

The Rituals and Cultural Changes of the Duan Festival of the Shui Ethnic – The case of Guizhou, China

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Abstract: *The Shui ethnic group is an ethnic group with a long history and unique ethnic culture in southern China, and the Shui Duan Festival is the grandest traditional annual festival of the Shui ethnic group. The study found that the festival has changed to a certain extent in ritual activities, Duanpo horse-racing activities, and the festival participants through field surveys, literature reviews, and interviews. The study results show that there are three main reasons for the changes: first, the change in the mindset of the Shui people; second, the promotion of government departments; and third, the improvement of rural infrastructure. This finding has significant theoretical and practical value for local government and related research.*

Keywords: *Shui ethnic, Ethnic culture, China, Traditional annual festival*

1. Introduction

Shui Duan Festival is the grandest traditional festival of the Shui people to welcome the old and the new, celebrate the harvest, celebrate the reunion, worship the ancestors and wish the happiness of the coming year (Long, 2009). The festival is also called "borrowing end" and "eating end," and "borrowing" means "eating" in the Shui language. The festival is the most widespread and most prolonged festival in the Shui region, with the most significant number of participants. At the end of the Shui Ethnic calendar, at the beginning of the year when the grain is ripe, the date of the festival is calculated on the day of the year. The festival was held in batches according to the clan's blood relations as the main body of activities, with many batches of festivals, divided initially into nine batches, now combined into seven batches, the first and last interval of about 50 days, known as "the longest festival in the world. At the same time, the 2006 Shui Duan Festival was selected as the first batch of the national intangible cultural heritage representative list (Long, 2009).

The study of the Shui Duan Festival began in the 1940s, but it was mainly recorded in scattered books and publications. It was only in the 1990s that the number of studies grew. The earliest documentation of the Shui Duan Festival began with contemporary ethnography (Zhang, 2006, 2008; Liang, 2002). Long (2009) conducted an extensive and in-depth social survey of the Shui area in Guizhou in 1943 and wrote "Shuijia Zhongjia Folklore," which recorded the rituals and brass drums in the course of the Shui ethnic. Luo (2000) further explored the historical background and recent changes in the Shui Duan Festival from folklore. However, previous studies also found that the traditional ethnic culture of the Shui ethnic group is facing a potential crisis in the process of development (Ji, 2019). For example, the value of tourism development and the inheritance and protection of the Shui Duan Festival was discussed.

To sum up, the current academic research on the Shui Duan festival is mainly reflected in the following three aspects: first, the origin of the Shui Duan festival; Second, the main rituals of the Shui Duan festival; Third, the way and social value of the Shui Duan festival horse-racing competition; but the historical origin and main rituals of the Shui Duan festival culture and the reasons for the recent changes have not been analyzed deeply enough.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Shui Tuan Festival

Shui Tuan Festival has a long history. The study of the Shui tribe end of the festival, need to trace the origin of the end of the festival. On the Shui tribe over the end of the record, contained in the Qing "Guizhou General". Every year, the first eleven days of the mid-autumn month rushed to the field, the day of the end of the festival, to be the day of rain and sunshine primary next year's abundance."(Pan, 2005). About the origin of the Shui Tuan Festival, there are many claims, and most of the current academic research on the origin of the Shui Tuan Festival is based on documentary sources, and folk legends, such as in the "Chinese Shui Culture Research" recorded two about the origin of the Shui Tuan Festival.

According to one legend, the ancient ancestors of the tribe were carrying bronze drums and production tools on their backs, fleeing from the desert in thousands of pairs, led by the head of the Shui family, Gong Deng, who walked for a long time from the "two regions" before arriving at San Dong in Sandu County. Seeing that there were mountains, water, fields, and forests in the area, they let several clans scatter down to live and agreed to come back to Samdong in the water calendar year after three years. As there was a total of one Tuan Tou, the Shui people were not convenient to walk around to solve the problem of Tuan Tou's sacrificial grant. The head of the water tribe, Gong Deng, let each place reach into the fish basket to catch fish and arrange them in order by the size of the fish caught. There is also a legend that the Shui tribe brothers went to see the old ancestor of the Shui tribe in ancient times. The old ancestor was very happy, personally went to the top of the house to pick pumpkins, accidentally fell and died, so the Shui tribe people to commemorate him, and the end of the festival, also known as "melon festival," eat vegetarian dishes (Pan, 2005). Through research and visits to local government, NRMs, and "ethnic elites," there is no official account of the origin of the Duanjie, a unique ethnic culture of the Shui ethnic group passed down from generation to generation.

2.2. The Main Rituals of the Shui Tuan Festival

2.2.1. Rituals

When the Shui people celebrate the end of the year, the two meals connected with New Year's Eve (the evening of the 11th day) and the first day of the year (the first day of the year) should avoid meat and have a vegetarian banquet. Therefore, all the cooking utensils and vessels, tables, chairs, and benches at home need to be washed and cleaned, and the main sacrificial offerings include tofu, glutinous rice, rice wine, fish, melons, and fruits. Among them, the primary offering is "fish wrapped in leeks," the Shui people avoid meat but not fish because Shui folklore says that the ancient Shui ancestors had nine kinds of vegetables and fish and shrimp made of medicine to get rid of a hundred diseases, and then "fish wrapped in leeks" has become the favorite hometown flavor of the Shui people. The practice of "fish wrapped in leeks" is mainly to take fresh carp, grass carp or mackerel, cut open the belly to take out the guts, smear with good wine, fill the cleaned fish belly with leeks, vast vegetables, bad chili, and onion, ginger, garlic seasoning, tie it with glutinous rice straw, and steam it in a steamer. At the time of the Duan Festival ritual, families with bronze drums also take out their treasured bronze drums and hang them in the middle of the hall, spilling three cups of rice wine as a sacrifice before they can be beaten, mostly with leather drums, and a small wooden bucket resembling a rice container is used to scoop back and forth at the bottom of the bronze drums to create a vibrant and joyful festival atmosphere.

2.2.2. Tuanpo Horse Racing

Tuanpo Horse Racing is the climax of the Duan Festival activities. The location of the horse race is determined after multiple choices and fixed for use in the era, and the place of horse racing is called "Duanpo" or "Nianpo". After the New Year's dinner, the people of the Shui ethnic group will come to Duanpo in groups from various villages and villages, and the Duanpo is crowded with people and brothers of Miao, Buyi, and Han ethnic groups in the vicinity will also come to participate. The game begins with the village elders setting up a sacrificial table in the Shui Duan Festival track center. "leek-wrapped fish," rice wine, glutinous rice, candy, and other ritual supplies are placed on it. Then a respected village elder presides over the ceremony, offering sacrifices to the ancestors who started the Dragon Boat Festival and praying for peace and happiness in the coming year. At the end of the ritual, the village elder of the Shui tribe rides a horse to open the road, and after a week around the road, the people who conduct the Duanpo horse race can enter the venue, and the horse race can start. The Shui

tribe's horse race is unique, called "squeeze the horse." When the horse race commander gives a command, the riders will drive the horses and raise the whip, and rush each other on the track, and in a rush "squeeze the horse", rush to the top of the slope, the Shui first to the top of the slope is the winner. This day is the most intense festival of the Shui tribe Tuan Festival, and this day is also a good day for the Shui tribe youth to find a couple.

3. Tradition and Modernity: The Transformation of the Shui Tribe's Duan Festival

With the transformation of society and the rapid development of the social economy, the Shui Duan Festival has changed to a certain extent in development, mainly in the three aspects of ritual activities, horse racing, and the objects involved.

3.1. Changes in the rituals of the Dragon Festival

Traditionally, the traditional Shui tribe's Dragon Festival rituals were based mainly on the original religious rituals of people linked by blood ties. Because the people of the water tribe set up a vegetarian banquet during the end of the festival, avoid eating meat, the sacrificial offerings can not have meat other than fish and shrimp, the main product of the festival is "fish wrapped in leeks," and in the traditional feast of the festival are blood-related family members, no friends are invited. Nowadays, in addition to vegetarian food such as "fish wrapped in leeks," glutinous rice flour, rice wine, and fruits, the rest of the food for friends and relatives is also prepared with meat such as chicken, duck, beef, and pork. Especially in the present, the ideology of the Shui people gradually opens. In order to better promote social interaction and interpersonal communication, the Shui people will come to the Shui end of the festival in advance to invite friends and relatives to their homes to spend the end of the festival. In Layu Duanjie, I saw many visitors from other provinces who came to spend the Duanjie and watch the Duanpo horse race. From the above, we can also see that the Duanjie ritual activities are also changing.

3.2. Changes to the Dragon Festival Horse Racing Event

Traditionally, the meaning of horse racing at the Dragon Boat Festival is not strong, and the event is more for self-entertainment. Therefore, young people do not rush to the Dragon Boat Festival to attend horse racing events to see the horses but see such a big party as an excellent opportunity to find a couple. However, now by the influence of modern civilization, the Shui cultural life is rich and colorful, and the entertainment methods are becoming more diversified. As a result, the Dragon Boat Festival horse racing entertainment gradually weakened, and the competitive nature gradually increased. Nowadays, the most important thing about the Dragon Boat Festival horse racing is reputation and profit, and what the audience wants to see most is the inspiring horse racing scenes. This shows that horse racing activities have gradually changed from traditional self-entertainment to a competitive competition based on winning the championship.

3.3. Changes in the target audience for the Dragon Festival

Due to the geographical environment, the original traffic in the Shui village is relatively closed, and the economic conditions are relatively backward, the Shui village Shui people mainly to the traditional planting and breeding industry as the primary source of income, these Shui people almost generations living in the village, relying on agriculture to maintain their livelihood. Most of the young people are at home, so the Shui Dragon Boat Festival before the participation of mainly young men, but also a good opportunity for young men to find a date. After the reform and opening up, the country's rapid economic development, especially in ethnic areas, has brought significant improvements in transportation to the Shui people, affecting the traditional ideology of the Shui people. In recent years, almost all the young adults in Layu villages have gone to work or started their own business in developed areas such as the coast, leaving only their parents or wives and children behind, which is the main reason why there are now fewer and fewer objects for Layu to participate in festivals at the end of the year, and fewer and fewer young people riding horses.

4. Research Design

4.1 Study Site

The Shui people are an ethnic group with a long history and unique ethnic culture in southern China. According to the seventh census in 2020, the population of the Shui is about 400,000, mainly in Sandu Shui Autonomous County, Libo County, Dushan County, and other counties in Guizhou Province, as well as in Hechi City, and the rest are scattered all over the country (Xie & Fang, 2019).

4.2. Research Method

The study selects Layu village as a case study fieldwork site. It is based on the continued attention and reflection on the cultural changes of the Shui Duan Festival from 2018 to the present, through an in-depth fieldwork methodology in Layu village, focusing on three focused studies in January 2018, October 2019, and October 2021. We review the history, current situation, difficulties, and cultural changes of the Shui Duan Festival of the Layu Shui Tribe during the research process based on a certain degree of response and reflection on the shortcomings of the studies above. Also, we hope to generate specific implications for the cultural changes of other ethnic minority festivals in the west.

5. Discussion

Previous research has found that two main factors influence "cultural change": internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to the cultural changes that occur during the development and evolution of the ethnic society itself. External factors mainly refer to the cultural changes that occur in exchange and integration with other ethnic groups, driven by different ethnic cultures, borrowing, and innovation (Luo, 2000). Therefore, based on the above research results combined with internal and external factors, the study concluded that the reasons for the change of the Duan Festival of the Layu tribe lie in the following three aspects.

Firstly, Today, influenced by economic globalization, the ideology of the Shui people is gradually changing, traditional ideology is fading and fading, and modern consciousness is gradually strengthening in the hearts of the Shui people. As a result, the traditional Shui Duan Festival has changed from a ritual involving people from within the family with blood ties to a ritual where all friends and relatives can participate. For example, the rituals of "fish wrapped in leeks" In addition to the vegetarian food such as fish wrapped in leeks, glutinous rice flour, rice wine, and fruits, the rest of the food for friends and relatives is prepared with meat such as chicken, duck, beef, and pork. The above phenomenon shows that the Shui Duan Festival culture gradually from traditional to modern. It can also be said that the traditional Shui Duan Festival culture is in the contemporary mutation.

Secondly, as the promotion of government departments, the traditional Duanpo horse race is mainly a self-entertainment activity held to commemorate the ancestors' hard work. However, now it is promoted by local government departments and village committees to become a competitive sporting event, and prizes or awards are used to motivate the activity. Even the local government advertises the Shui Duan festival through official websites or posters to attract more spectators and riders from the region to the destination. Participate in the activities, and the village committee also promotes the activities of the Shui Duan Festival by adding other competitions, such as the knowledge competition on poverty eradication and the knowledge competition on party history learning and education, to enrich the content of the activities.

Finally, the original Shui people live in the river's upper reaches and have long been restricted by natural conditions, such as the original infrastructure has been inferior, the traditional way of transportation travel is by horse and foot, and the transportation of goods is also by horse. However, after the reform and opening up, the state has increased infrastructure construction in ethnic areas. The construction of concrete roads and the opening of high-speed railroads have brought great convenience to people in the Shui Min region. Therefore, now many Shui people do not keep horses, which is one of the critical reasons for the gradual change of the Dragon Boat Festival horse race.

6. Conclusion and Limitations

The Shui ethnic group is one of the 56 ethnic groups in China. Each ethnic group has its own

traditional culture, and the national culture is the cornerstone of this ethnic group and the endogenous driving force of its development. The Shui Duan Festival is a unique national culture of the Shui people and is a continuation and development of the culture of the Shui people. The changes in the Shui Duan culture are also a microcosm of China's social development. With the rapid development of economy, information, and technology in modern society, it is also necessary to adapt to the cultural changes in the inheritance and development of the national culture while fully respecting the national cultural carrier, but also to maintain its characteristics while transforming the national culture, and also adapt to the development of society.

This study also has some limitations. First of all, this paper is a case study with limited generalization. Future research can be based on different ethnic cultures. Finally, culture is constantly changing with economic and social degrees. Therefore, future studies can consider mixed studies to explore the internal and external causes of ethnic and cultural change.

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