According to the fifth national census, the current population of Yao minzu in China is 2.63 million, which is mainly distributed in Guangxi, at the same time it is also distributed in Yunnan, Guangzhou and other places. The Yao minzu is not an indigenous people in Vietnam. From the 13th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the Yao minzu entered Vietnam from China in batches.

Estuary Yao Autonomous County, located in the southeast of Honghe Hani Yi Autonomous Prefecture, opposite the Lao Cai of Vietnam, Guiliu City across the Red River. Since opening to the outside world, Hekou County has made great efforts to develop port economy and trade, and has established a good economic cooperation relationship with Vietnam's Lao Cai Province. In the 2010 census, the Yao population in Hekou was 24013, accounting for 22.96% of the total population.

The estuary is geographically located on the border between China and Vietnam, and its strategic position should not be underestimated. On the other hand, the estuary Yao minzu has a common consanguinity and cultural relationship with the Yao minzu in Lao Cai Province of Vietnam, also known as Dong, Trai, Diu Mien, Kim Mien, etc., due to their special history and geographical environment. Cross-border minzu have formed a very diverse social culture, many times, people use cultural differences to define different social groups, there is no cultural identity within the minzu, it is difficult to form a national community. To a certain extent, the identity of all minzu is a kind of cultural identity. The Yao minzu is all over the estuary and the old streets of Vietnam, and its culture, language, religion and customs condense the ethnical identity of the Yao minzu.

Some scholars believe that from the perspective of ethnic history, spoken and written languages, religious beliefs and customs, there is no doubt that the cross-border minzu in Yunnan are cultural groups with unique social and historical characteristics. Around this series of cultural characteristics, Yunnan cross-border minzu have formed their specific identity form, so it can be said that the identity of Yunnan cross-border minzu is first of all a kind of cultural identity [6]. But national boundaries only began to appear in the process of nation-state emergence. However, the history of the Yao minzu is not only the history of the Yao people, but also an important part of the formation of the pluralistic and integrated pattern of the Chinese minzu. Mr. Fei Xiaotong said: in the course of thousands of years of development, the mainstream has been formed by many scattered ethnic units, through contact, struggle, confusion, integration, but also differentiation and demise, forming a way for many minzu to come and go. I have you, you have me, not only have their own personality, but also have a multi-level common unity. Therefore, there is a contradiction in the psychological identity of cross-border minzu [2]. There are a wide range of cross-border

minzu among China's 20.28 million km land border, distinguishing between political identity and cultural identity in national psychological identity, and guiding cultural identity to conform to the development of political identity on the basis of respecting cultural identity. It is not only conducive to promoting the discipline development of China's minzu theory and policy, improving the relevant investigation and research, but also maintaining minzu unity, which is of great significance to national security, stability, policy implementation, economic development and so on.

4. Analysis of the Factors Affecting the Psychological Identity of Cross-Border Minzu

4.1. New Situation in International Relations

The peace and stability in the southwest frontier region are inseparable from China's foreign policy of "good-neighborliness, peace and prosperity", but now China, as the second largest economy in the world, is also facing the pressure brought by the "China threat theory". With the rapid development of China's economy, it has created huge business opportunities for neighboring countries and expanded the space for mutually beneficial cooperation. However, the outstanding issues of the disparity of national strength and some territorial disputes are the tension of the regional geopolitical environment from time to time. In this context, the construction of cross-border nation-state identity in this region will also encounter new problems and new challenges.

4.2. Imbalance in Economic Development

Compared with the coastal and inland areas, the economy of the ethnic minority areas in the southwest frontier is underdeveloped, although local governments have made active efforts to help the poor in recent years, and have also achieved certain results. However, it is difficult to make a qualitative leap in a short period of time in the relatively underdeveloped state of the southwest frontier minzu areas. In the southwest frontier minzu areas with many cross-border minzu, if the economic basis of national identity cannot be transformed into specific economic support policies, it is easy to fail. At present, such as the estuary is located on the border between China and Vietnam, its infrastructure is not only significantly behind the mainland, but also backward compared with neighboring Vietnam. The roads in neighboring countries are asphalt, while our roads are paved with marbles. In the long run, if we want to further consolidate and strengthen the national identity of cross-border minzu, we will lose the economic foundation.

4.3. The Implementation of the Law Is Not in Place

In China's Law on Regional Minzu Autonomy and other local policy systems, there are all kinds of special supportive policies implemented by the state in minzu areas. If these policies can be closely integrated with the reality of minzu

areas, it will be of great benefit to minzu areas. However, the overall quality of local minzu cadres in the border minzu does have limitations, and they are not good at combining the relevant policies in the autonomous law with the reality of local development, for example, local laws and regulations only copy the contents of higher-level policies. It's not combined with local reality. The inability to effectively combine minzu policy with local practice will also pose a direct or indirect obstacle to the goal of consolidating cross-border nation-state identity.

4.4. Imperfections in Social Policy

Social policy is closely related to the life of cross-border minzu. Perfect social policy can consolidate and strengthen the national identity of cross-border minzu. The policy differences between the two countries may lead to ethnical identity above national identity.

In recent years, the Vietnamese government has increased its support to the border region, fully taking into account the production and life of the border people, children's education, medical security and poverty alleviation and other practical problems, to a considerable extent to meet the needs of the border people. The lack of opportunities for the expression and acquisition of interests of the people in southwest China has shaken the national identity of cross-border minzu to a certain extent. The Yao minzu in the border between China and Vietnam belongs to the same nationality, but the benefits brought by the Chinese border people are not as good as those brought by Vietnam, which will weaken the border people's sense of national identity, superiority and pride. Therefore, there is often a state of confusion between ethnical identity and national identity in cross-border minzu. The gap between the social policies of the two countries and the lack of national social policy strengthen the opposites of ethnical identity and national identity.

4.5. Diversity of Information Dissemination

Because they are located in the border areas and speak the same language with neighboring countries, cross-border minzu can accept not only domestic media information, but also foreign information, and the diversity of information dissemination is far greater than that in the mainland. For example, you can watch Vietnamese TV programs in a room at the mouth of the river and listen to a Vietnamese radio broadcast listened to by a driver in a taxi. This leads to a certain degree of difficulty in the work of using mainstream voices to occupy the commanding heights and influence the masses of minzu. In the environment of information dissemination, the weakening of mainstream voices and the strengthening of diverse voices are not conducive to the integration of ethnical identity and national identity.

5. Conclusions

Cross-border minzu is a special entity, ethnical identity and national identity go

hand in hand. If we ignore the ethnical identity or suppress the ethnical identity it will cause national dissatisfaction, undermine minzu unity and disturb the social order. How to deal with the relationship between national identity and national identity is an important issue for countries.

When talking about the identity of the Chinese minzu, Mr. Fei Xiaotong mentioned that the identity of the Chinese minzu is multi-level, and high-level identity does not necessarily replace or reject low-level identity. Even on the basis of different levels of identity, we can develop their own characteristics and form a multilingual and multicultural whole. Therefore, we should correctly distinguish the relationship between cross-border ethnic identity and national identity. We can regard these two forms of identity as different levels. Ethnic identity is mostly related to religion, customs and other cultures, and can be regarded as cultural identity. The premise of national identity is to recognize the existence of the People's Republic of China, the nation is one of the 56 minzu in the Chinese nation, therefore, national identity is the premise and basis of other identities. At the political level, the state maintains the national culture of ethnic minorities through the establishment of a set of systems and policy systems conducive to the protection and development of minzu cultures; in economic construction, through the establishment of relevant development funds and subsidies, to carry out the protection of cultural relics and monuments of minzu, the protection of the intangible cultural heritage of minzu and other ways to strengthen the cultural identity of all minzu to their own minzu. In 1998, the State Civil Affairs Commission initiated the "Action for prospering the Border and enriching the people." In 2011, The State Council issued a report on supporting Yunnan Province to speed up its efforts: "Opinions on the construction of an important bridgehead facing the southwest." Ethnic identification promotes the formation of cross-border nation-state identity, and the implementation of ethnic policies is the guarantee to improve cross-border nation-state identity. To a certain extent, these policies promote the economic and social development of minzu areas. It has also mobilized the enthusiasm of minzu to actively participate in the management of their own affairs, and strengthened the national identity of cross-border minzu areas.

However, there is no identity between ethnical identity and national identity in the process of minzu development, and it still needs to be taken into account in many aspects when China guides ethnical identity to adapt to national identity. In order to further consolidate the national identity of cross-border minzu in the southwest frontier region to create good political, economic, cultural and social conditions, national identity is higher than ethnical identity. Only by fully respecting the ethnic identity of minzu, including cross-border minzu, can we finally realize the integration of national identity and build the community of the Chinese nation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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