

The Cultural Implication of the Taboo of Li Nationality in Hainan Under the Cross-cultural Perspective

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Abstract: Studying the cultural taboos of ethnic minorities is of positive significance to the harmonious coexistence of all ethnic groups, and taboo is the main body of the taboo cultural system, which affects people's life all the time. The Li ethnic group in Hainan Province's population accounted for a large proportion, because of the early economic underdevelopment, low level of culture, the people of the group in the life of a lot of taboos, and with the development of the times, taboo culture is in a state of loss. To study the taboo culture of Hainan Li ethnic group from a cross-cultural perspective, reduce the obstacles to cultural exchange among all ethnic groups, and explore the cultural implication of Li taboo from it.

1. Overview

1.1. Ethnic Minorities and Cross-cultural Communication

Communication occurs in human society at every moment, and it includes not only the transmission of all kinds of information in society, but also refers to the operation of the entire social information system, the fundamental purpose of which is to transmit information to others, a complex of activities regarding the transmission, reception and feedback of information between individuals and individuals, between individuals and society, by being given symbols with meaning, and not just manifested as one of these aspects." (Wenhui Liu, 2014: 10) The "interactive relationship theory" proposed by George Gerbner defines communication as the interaction of society through information, emphasising the interaction between two cultural subjects, rather than the one-way transmission of information. In today's booming national economy and increasingly accessible transportation, intercultural communication has become commonplace[1]. The internet age has brought people closer together and intercultural communication has benefited from this,

with text messages, telephone calls, or videos allowing people to communicate even across thousands of miles from each other, from different ethnicities or nationalities, both at home and abroad. Due to the differences in geographic environment, production and lifestyle, spiritual beliefs and many other aspects, various ethnic groups in China have created their own unique traditional cultures during their long history, and these colorful and excellent national cultures are the common spiritual heritage of mankind[2]. From ancient times to the present, the exchanges between people of different regions and nationalities have never stopped, especially in recent times, along with the advancement of modernization in the world. The globalization of human society is unstoppable, and the exchanges between people with different cultural characteristics are becoming increasingly common and frequent, and minority cultures are facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges in cross-cultural exchanges[[3]. The distribution of ethnic groups in China shows a distribution pattern of large, mixed, and small clusters. From a general point of view, ethnic minorities mainly live in the mountainous, plateau, frontier, and other areas with relatively poor natural conditions in China. The different ways of production and life are the basis for the formation and development of each ethnic culture. At present, along with the pace of social development, although the production and life style of each ethnic minority has changed greatly, the traditional culture rooted in regional differences is still the foundation of each ethnic group[4].

The traditional culture of each ethnic group is still the genetic basis of the culture of each ethnic group. It can be said that there are various types of minority cultures and there is no fixed pattern. Even the differences in culture within the same ethnic group are obvious, and the differences in customs, food, clothing, housing, and transportation among members of the ethnic group are everywhere, even in psychological qualities and values. Differences in psychological qualities and values are also obvious.

Taboo culture has its own special features in cross-cultural communication, and it is easy to cause misunderstanding and ineffective communication among minority groups in a multiethnic multicultural system. The taboos of the Li people in Hainan, who live in groups, are not bound by law or authority, but are a reflection of the historical origins and daily life of the Li people. Hainan has its roots in the rich and profound culture of the Middle Kingdom, and as such, its cultural traits are imprinted in the culture of the clan. The clans in the process of continuous migration, in order to maintain the continuity of clans and clans, various cumbersome taboos were set to regulate the behaviour of clansmen in order to maintain the various interpersonal relationships within clans, clans and families. It is for this reason that Hainan folk have adopted the Chinese taboo culture as a guiding principle, which has been passed down from generation to generation[5].

1.2. Taboo Culture of the Li People in Hainan

1) Speciality

The traditional taboo culture of the Li people arises from the long-term life and practice of the Li people and can be demonstrated in all aspects of social life. The special characteristics of the Li taboos are mainly manifested in the following three aspects.

Firstly, the taboo culture of Li has a specificity, in the broad sense that all ethnic cultures have a specificity of their own. The Li people of Hainan, for example, have a taboo culture that corresponds to it. After thousands of years of nature's refinement, the Li culture has developed in this southernmost island of China, with economic, technological, and educational developments, and the Li people have their own sense of pride in having inherited and developed this culture over thousands of years of history. The culture of the Li is considered marginal, and although the culture is commonly known, it is still considered unique to the tribe, a confirmation of the culture's identity, and a subjective identification. The taboo culture of the Li, as part of the national culture, has both

commonalities and specificity. Both Li and Han have their own taboos, both similar and different, and this difference is known as the specificity of the taboo[6].

Secondly, the taboo culture of the Li people is local in nature. An important characteristic of locality is that it is only valid for a specific group of people in a specific area, but not beyond that area. The fact that the Li people live far away from urban areas, inaccessible in the morning, and closed to information, such as in Baoting, Ledong, and Lingshui, is an ethnic characteristic that also reflects the marginal tendency of Li culture. As cross-cultural communication becomes more widespread, the local nature of the Li culture has been misunderstood due to unrealistic social media reports, and once formed, misunderstandings are difficult to reverse. In the long run, this will have a negative impact on cultural communication. To avoid this kind of situation, the locality of the Li living area should be well understood so that conflicts and strife can be avoided to the greatest extent possible[7].

Thirdly, the inward-looking nature of the Li culture, which is relative to the mainstream culture that is constantly spreading outwards. When foreign culture is imported, the people of the tribe selectively take it in according to their own cultural identity. The main form of importation is the importation of foreigners, and when a foreigner enters the community, there is a natural spread of different cultures and exchanges. When two cultures start to spread to each other, the foreign culture is likely to be replaced or absorbed by the local culture, a process that does not happen overnight and takes a long time to complete. The study of the special characteristics of the taboo culture of the Li people will help to promote the spread and transmission of the taboo culture.

2) Causes

The traditional taboo culture of the Li people comes from the summary of lessons learned by previous generations. In early societies, due to the low level of production, the backwardness of technology, and the lack of the ability to understand matters correctly, the summaries made by people of their life experiences were not always scientific and were wrongly attributed when thinking about their causes and consequences, passing on chance events as inevitable, thus evolving into taboos to this day. "There are many results due to biased perceptions of objective things, for example: pregnant women cannot eat snake or monkey meat or they will give birth to strange babies; sleeping with the head facing out of the door is contraindicated as a symbol of death; if a child is given pork loin or lip meat, he will be bitten by readers or mountain pigs in future hunting." (Baoyu Fu, 2010: 38)

Religious worship is the main source of most traditional taboos among the Li. The Li are relatively backward in their beliefs, revering all things spiritual and calling all this a ghost or spirit. The first is ancestor worship. "Ancestral ghosts are ghosts that do bad things to people's bodies, so it is forbidden to mention the names of ancestors for fear of bringing them out and causing bad things to happen. As it is impossible to analyse the bad things in daily life with a rational mind and a scientific attitude, everything is attributed to the punishment and lessons given to human beings by the ghosts and gods after they have become angry, and people start to taboo these things that cannot be done. Secondly, nature worship, i.e., the worship of natural objects, such as the large tree right in the middle of the doorway of the house, which is sacred and cannot be climbed, thus giving rise to a culture of taboo worship of trees. The Li people sincerely hope that observing the taboos will lead to good weather, family harmony, and no illnesses or disasters[8].

As a fundamental source of taboos, the suppression of desires refers to the psychological restraint of the people of Li in their wishes and thoughts. Although the "seven emotions and six desires" are basic to human beings, when a person is in society, he or she has to suppress his or her own whims. In the case of the Li people, they suppress their desires first in order to survive, and after the problem of survival has been solved, they then consider other factors, including social, ethical, and interpersonal factors. After considering all these factors, the Li ancestors considered it

necessary to "restrain themselves", and various taboos emerged. The reason for this is that the Li people are keen to establish good relationships with others, and being too polite and eating too little runs counter to their original intentions. There are also many taboos concerning production for the sake of a good grain harvest.

2. Classifications of Taboos of Li People

2.1. Production Taboos

The Li people mainly live in the areas of Ledong, Baoting, Qiongzong, Dongfang, Lingshui, and Tongxie in Hainan Province, where they were the first inhabitants 4,000 years ago. The Li people rely on the Chinese "12 Earth Branches" to calculate dates, with 12 days being a cycle, each day being named after an animal, in the order of chicken, dog, pig, rat, cow, worm, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep and monkey, in.e. chicken day, dog day, pig day, rat day, cow day, worm day, rabbit day, dragon day, snake day, horse day, sheep day and monkey day. The production activities of the local people are basically based on this, but the ordering of the animals varies from one part of the island to another[9]. The production activities of the Li people strictly follow the traditional "auspicious days" and "forbidden days" ("jima" in Li). For example, it is forbidden to plough the fields on the day of the ox, otherwise the harvest will be bad and even full of pests; women cannot plant rice seedlings on the day of chicken; it is suitable for sowing seeds, ploughing the fields for the first time and eating new rice on the day of pig and rat. Moreover, unique geographical advantages in Hainan also help the growth of orchards, which is respectively shown in Figure 1 and Figure 4.



Figure 1. Mango field in Hainan

In some regions, the activities of the Twelve Days are refined: the Dragon Day is the first day and it is forbidden to pull oxen to plough the fields or to plant and pluck rice seedlings; the Snake Day is the second day and it is a very auspicious day to start a certain business, so most people choose this day to get married, but if a close relative dies on this day, the Snake Day is not considered auspicious for the next three or four years; the Goat Day is the On the third day, it is forbidden to work in groups, and it is advisable to work alone by hand; on the fourth day, it is the same as the Snake Day; on the fifth day, it is forbidden to plant a mountain bar, otherwise monkeys

will eat the rice; on the sixth day, it is advisable to have a good harvest; on the seventh day, it is advisable to have various productive activities; on the eighth day, it is the same as the second day; on the ninth day, it is forbidden to build a granary, as rats will come and steal the grain; on the tenth day, it is forbidden to buy or sell cattle; on the tenth day, it is forbidden to buy or sell cattle. It is forbidden to buy or sell cattle; on the eleventh day of the month, it is forbidden to grow potatoes; on the twelfth day of the month, it is auspicious.

2.2. Life Taboos



Figure 2. Zhongli Village in Hainan

The Li people have five common taboos, no matter where they live: they cannot burn sickles, hoes, shovels, and other working tools in the wood stove, otherwise the harvest will not be good in the coming year; they cannot enter a house when the hoe is on their shoulders; they believe that only when burying a dead person should they put the hoe on their shoulders, otherwise they will defile the ghosts of the earth; after the new rice harvest, they must eat the new rice at home before distributing it to their relatives and neighbors. It is forbidden to sell cattle on the day of cattle, as it is not easy to plough the cattle in the future; and it is forbidden to knock on the bowl when eating, as they believe that only wanderers knock on the bowl. For instance, Zhongli Village (Fig 2) is a very typical village of Li people, traditional culture of the Li nationality is fully represented within.

In individual regions, taboos vary. For example, when opening the barn to eat new rice, the woman must wait for the man to eat first before entering the house to eat with him; at the beginning of spring, the god of the harvest and the ghost of the earth are sacrificed first; women are forbidden to do heavy work during pregnancy, etc. It is considered disrespectful to the host's family, if you are too polite and save your meal; it is an insult to the guest to turn the chopsticks upside down when eating; cats are considered the god of the stove at home, so it is forbidden to eat cat meat; when making wine, leaves must be hung at the door of the house so that outsiders cannot enter the house, thus making a good pot of wine[10].

2.3. Tattoo Taboos

There are various taboos in the lives of the Li people, with tattooing of women being the main one. In terms of timing, locals do not choose days they consider 'inauspicious' to get tattoos, such as the anniversary of the death of a family member. Most of the tattooed women of the Ledong Hali tribe choose an odd age, such as 13, 15, or 17, and never an even age, such as 16, for their tattoos.

Traditionally, in addition to the tattoo artist and his assistant, there is also a group of onlookers during the tattooing process, but pregnant women are not allowed to be among the onlookers, which is an ancient taboo passed down in the Li region. The local people believe that a pregnant woman has the souls of two people attached to her and that it is not a good idea to observe others or to ask a pregnant woman to help with the tattoo. In general, this taboo is closely related to the traditional Li society's concept of ghosts and spirits. "Gua Miao from Baolun Village, Qianjia Township, Ledong County, said: 'It is because a pregnant woman carrying a baby has two spirits on her body, so it is easy to affect others. If a pregnant woman sees it or asks for her help in casting the text, it will make the tattoo of the recipient unclear and ineffective.' This is because the child in the pregnant woman's womb will be playing with the 'hungry peach' (a locally grown plant pigment used for tattooing - notes by the author) and the tattooist's hand will tremble and the lines would become crooked.'" (Xianjun Wang, 2013: 97) It is worth noting that the taboo of not allowing pregnant women to observe tattoos is similar in parts of Taiwan and Japan, which shows that the phenomenon of tattoo taboos is widespread among tattooed peoples.

2.4. Marriage Taboos

The traditional Li culture has many taboos regarding marriage rites and women giving birth to children. These taboos have been carried on from ancient times and have gradually increased with experience, some of which are not supported by scientific theories but are still good for women's health, while most of them are derived from the local people's beliefs about ghosts and gods.

It is strictly forbidden for young men and women who cannot intermarry to play or sing in the same 'squatter's room', otherwise they will be punished by the 'ancestor ghosts'; when a man or woman is engaged to be married, no white chickens are allowed, as they are used for rituals. Must choose ox, chicken, dragon, rabbit and other auspicious days, do not insect day, rat day, monkey day, dog day, marriage, otherwise the heir is not prosperous; bride of the house to pass through the fire, break eggs, do not enter the house, otherwise the ghost will be with the bride in the house haunted, causing illness; in the wedding banquet, avoid breaking dishes, otherwise the newlyweds will be widowed; marriage, happy event, avoid crying, otherwise it will bring bad luck. Pregnant women should not eat snake, meat, dog, meat, eggs, fish, and shrimps, otherwise they will miscarry; pregnant women should not see dead people, otherwise they will incur fetal death. (Fu Baoyu, 2010: 37-38)

2.5. Religious and Holiday Taboos



Figure 3. New years' decorations in Zhongli Village

The religious taboos are summarized around rituals, while the taboos relating to festivals are focused on the most important festival in the hearts of traditional Chinese people: the Spring Festival, from New Year's Eve to the 15th day of the Chinese New Year(Fig.3). It is not allowed to turn over ritual objects, as this will cause pain in the hands and feet; it is not allowed to put dog meat in a room where there is a tablet, as this is an insult to the ancestors; the bones of cattle used for sacrificing to the spirits should not be touched, as this will lead to disaster, and only the killing of pigs and cattle for sacrificing to the spirits will ensure peace. On the first day of the Lunar New Year, it is not advisable to go out and clean the house or mop the floor to prevent the loss of money. During the period from New Year's Eve to the 15th day of the Lunar New Year, swearing and offensive words to the gods are forbidden; food preparation and hunting are not allowed during this period, and everything must be prepared before the New Year, otherwise there will be no harvest in the coming year. The cows are made sacred animals and are not allowed to be slaughtered on the first weekend of March and are fed wine, which is soaked in the local cattle spirit stone, to bless a good harvest the following year.

2.6. Language Taboos

It is forbidden to talk about animals that you are afraid to encounter when hunting in the mountains, such as pangolins. The word "death" is not allowed to be mentioned during a happy event in the family, so as not to attract "ghosts". In reality, the Li people encounter many many of the misfortunes they encounter in reality, cannot be understood in a scientific way, and often see the difficulties and misfortunes they encounter as offending spirits. difficulties and inauspiciousness such as offending spirits, and thus being punished by them. They are punished by the ghosts, so they become submissive, evasive, and even worshipful[15].

They avoid and forbid words, actions, and things that might offend the spirits. This avoidance and prohibition of things that offend the spirits have become a common taboo for the Li people. Taboos are commonly observed by people. The Li people hope to follow the taboo to pray for good fortune, ward off disasters, and hope that their devotional initiatives will have a practical effect.

3. The Cultural Implications of Li Taboos

3.1. Significance of Purpose

The culture of taboos, drawn from the long experience of the Li people in production and life, has served the purpose for which it was created, not only by promoting social stability and enhancing the internal cohesion of the Li people, but also by creating a friendly social environment for people. The taboos are the equivalent of sacrosanct rules within the Li tribe, rules that every member of the tribe has to abide by, and since they are observed by everyone, there are no contradictions or disputes arising from the taboos, and although there are different Li settlements on Hainan Island, they are unified and stable within their respective settlements. "In terms of the significance of the purpose of taboos, Hainan Li taboos are in fact the umbrella of life, rather than shackles set in the midst of people's pursuit of a happy life." (Xianwu Zhan, 2008: 25)

Ethnic taboos fundamentally contribute to the development of folk spirituality, which has a binding effect on the categories to which it belongs, religious beliefs, and folk customs. In addition to its influence on the spiritual aspects of the Li living area, the material aspects have an equal impact[14]. Through the methodology of historical materialism, the essential characteristics of the Li taboo are explored and its place and significance in cross-cultural communication analyzed. It is this particular uniqueness of taboos that has led to a strong cohesion within the Li people, who remain on the periphery compared to some large population groups (such as the Han nationality),

and which has made them more united and loving towards each other. The taboos learned through lessons learned by previous people have also made interpersonal interactions smooth nowadays, with some embarrassing or irritating behaviour towards each other being reduced by 80% as both parties to encounter have the same cultural knowledge base of taboos.

3.2. Significance of Function

The taboo culture of the Li people has a protective function of tending to avoid harm. "The Encyclopedia Britannica points out the original function of taboo, making it for some immediate purpose, serving as a sort of protection for people." (Cheng Ren, 1991: 12-13) Li taboos are no exception and are likewise motivated by the protection of Li society and individuals. The function of avoiding harm and danger plays an important role in the daily life of the tribe. "In order to achieve the goal of avoiding danger and mischief, the taboo often creates an atmosphere of mystery where it exists[13]. It is like emitting a kind of uninterrupted alarm bell sound, so that the forbidden event presents a dangerous state, reminding people that they must act carefully and must not be reckless in their marriage, childbirth, funerals, rituals and other rituals or when they come into contact with something. Otherwise, it will lead to calamities and bad luck and punishment." (Cheng Ren, 1991: 13). This kind of thinking to avoid harm is prevalent in the Li living area, and ethnic identity is important for the harmony, stability and development of the local society. On a macro level, taboos regulate the behaviour of the Li people and reduce conflicts within the Li community; on a peripheral level, each Li family is also regulated by taboos, which are more detailed and uniform than those in the various Li living areas, thus ensuring harmony and stability within the family. Taboos are a way of explaining things that are ethical and moral, which are not explicitly stated in the law, and they help to add to what is not stated in the law, which cannot be described as 'superstition'. The taboo against foul language in the home, for example, is an invisible way of reducing contradictions and conflicts.



Figure 4. Natural scenery in Zhongli Village

The Li taboos have the function of strengthening the cohesion of the Li people. As an integral part of Li culture, taboos have a very distinctive regional character. For example, every Li family has an "ancestral god" that needs to be worshipped and an "ancestral ghost" that needs to be avoided. The very act of "worshipping" the ancestors has a positive effect on the cohesiveness of the family

lineage, which also reflects the ethnic values and sense of identity of the Li people. The traditional taboos of the Li people are the result of the social production and practice of the Li people, and they also retain traces of social development, social patterns, and religious beliefs, and have a restorative effect on the past of the Li society. There are also traditional taboos that serve to transmit scientific knowledge. For example, the taboo against intermarriage within the same bloodline, a taboo of ancient origin, has had a positive effect on the eugenics of human reproduction and the improvement of human quality[12].

At the same time, the Li taboos are also a spiritual pillar for people and have an adjusting function on their psychological state. In the past, due to the low level of production, the lack of proper understanding, and the lack of economic power, the Li people were unable to deal with every difficulty and every adversity they encountered in their lives in a scientific manner and with the correct thinking. Although there are many rules that have no scientific basis, these taboos bring psychological comfort and motivation to the Li people, and they have their meaning.

4. The Impact of Cross-Cultural Communication on the Taboos of the Li People



Figure 5. Building of indigenous population

The spread and development of traditional taboos of the Li people in Hainan differs greatly from other regions, and because of its geographical isolation, the development of taboos carries a prominent regional character (Fig.5). As a marginal culture, Hainan's traditional culture is an inheritance and development of the culture of the Central Plains, from which its culture originated. As an island of immigrants, most of the Chinese immigrated to Hainan during its history, bringing with them customs and taboos. The traditional culture of Hainan was inherited from the Middle Kingdom and has evolved through interaction with other ethnic groups, including the culture of taboos, including the Li taboo culture. In this new island environment, the ancestors made a lot of adjustments to the taboo culture to adapt to the unique geographical environment, which was blessed with natural conditions, and there was no doubt that the cultivation industry was well developed. The culture of taboos was particularly important, and the former people observed them for the sake of good weather and rain. As one of the 56 ethnic groups, the Li culture is an important part of Chinese culture, and it is the mission and responsibility of every Chinese child to

communicate with it and help it to be passed on. In cross-cultural exchanges, it is important to be clear about the Li culture and the soul of the Li people, and that there should be no discrimination.

In the Li taboo culture, people's understanding of their position in society becomes clearer as they become more aware, especially the position of women in society, which is difficult to change due to the low status of Li women in the traditional taboo culture and the deep-rooted stereotypes of women. As intercultural communication becomes more everyday, women are also breaking the shackles of tradition and gender is one of the key factors in the further advancement of taboo culture across cultures. Gender equality is a general trend, which runs counter to the traditional taboo culture, and it is worthwhile for our new generation youth to think and practice if we balance the phenomenon. The impact of intercultural communication on the taboo culture of the Li people has two sides[11]. On the one hand, it has a positive effect on the spread of the traditional taboo culture of the Li people, and it can promote economic and social development, promote the change of the taboo culture, which is conducive to social harmony and stability; on the other hand, there are also negative aspects, the level of culture and the improvement and import of foreign culture constantly impact on the original taboo culture pyramid, this original stable The system has been heavily influenced. Nevertheless, the taboo culture still has an indelible role and place. The Li people of Hainan should continue to promote the scientific, rational, and reasonable taboo culture of the tribe, while discarding the taboos established by feudal thinking, taking the essence and removing the dross, so that the taboo culture can be better promoted and a higher level of intercultural communication can be achieved.

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If any, should be placed before the references section without numbering.

Data Availability

The datasets used during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Conflict of Interest

The author states that this article has no conflict of interest.

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