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## Research on Ethnic Identity of Zhuang Ethnic in Red River Basin of Guangxi

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### Abstract

The *Questionnaire on Ethnic Identity of Zhuang Ethnic in Red River Basin of Guangxi* is formulated based on Multi-Ethnic Identity Questionnaire Design of Phinney, integrated with the results of previous interviews to Zhuang Ethnic, 490 samples with different gender, ages, regions, occupations and educations were randomly selected in this questionnaire research. It is found in the research that 50-year-olds rank highest on the identity degree of the ethnic identity and the dimension of sense of ethnicity belonging, 20-year-olds rank lowest; farmers rank highest on the identity degree of the dimension of sense of ethnicity belonging, public sector staffs rank lowest; secondary and polytechnic education group ranks highest on the identity degree of the dimension of sense of ethnicity belonging, primary education group ranks lowest; there is no difference among the remaining. Effectively intensifying the ethnicity education of Zhuang Ethnic and enhancing the cultural heritage protection of Zhuang Ethnic perhaps will be the effective ways to change the unsatisfactory situation of heritage of current ethnicity culture.

**Key words:** Zhuang ethnic; Ethnic identity; Cultural heritage protection

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### INTRODUCTION

In nowadays of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the development process of the integration of the world economy, internationalization has become an inevitable trend of common development for the whole world. The rapid flow of the world population and regional population causes the emergence of a large number of international migration and urban migration. Among and within countries, interaction between various ethnicity groups has been strengthened. In this context, the cultural development of disadvantaged minorities faces a tension: on the one hand, it performs as integration, that is, along with the worldwide general exchanges of the people with different cultural backgrounds, and mutual infiltration and integration among cultures penetration, a state of homogeneity appeared; on the other hand, it performs as separation, that is, in order to maintain the diversity of cultures, the minorities with different cultural hotbeds and backgrounds have noticed that, maintaining their own culture characteristics is the only way to foothold, survive and multiply in the inter ethnic tide.

Zhuang Ethnic, as the minority with a largest population in China, is bound to be affected by the above-mentioned tension in the process of globalization. Disadvantaged Zhuang Ethnic hopes to adapt to social development, converge at and be included in the dominant culture on the one hand; on the other hand, it wants to save the cultural characteristics of their ethnicity, which will undoubtedly lead to inadaptability of various aspects, especially psychology, of the members of Zhuang Ethnic. If this inadaptability is handled improperly, it will be very likely lead to conflict and affect social stability and harmony. Most of Zhuang people live in the Guangxi, mainly in Liuzhou, Laibin, Hechi, Nanning, Baise, Chongzuo and other regions, and especially

large population distribution in the Red River Basin of Guangxi. There is also some population of Zhuang Ethnic living in Yunnan, mainly in Wenshan, Honghe, Luoche County and so on. As a minority with many population in China, it has many customs and traditions not owned by other ethnic groups, these customs and traditions as well as its costumes, architecture, food custom and language with unique ethnic characteristics, are fading away quietly and unknowingly, the cultural heritage space of Zhuang Ethnic is gradually narrowing currently, assimilation is quite serious, its characteristics are on the verge of being unsustainable. This phenomenon of Zhuang Ethnic belongs to the natural assimilation in the ethnicity assimilation. In order to save as much as possible the rich culture of Zhuang Ethnic accumulated in the development process of its long history, the research on the ethnic identity of Zhuang Ethnic groups becomes extremely urgent. Currently, empirical and systematic research on the identity development of Zhuang Ethnic is still relatively few. Therefore, this research selected Zhuang Ethnic in Red River Basin of Guangxi as a research object, analyzed the ethnic identity characteristics of Zhuang Ethnic in the Red River Basin, clarified the main factors affecting the ethnic identity of Zhuang Ethnic, services for raising ethnicity awareness and state awareness of the Zhuang Ethnic, and also provided effective measures to improve ethnicity harmony and social stability at the same time.

## 1. PERTINENT CONCEPT

“Ethnic identity”, as a social identity on a group level, does not have a relatively uniform definition in academia. Mr. Fei (2000) held the view that the ethnicity in China should contain two levels of meaning: the first level is the unity of the Chinese nation; the second level is all ethnicities composing the unity of Chinese nation. Therefore, during identifying the ethnic identity, the people of various ethnic groups should be double identity of ethnicity that the identity of their own ethnicity and the identity of the Chinese nation. Mr. Zhuang (1987) divided the ethnic identity into broad one and narrow one: Broad ethnic identity refers to the identity on a sovereign nation-state, that is the national identity; narrow ethnic identity refers to the identities on their own ethnic culture of various ethnicities within a country, that is the ethnic group identity. Mr. Chen (1998) Zhilie held the view that ethnic identity is a circumstance about pattern of personal thinking, perception, emotion and behavior belonging to a certain ethnic group. Mr. Zuo and Qin (2011) held the view that ethnic identity mainly refers to the awareness and emotional attachment of their own ethnicities of ethnicities members. American scholar Phinney (1990) held the view that the ethnic identity includes not only the sense of belonging and a positive attitude (such as pride) of their own ethnicities, but also participating in the

cultural practices and activities of their own ethnicities (i.e. ethnic behaviors. While, Kwank and Sodowsky (1997) held the view that ethnic identity includes four dimensions of cognition, emotion, morality and behavior. Carle (1998) held the view that the ethnic identity refers to the individual recognitions of beliefs and attitudes of its own ethnic group, and the recognition of their ethnic identity. While Smith held the view that ethnic identity is a sense of continuity understood by a people with particular ethnic culture during inheritance from generation to generation, is the memories of early common experiences of people in the long history, is a sense of common destiny owned by every generation (Anthony, 1991). Although different scholars construct structures and dimensions of ethnic identity from different perspectives, most of them referred to the three important aspects of cognition, emotion and behavior. Integrating with views of above scholars, I believe that “ethnic identity” is a research orientation about the on the ethnic level, the identity on the ethnic level generally consists of three basic elements: the sense of ethnic belonging, ethnic status achievability and ethnic behaviors. On the development orientation ethnic identity, abroad studies mainly treat ethnic identity as periodically, hold the view that the development of ethnic identity is a dynamic lifelong process of development with phases from less healthy to healthier (Phinney, 2003). As Jackson’s four-stage development model of ethnic identity, Kim’s five-stage sequence development model of ethnic identity and Phinney’s three-stage development model of ethnic identity, she also theoretically proposed four dimensions of ethnic identity, and formulated the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM).

## 2. RESEARCH PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESES

### 2.1 Research Purpose

The purpose of the research on the ethnic identity of Zhuang Ethnic in the Red River Basin of Guangxi lies in: studying the current situation of identity of its own ethnicity Guangxi Red River through empirical research, and analyzing the influencing factors leading to this situation based on this.

### 2.2 Research Hypotheses

- a) Females of Zhuang Ethnic rank higher than males on the ethnic identity.
- b) Over-50 years Zhuang people rank highest on the ethnic identity, below-20 years rank lowest on the ethnic identity.
- c) Zhuang employees in public sector rank highest on the ethnic identity, followed by workers and farmers lowest.
- d) Zhuang people with senior college and above degrees rank highest on the ethnic identity secondary or

polytechnic education, primary education and illiteracy rank lower in sequence on the ethnic identity.

e) Zhuang people in rural areas rank higher than Zhuang ethnic people on the ethnic identity.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### 3.1 Design of Questionnaire

The *Questionnaire on Ethnic identity of Zhuang Ethnic in Red River Basin of Guangxi* is required for the completion of this research. Because of the absence of uniform and authoritative questionnaire on ethnic identity currently, the investigator formulated the *Questionnaire on Ethnic identity of Zhuang Ethnic in Red River Basin of Guangxi* integrating Multi-Ethnic Identity Questionnaire Design of Phinney with the results of previous interviews with Zhuang Ethnic. In order to ensure that each item in this questionnaire can measure the ethnic identity status of the Zhuang people in Red River Basin, the method of reliability and validity evaluated by experts was adopted to this questionnaire, preliminary tests confirmed that the questionnaire reliability is 0.632, reaching an acceptable level, and through validity tests, there is a high correlation between each question and the total score ( $P < 0.01$ ), reaching a significant level. Ethnic identity in this questionnaire can be decomposed into three dimensions, that is: (a) Sense of ethnic belonging, it is a key factor of ethnic identity, including pride of their own ethnic backgrounds and feeling happy to stay together with the same ethnic people; (b) Ethnic status achievability, means that the individuals are satisfied with the social status of themselves as members of an ethnicity; (c) Ethnic behaviors, refers to the individual participating in social activities.

#### 3.2 Implementation of Questionnaire

Zhuang Ethnic in Shanglin County of Guangxi Province was selected as the sample objects of this research; random sampling method was adopted to study the object of research. The main statistical characteristics of measured objects are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Main Statistical Characteristic of Measured Objects**

Item	Category	Quantity	percentage(%)
Gender	Male	237	54.9
	Female	194	45.1
Age	Below-20 years old	103	23.9
	20 to 29 years	117	27.1
	30 to 39 years	81	18.8
	40 to 49 years	71	16.5
	Over-50 years	59	13.7
	Farmer	18	4.2

To be continued

Continued

Occupation	Worker	144	33.4
	Public Sector	126	29.2
	Others	143	33.2
Education	Illiteracy	19	4.6
	Primary	84	19.5
	Secondary or polytechnic	224	52.0
	Senior college and above	104	23.9
Region	Cities and towns	144	33.4
	Region		
	Rural areas and village	287	66.6

### 4. RESULT ANALYSES

#### 4.1 Circumstance and Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People of Different Gender

Prior to this research, the imaginary of the investigator is: Females of the Zhuang Ethnic rank significantly higher than males on the ethnic identity of their own ethnicity. There are significant differences between the two. But the result actually gotten was contrary to the expectation of the investigator.

**Table 2**  
**Variance Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People of Different Gender**

Variables	Average	Standard deviation	Male	Female	T value	Significance
	Male	Female				
Ethnic Identity	2.952	2.931	0.433	0.448	0.352	0.724
Sense of ethnic belonging	3.332	3.316	0.567	0.572	0.245	0.808
Ethnic Status Achievability	2.628	2.608	0.477	0.491	0.338	0.737
Ethnic Behaviors	3.371	3.372	0.682	0.567	-0.024	0.981

The research data indicated that: Although the average score of females is slightly higher than males on the ethnic identity, but there is no significant difference. In the 1960s, that is, before the commencement of feminism, the life circle of females was extremely narrow, coupled with the low level of education, they never meant to change the mothering life from generation to generation, did not want their living environment to be by affected any other factors, the vast majority of females had a very high identity on their own ethnicity and were less willing to integrate with other ethnic groups. While the males would be more rational to analysis of the matter of ethnic identity, that formed a certain difference to females on the ethnic identity. After the commencement of feminism, female consciousness began to recover, they had got personality independence just like men, there was almost no difference between the thought of male and female

on the matter of ethnic independence, so there was no significant difference between them on the identity of their own ethnic.

#### 4.2 Circumstance and Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People of Different Ages

In Table 3, there is a significant difference on ethnic identity among Zhuang people with different ages, this difference is not only in the average score of ethnic identity, but also in the score of sense of ethnic belonging, and the sense of ethnic belonging is extremely significant, but there is no significant difference in the ethnic status achievability and ethnic behaviors.

It was found through multiple comparisons on the dimension of sense of ethnic belonging of different ages that, compared to people of other ages, the Zhuang people of over-50 years age have got the most intense sense of ethnic belonging, the Zhuang people of below-20 years age have got the lowest sense of ethnic belonging, the sense of ethnic belonging of Zhuang people of 40 to

49 years age, 20 to 29 years age and 30 to 39 years age rank in the middle, and weakened in sequence, which is consistent with previously predicted results of the investigator. Along with the long-term and close economic and cultural exchanges among various ethnic groups, the advanced productivity of the ethnicity with the higher civilization level is very attractive to the ethnicity with the lower civilization level; that caused the generation of envy and imitation psychology on it, through the evolution of a history, the assimilation commenced gradually among ethnic groups. Ethnic assimilation, as defined by Lenin: The assimilation problem, namely the problem of losing ethnic characteristics and become another ethnicity.”

(Complete Works of Lenin, 1985) This phenomenon of ethnic assimilation makes Zhuang Ethnic miss the understanding of their own culture from generation to generation, ethnic identity awareness weakened from generation to generation, the ethnic belong of below-20 years young people ranking lower than over-50 years elders would have become inevitable.

**Table 3**  
Variance Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People of Different Age

Variables	Average ± standard deviation					F value	Significance
	<2 years	20-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	>50 years		
Ethnic identity	2.804±0.399	2.989±0.390	2.934±0.500	2.985±0.482	3.079±0.423	3.035	0.018*
Sense of ethnic belonging	3.139±0.558	3.324±0.514	3.305±0.629	3.375±0.615	3.627±0.442	4.927	0.001**
Ethnic status achievability	2.505±0.412	2.687±0.437	2.618±0.538	2.651±0.522	2.657±0.540	1.47	0.211
Ethnic behaviors	3.332±0.544	3.359±0.649	3.426±0.581	3.351±0.745	3.410±0.668	0.217	0.929

**Table 4**  
Multiple Comparison Analysis Table of Sense of Ethnic Belonging of Zhuang People of Different Ages

(I)Age	(J)Age	Mean deviation	Standard deviation	Significance Level
<20	20-29	-0.184 8*	0.091 47	0.044
	30-39	-0.165 9*	0.100 56	0.100
	40-49	-0.235 1*	0.104 68	0.026
	>50	-0.486 2*	0.110 88	0.000
20-29	<20	0.184 8*	0.091 47	0.044
	30-39	0.018 9	0.097 98	0.847
	40-49	-0.050 3	0.102 20	0.623
	>50	-0.301 5*	0.108 55	0.006
30-39	<20	0.165 9	0.100 56	0.100
	20-29	-0.018 9	0.097 98	0.847
	40-49	-0.069 2	0.110 41	0.531
	>50	-0.320 4	0.116 31	0.006
40-49	<20	0.235 1*	0.104 68	0.026
	20-29	0.050 3	0.102 20	0.623
	30-39	0.069 2	0.110 41	0.531
	>50	-0.251 2*	0.119 89	0.037
>50	<20	0.486 2*	0.110 88	0.000
	20-29	0.301 5*	0.108 55	0.006
	30-39	0.320 4*	0.116 31	0.006
	40-49	0.251 2*	0.119 89	0.037

#### 4.3 Circumstance and Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People From Different Regions

The research result in Table 5 indicates that, although the average score of ethnic identity of the Zhuang people from cities and towns is slightly higher than the rural areas, there is no significant difference; this differs materially from the previous conjecture of the investigator that the rural Zhuang people rank higher than cities and towns on ethnic identity. The investigator discovered a phenomenon through field researches that: the villages of Zhuang Ethnic is relatively close to the county and the transportation is convenient, most rural young people of Zhuang Ethnic come to work in the county during the day, and go home at night. This phenomenon of mobility leads to the extremely frequent exchanges between the rural areas and cities and towns, this kind of frequent exchanges nearly without regional differences inevitably led to the increasing consistence of their ideological understandings, moral choices and value orientations of their thought and understanding, no significant difference between rural areas and cities and towns on the ethnic identity is not hard to understand.



**Table 5**  
**Variance Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People From Different Regions**

Variables	Average		Standard deviation		T value	Significance
	Cities and towns	Rural areas	Cities and towns	Rural areas		
Ethnic identity	2.916	2.961	0.503	0.407	-0.816	0.415
Sense of ethnic belonging	3.278	3.349	0.609	0.547	-1.002	0.317
Ethnic status achievability	2.613	2.624	0.535	0.456	-0.197	0.844
Ethnic behaviors	3.302	3.406	0.634	0.630	-1.313	0.190

**4.4 Circumstance and Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People With Different Occupations**

There is no significant difference among different

occupations; however, it is worth to be noted that they presented significant difference in the sense of ethnic belonging (see Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Variance Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People With Different Occupations**

Variables	Average				F value	Significance
	Workers	Farmers	Public sectors	Others		
Ethnic Identity	2.996±0.346	3.001±0.394	2.951±0.531	2.879±0.403	1.278	0.282
Sense of ethnic belonging	3.417±0.430	3.460±0.545	3.300±0.635	3.200±0.519	3.597	0.014*
Ethnic Status Achievability	2.599±0.383	2.618±0.473	2.663±0.558	2.588±0.434	0.359	0.783
Ethnic Behaviors	3.375±0.433	3.406±0.670	3.286±0.717	3.411±0.526	0.731	0.534

**Table 7**  
**Multiple Comparison Analysis Table of Sense of Ethnic Belonging of Zhuang People With Different Occupations**

(I) Occupations	(J) Occupations	Mean deviation	Standard deviation	Significance level
Workers	Farmers	-0.043	0.172	0.799
	Public Sectors	0.117	0.173	0.500
Farmers	Workers	0.044	0.172	0.799
	Public Sectors	0.161	0.084	0.056
Public Sectors	Workers	-0.117	0.173	0.500
	Farmers	-0.161	0.084	0.056

It can be seen from the Table 7 that the sense of ethnic belonging of farmers is most intense, workers' is less, and the public sector staffs' is less than above two groups. This is attributed to the difference of work environment and nature. From the aspect of work environment, the farmers of Zhuang Ethnic usually live in rural areas, while the majority of public sector staffs scatter in county town of Shanglin, this difference resulted in that farmers have more opportunity to stay together with their ethnicities to discuss their own ethnicity than public sector staffs. From

the aspect of work nature, the existence of this difference is related to that the farmers of Zhuang Ethnic have more time and energy to focus on traditional festivals. Except that the farmers are busy during rush-harvesting and rush planting, they are looking forward to adjustment of life during slack season, so when each of these festivals comes, every household in rural areas begins to celebrate the folk warmly and strongly in festive atmosphere. On the contrary, the Zhuang people working in the public sectors from nine to five almost have no time and energy to pay attention to these festivals. It is well known that the atmosphere of folk festivals can supply ethnic pride and sense of ethnic belonging to people best.

**4.5 Circumstance and Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People With Different Educations**

It can be seen from the table that, there is no significant difference among the Zhuang people with different educations. After the further multiple comparisons to this, the investigator found that there is extremely significant difference in the dimension of ethnic behaviors of ethnic identity among the Zhuang people with different educations, the result is shown in Table 8.

**Table 8**  
**Variance Analysis of Ethnic Identity of Zhuang People With Different Educations**

Variables	Average ± standard deviation				F value	Significance
	Illiteracy	Primary	Secondary and polytechnic	Senior college and above		
Ethnic Identity	2.875±0.336	2.876±0.367	2.969±0.425	2.966±0.537	0.76	0.518
Sense of ethnic belonging	3.431±0.315	3.341±0.565	3.314±0.551	3.317±0.648	0.185	0.907
Ethnic Status Achievability	2.465±0.467	2.529±0.414	2.652±0.466	2.657±0.562	1.466	0.224
Ethnic Behaviors	3.269±0.525	3.125±0.728	3.460±0.562	3.399±0.667	4.092	0.007**

**Table 9**  
**Multiple Comparison Analysis Table of Sense of Ethnic Belonging of Zhuang People With Different Educations**

(I) Educations	(J) Educations	Mean deviation	Standard deviation	Significance level
Illiteracy	Primary	0.144 2	0.191 49	0.452
	Secondary and Polytechnic	-0.190 5	0.179 87	0.290
	Senior College and above	-0.129 3	0.188 06	0.492
Primary	Illiteracy	-0.144 2	0.191 49	0.452
	Secondary and Polytechnic	-0.334 7*	0.097 49	0.001
	Senior College and above	-0.273 6*	0.111 87	0.015
Secondary and Polytechnic	Illiteracy	0.190 5	0.179 87	0.290
	Primary	0.334 7*	0.097 49	0.001
	Senior College and above	0.061 2	0.111 87	0.500
Senior College and above	Illiteracy	0.129 3	0.188 06	0.492
	Primary	0.273 6*	0.111 87	0.015
	Secondary and Polytechnic	-0.061 2	0.090 57	0.500

Interestingly, the research found that in terms of the comparison among these four groups of illiteracy, primary education, secondary or polytechnic education and senior college and above on ethnic behaviors, secondary and polytechnic education rank highest, followed by senior college education, illiteracy rank third, primary education rank lowest. Through in-depth analysis, the investigator try to comprehend this phenomenon: people of secondary or polytechnic education, with a certain degree of education, have got fully appreciation ability to the activities of special food, Song Fair or customs organized by Zhuang ethnic, so their enthusiasms would be relatively high. For people of senior college or above education, though they have got higher educations, their work is more busier than people of secondary or polytechnic education, and they do not have so much time to participate in such activities. Because of low degree of education, the life pivots of illiteracy and primary education are almost all at home without a high enthusiasm for such activities. These caused the above analysis result of research.

## CONCLUSION

50-year-olds rank highest on the identity degree of the ethnic identity and the dimension of sense of ethnicity belonging, 20-year-olds rank lowest; Farmers rank highest on the identity degree of the dimension of sense of ethnicity belonging, public sector staffs rank lowest; Secondary and polytechnic education ranks highest on the identity degree of the dimension of sense of ethnicity belonging, primary education group ranks lowest; there is no difference among the remaining.

Effectively intensifying the ethnicity education of Zhuang Ethnic and enhancing the cultural heritage protection of Zhuang Ethnic perhaps will be the effective ways to change the unsatisfactory situation of heritage of current ethnicity culture.

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