

Study on the Contemporary Ideological and Political Education Value in Mythology of Yi Nationality

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ABSTRACT

Yi mythology, as an oral culture, is rooted in the folk belief soil of animism and ancestor worship in all things. Through generations of transmission, it has become a common spiritual heritage of the Yi people. There are description of the origin of heaven and earth, praise of heroic figures, explanation of natural phenomena, and standards of moral and ethical norms in these myths. The wisdom and inspiration contained in these myths have had a profound impact on the production, lifestyle, and values of the Yi people. This article explores the ideological and political education values contained in Yi mythology, including ecology, national spirit, ethics, and morality. It has a positive promoting effect on deeply exploring the educational value of traditional culture and effectively inheriting the excellent traditional culture of the nation.

Keywords: *Yi nationality, Mythology, Ideology and politics, Educational value.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The prosperity of a country or a nation is always supported by cultural prosperity, and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation requires the development and prosperity of Chinese culture as a condition. Xi Jinping said: "The rich philosophical, humanistic, educational, and moral concepts of China's excellent traditional culture can provide useful enlightenment for people to understand and transform the world, provide useful inspiration for governance, and also provide useful inspiration for moral construction."¹ After five thousand years of historical accumulation, the children of all nationalities in China have created brilliant civilizations, and the profound systems and concepts contained in them are an important source of cultivating core socialist values. In October 2014, Xi Jinping stated at a symposium on literary and artistic work that "many ideological concepts and moral norms in excellent traditional Chinese culture, whether in the past or present, have their timeless

value". Cultural confidence is the spiritual pillar for a nation to achieve better development. With the rapid development of economy and technology, profound changes have occurred in various fields around the world. Various ideologies and cultures frequently collide, exchange, blend, and clash. There is a must to deeply recognize the importance of excellent traditional culture of our nation, strengthen cultural consciousness and confidence, deeply explore the value connotation of excellent traditional culture, and further stimulate the vitality and vigor of excellent traditional Chinese culture.

2. MYTHOLOGY AND IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

The reason why the world is so rich and colorful is because different regions and ethnic groups around the world have nurtured their own unique civilizations.² Myth is an important part of traditional Chinese culture, representing the great spirit of self-improvement and perseverance of the

1. Xi Jinping, Speech at the International Academic conference to Commemorate the 2565th Anniversary of Confucius' Birth and the Opening Meeting of the Fifth General Assembly of the International Confucian Federation, [EB/OL]. People.cn, Sept., 2014. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/0925/c64094-25729647-2.html>

2. Xi Jinping, 2017 United Nations Geneva Headquarters Speech [EB/OL]. xinhuanet, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-01/19/c_1120340081.htm

Chinese nation,³ and the perception of the world and the reflection of world concepts during the embryonic period of primitive humans. Primitive humans regarded all objects and phenomena in nature as living beings like themselves, thus forming a primitive thinking state of confusion between things and themselves.⁴ This is the most ancient way to trace the origin, adapt to ancient society, understand the world, and interpret the world and oneself. Zhang Tao's "On the Educational Meaning of Mythology" (2011) wrote: "Mythology is a story in which each person continuously pursues the truth, meaning, and importance of life throughout their lifetime, as time goes by." It is an interpretation of natural phenomena by the ancestors. It reflects the basic living and cognitive level of human ancestors, as well as the communication and exchange between humans and the unknown world, showcasing the social development status of that time to future generations. It is a profound expression of politics, culture, systems, and other aspects, and has various social functions such as aesthetic cognition and education.

As a complete system, excellent traditional Chinese culture adheres to values such as benevolence, integrity, and harmony, which can cultivate people's moral qualities and sense of social responsibility.⁵ Ideological and political education and excellent traditional Chinese culture share the same educational goals and are mutually compatible and accomplished.⁶ The construction of the modernity of ideological and political education requires further exploration, inheritance and promotion of the essence of the Chinese nation's excellent traditional culture, which not only meets the essential requirements and basic characteristics of Chinese path to modernization, but also conforms to the core socialist values.⁷ Inheriting

and promoting excellent traditional Chinese culture is an important mission of ideological and political education in China⁸. In 2019, the "Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Deepening Undergraduate Education and Teaching Reform and Improving the Quality of Talent Cultivation in a Comprehensive Way" proposed to integrate ideological and political education throughout the entire process of talent cultivation.⁹ In current era, people are facing multiple impacts from foreign cultures. To give the Chinese people cultural confidence and cultural consciousness, it is necessary to construct people's own cultural soft power and fully stimulate the spiritual value of traditional culture. The Chinese spirit contained in Chinese mythology is the source of ideological and political education.¹⁰

3. THE CONTEMPORARY IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION VALUE OF YI MYTHOLOGY

The excellent traditional Chinese culture deeply embodies the value of ideological and political education, and the rich traditional Chinese culture contains the spiritual roots and soul sources of ideological and political education, accumulating solid and profound spiritual pursuits and behavioral norms, providing a source of core values and beliefs for ideological and political education, and injecting nutrients into the development of ideological and political education work.¹¹

As Cao Haiqing said, "Mythology is a reflection of national identity, a dream of a nation, and to a certain extent, reflects the characteristics of its nation."¹² Epics and myths reflect the national spirit

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12. Cao Haiqing, A Contrast of Cultural Spirits Implied Between Chinese and Western Legends [J]. Journal of Xinzhou Teachers University, 2002 (18).

nurtured by various ethnic cultures through artistic means, and have more functions in inspiring national spirit, maintaining national unity, and regulating moral behavior.¹³ The myth of the Yi ethnic group, as an oral culture, is rooted in the folk belief soil of having spirits in all things and ancestor worship. Through generations of transmission, it has become a common spiritual heritage of the Yi people. These myths depict the origin of heaven and earth, praise heroic figures, explain natural phenomena, and establish moral and ethical norms. The wisdom and inspiration contained in these myths have had a profound impact on the production, lifestyle, and values of the Yi people.

3.1 Cultivating an Ecological Ethics View of Harmonious Coexistence Between Humans and Nature

In the traditional concept of the Yi people, all things in heaven and earth have spirits, with wind, rain, thunder and lightning. The four seasons cycle, and people and all things in heaven and earth will present a state of interdependence, mutual benefit, and mutual benefit. "Heaven and earth coexist with me, and all things and I are one."¹⁴ Mythology is the expression of our ancestors' understanding of the origin of humanity and the origin of heaven and earth, and the primitive ancestors already had a consciousness of exploration.

In the Yi mythological story "Floods All Over", it is said that the Jumu family extensively cultivated and cut down land on the hillside, affecting the ancestral cemetery of the Ahou family, which led to fighting and disputes. The sons of the Jumu family learned the news that the flood was about to engulf the human world, and also learned how to elude it. When floods flooded all over and destroyed everything in the world, the kind and wise Jumu Reniu became the chosen race. Finally, after passing multiple tests, Jumu Reniu and Ziye Ani¹⁵ became husband and wife, and brought back food seeds, livestock, and other items to return to the human world for reproduction.

All things have spirits, which is an expression of early human psychological needs and spiritual

sustenance.¹⁶ The primitive ancestors had limited understanding of heaven and earth. The different types of harsh natural environments and phenomena described in Yi mythology are the historical memory expressions of primitive ancestors towards natural anomalies. Their emotions towards nature are contradictory and complex, filled with awe and admiration for the unknown mystery and powerful power of nature; they are filled with fear when facing natural anomalies such as earthquakes, thunderstorms, and floods. They have realized that humans can only rely on nature for survival, recognize their insignificance, and their powerlessness in the face of natural disasters. Therefore, weak humans need to rely on gods with strong spiritual power or the help of animals and plants with spiritual power to avoid danger, overcome disasters, and turn danger into safety. In "The Origins of the Three Nationalities", Jumu Reniu never forgot to rescue the weak and vulnerable during floods. Finally, with the help of these small animals with spiritual power, a way was found to make the mute son speak, giving birth to three ethnic groups: Tibetan, Han, and Yi. With the help of small animals, Zhigealu tamed the cannibal demon. In "Chicken Saves Mother", with the help of many enthusiastic animal and plant friends, the little chicken saved their mother.

They realized that only with heaven and earth can all things grow, and even believed that gods reside in the heavens and control the life and death of all things on earth, in order to explain their exploration and understanding of the world. The Yi ancestors firmly believed that only by continuously improving the harsh natural environment can humans survive and reproduce smoothly. In "Zhigealu", nine suns appeared in the sky constantly roasting the earth, causing great suffering and making it difficult for the people to survive. Zhigealu stood at the top of the cedar tree and shot down eight suns with an arrow, only then did the human world regain vitality. In the book "Sire Zhigealu", it is said that in ancient times, human insects, fish, and birds were all incredibly large, with snakes as big as water tanks and toads as big as grinding plates... People were unable to cultivate and live, so Sire Zhigealu held a wormwood branch and recited spells while constantly whipping these giants to make them

13. Zhao Bowen, Li Kejun, Research on the Symbolic Element of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Strengthening of Chinese National Community Consciousness [J]. Guangxi Ethnic Studies, 2022(06): 137-145.

14. "Zhuangzi · On the Equality of Things"

15. The daughter of the heaven god Ziye Dinggu.

16. Liu Yuan, An Exploration of the Educational Value of Ancient Chinese Mythology [D]. Shanghai Normal University, 2013.

smaller, so that people can produce and live normally.

Human beings and nature are one, and there is a necessary connection between all things. Human beings are only a part of nature. How humans treat nature, nature will also provide feedback in the same way. Only by treating and respecting nature, relying on nature, and harmoniously coexisting with nature, can we obtain the reproduction and growth of our ethnic groups. The interdependence between humans, gods, and animals and plants is precisely the naive understanding of the Yi ancestors' cosmology¹⁷ of the unity of all things. This is of great significance for people to establish a correct ecological view and a consciousness of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

3.2 Outlook on Life

As Cassirer said, death in mythology is just another form of transformation of life, and "death in the body but with a spirit" is the simple view of life of the Yi ancestors. In the eyes of the primitive ancestors, the sun rises and the moon sets, flowers bloom and wither, and all natural things in the world are constantly undergoing the transformation of life and death. Even the powerful Sire cannot escape the natural laws of death. For example, Zhigealu was a god conceived by the combination of a human and a divine dragonhawk. He was a savior hero of the Yi ethnic group, possessing divine superpowers. However, in the end, he died of murder when he was about to complete his mission to save the world. Oba Sire¹⁸ was a god dressed in frog skin that jumped out of a woman's knee. Oba Sire also possessed divine power, but was burned to death before truly transforming into human form. The ancestors had a fear of death and a longing for life, combined with the spiritual sustenance that all things have spirits. They believed in the immortality of the soul and believed that after a person's death, the soul would return to the birthplace of their ancestors and live with their loved ones in another world. Therefore, under this belief of immortality, departed ancestors or heroes become deities worshipped by future generations, and some are even worshipped as totems of the clan.

When there is life, there is death, and death is the beginning of new life. Life and death go back

and forth, and life and death never cease. This is precisely the desire of the ancestors for a never-ending life and their inner pursuit of thought and spirit. The life scenes of humans, nature, and society presented through myths help people understand the meaning of respecting life, establish a correct view of life, learn to care for others, care for themselves, respect every life, and have a broader tolerance.

3.3 Cultivating National Spirit

In March 2018, General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly expounded the contemporary connotation of the "Four Great Spirits" at the first session of the 13th National People's Congress, which is the essence of the great spirit of the Chinese nation. The national spirit is the driving force of a nation, and it is the cultural core of a nation that has been accumulated and formed over a long period of history.¹⁹ Mythology is an important medium for understanding national spirit. Yuan Ke once said, "To understand a country and a nation, one should first understand its mythology."²⁰ The mythology of the Yi nationality has shaped many vivid individual images with distinct personalities, such as "Zhigealu", "Floods All Over", "The Origin of the Three Nationalities", and "Sirearu Jure", vividly describing the living environment, collective consciousness, value orientation, ideal vision, and struggle history of people in ancient times. The continuous influence and inheritance of the ethnic group over thousands of years have made it the national spirit of this nation.

The National Spirit of Hard Work and Struggle Hard struggle is a glorious tradition followed by the Chinese nation, and it is also a theme of exploration that people have never stopped exploring since ancient times. In ancient times, the natural climate was abnormal and living conditions were harsh. The ancestors had little understanding and knowledge of nature and often faced life and death challenges. In this situation, only by constantly facing crises, solving difficulties, and working hard can people gain a glimmer of vitality. Zhigealu was the son of the divine dragonhawk and the mortal Pumulieyi. He was born with the great mission of saving the people. When the nine suns scorched the earth and the people were struggling, Zhigealu dared to stand up and take responsibility, shot down

17. (German) Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of The State* [M]. Fan Jin, trans., Beijing: The Writers Publishing House, 1991.

18. Transliteration, Yi language, meaning Frog God.

19. Xu Jianfei, *Protecting the Cultural Roots That Sustain the National Spirit* [N]. *People's Daily*, 2023-02-17(09).

20. Yuan Ke, *Chinese Myth* [M]. Beijing: China Folk Literature and Art Publishing House, 1987: 04.

eight suns and saving the people, tamed the cannibalistic demon "Tabu"²¹ and subdued Thunder Lord; He worked tirelessly to improve the harsh natural environment when encountering wastelands and bridges when encountering water. He worked tirelessly from dawn to dusk, until he died unexpectedly from overwork. It was under such sacrifice that he fulfilled his mission and portrayed a national hero who was dedicated to seeking happiness for people without any expectations. In "The Origins of the Three Nationalities," it is said that Jumu Reniu, who were kind, wise, and hardworking. Even in times of adversity, he never forgot to save the lives of the weak; After being captured in disguise in the Heavenly Court, he engaged in a battle of wits and bravery with the heavenly gods. Finally, with the help of the daughter of god Ziye Ani, he overcame numerous challenges and returned to the human world, bringing back food seeds and animal breeds to reproduce. The image of the ancestors who bravely advanced to seek happiness for people has deeply penetrated people's hearts.

The National Spirit of Daring to Struggle Since ancient times, the Yi people have revered diligence and bravery the most, which is also the deepest national spirit and quality. In the mythological stories of the Yi nationality, there are heroes like Zhigealu who dare to fight against nature, Jumu Reniu who dares to challenge the power of the gods, and Ayi Niuniu, a representative of the vulnerable group who fights against the black and evil forces. The heroes in mythology include both gods and small figures, and their deeds are admirable. They have been passed down orally from generation to generation by the Yi people, not only inheriting national culture, but also playing an irreplaceable role in strengthening national identity, enhancing national pride, and increasing national cohesion for future generations.

3.4 Ethical and Moral Education

Mythology showcases its ethical values through the expression of stories. By deeply interpreting mythological texts, people can understand the original cultural matrix and social ethics of the ethnic group²², and still provide ideological and spiritual motivation and moral behavior norms.

21. Transliteration, in the folk culture of the Yi nationality, this is a ferocious beast hidden in all directions, specialized in eating on humans.

22. Chen Xingyuan, Jin Zihua, Liu Feng, Multi-faceted Expressions of the Canoe Dragon Boat Mythology: Starting

Zuo Yutang once said that there is a universal moral proposition in Yi mythology, where good and evil, right and wrong, are the most basic moral emotions. "The various beliefs, rules, rituals, and taboos in mythology have sacred characteristics, and no member of the clan can violate them."²³ In the traditional thinking passed down by the Yi people from generation to generation, the rituals of the ethnic group must never be desecrated, and must be revered and devout in attitude; Taboos cannot be touched or violated... Once violated, they will be punished by the gods. The ancestors of the Yi nationality believed that gods would bless behaviors that followed ethical and natural laws, while violators would face punishment, such as destruction, disasters, diseases, death, and other disasters. This is a punishment imposed by gods on humans who violate laws and ethics. The myth "Floods All Over" is due to human greed, rudeness, and reckless destruction of nature, which angered the gods. The gods sent a flood to destroy everything in the world as punishment.

The Yi people in mythology advocate diligence, bravery, kindness, and generosity, without seeking anything in return. They strictly adhere to the concept of "not doing evil for the sake of small things, doing good even for the sake of small things", shaping classic images and storylines that have been deeply influenced by the spiritual space of the Yi people for thousands of years. These concepts invisibly influence their attitudes and behaviors towards society and the world. The primitive ancestors deeply realized that for weak humans, only by uniting and jointly safeguarding the interests of the ethnic group can they obtain better survival resources. In order to meet the spiritual needs, superheroes with superpowers who combine humans, beasts, and gods were born. They were able to accomplish things that humans could not, resolve the disasters brought by nature, fight against demons and monsters, selflessly protect the ethnic group, and even bravely sacrifice for the ethnic group. This is a manifestation of the noble collectivist moral trend in primitive society.

Labor creates everything. Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has created miracles with its diligent hands. In the mythology of the Yi

from A Study of the Miao Canoe Dragon Boat Culture of the Qingshuijiang River [J]. Journal of Guizhou Education University, 2024, 40(01): 78-84. DOI:10.13391/j.cnki.issn.1674-7798.2024.01.006.

23. (U.K.) Bronisław Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion [M]. Li Anzhai, trans., Shanghai Social Sciences Press, 2016.

nationality, it embodies the hardworking national quality of this nation. Pumolieyi²⁴ can weave the most beautiful cloth in the world; Ziyé Ani was not only good at weaving, but also at planting. After the floods flooded all over, everything in the world ceased to exist. It was she who stole grain seeds and livestock into the world, which gave rise to later grains such as buckwheat and rice, as well as livestock such as sheep and mules. Zhigealu not only subdued demons and demons, but also personally cultivated land, and built roads and bridges for the people. There are many mythological stories that are closely related to labor. Whether gods or humans, their wisdom is reflected in labor, and their great and selfless character is highlighted in labor.

4. CONCLUSION

The Yi ethnic group is an ancient ethnic group and one of the ethnic groups in the world with ancient scripts. Myths are the thoughts and wisdom accumulated by the hardworking, kind, brave and fearless ancestors of the Yi nationality through continuous transformation of nature and production. They are the essence of the development and changes of the Yi ethnic system, national spirit, and cultural phenomena. The noble character and exploratory spirit of the heroic figures in Yi mythology are the common consciousness and spiritual pillar of the nation. These spirits play a huge inspiring and educational role in people's social and cultural life. Especially in today's civilized society, suppressed by material desires such as power and money, these beautiful qualities of humanity tend to fade away. Extracting spiritual elements from myths that are lacking in modern life and culture but also desired by human nature has become a necessity of the times.

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24. Zhigealu's mother is the most beautiful woman who can weave the best fabrics.

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