

## A Study on Value Orientation of School Education of the Qiang Ethnic Group During the Late Qing Dynasty and Republic of China

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### Abstract

During the late Qing Dynasty and Republic of China, modern school education system of Qiang ethnic group was basically completed. According to the review of the national education policies and curriculums established by the Qiang schools in that period, we find that the value orientation of the Qiang schools met the national need of “assimilation”. People were not interested in that kind of education. The education they need is how to get rid of the identity of ethnic discrimination and how to solve their livelihood.

**Key words:** Late Qing and Republic of China; School of Qiang ethnic; Value orientation; Assimilation

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### INTRODUCTION

The value orientation of ethnic education is the tendency which the value subject of ethnic education chooses and makes a decision for the value of ethnic education. The Qiang ethnic group has a long history and glorious culture in China. Unfortunately, nearly 30,000 Qiang people who are 1/10 of the total population of Qiang ethnic group lost their lives in Wenchuan earthquake on May 12th 2008. Since 40 years among Qing Terminal New Deal, The

Revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, modern school education system of Qiang ethnic group has been basically established. Investigating value orientation of school education of Qiang during this period is beneficial to understand education vicissitude and educational choice of the ethnic group which has fewer people during the process of modernization.

### 1. THE SITUATION OF SCHOOL EDUCATION OF QIANG ETHNIC GROUP DURING THE LATE QING DYNASTY AND REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The first elementary school of the Qiang ethnic group was founded in Maoxian county in 1903 (Guangxu 29 years of Qing Dynasty). There were 8 full-time elementary schools and 1 half-day small elementary school in Maoxian county until 1906. More and more primary schools were set up in other Qiang area at that time. But the schools were often small with poor condition. The system of primary school education in Qiang area had been basically established during the republic of China (1912-1949). a) Every county in Qiang area not only had one or more complete primary schools which is established by the county, but also one primary school which is established by the province. b) Primary schools were established in some rural areas. c) Every county successively established some women’s primary schools. d) National government implemented New County System in 1940 and carried out national compulsory education. Every county in Qiang area established central national schools and Guaranteed National Schools in township (town). Though the executing results and the education quality in every place weren’t the same, In general it promoted the development of primary education in Qiang area.

Compared with primary school, the general middle school education in Qiang area developed lately and slowly in the late Qing dynasty. There were only 3 middle schools in Qiang area during the Republic of China (1912-1949). Until the autumn in 1949, the junior secondary school in Mao Xian county enrolled 10 more high school students. It started in the history of high school education in Qiang area (Wu, Zhang, & Zhu, 2011).

## **2. NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY OF QIANG AREA DURING THE LATE QING DYNASTY AND REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

During the Late Qing the New Deal abolished the imperial examination system, changed the school system and revised the educational aims. The Qiang area established new schools, started the process of the modernization of school education. In the national policy, Qing Dynasty inherited some dominant strategy that dynasties of past ages took. Its educational aim was to foster a person that has good ability and can be loyal to the Qing Dynasty. As to the minority area in Sichuan province, some officials also advocated some claims about educational aims. These claims have established the basic guiding ideology, which is the guide of establishing schools in Qiang area (Wu, 1984).

In the beginning of the Republic of China, Minority education basically had no cause. For the unification of the country, most of the national policy paid attention to the political affairs of the border area. The national education policy is mainly related to the Mongolian and Tibetan, which had large population and affluence. Mongolian and Tibetan which are the minority in China, have its own language and word. The national education policy ruled that the person with special nature in their language culture can learn the language and characters they owned. Others implemented the same education with the Han Nationality. For the goal of national education at that time, some researchers said: The final aim of the education is to assimilate (Zheng, 1938)

The national education policy set a high tone for the value of the Qiang school education. But the settlement of Qiang area is most remote place and had less population. So we still need to analyse the condition of the national education policy of the settlement of Qiang area.

Most of the time in the Republic of China, the situation of the settlement of Qiang area was more confused. War, banditry, the consequent heavy clutter pie and natural disasters had brought untold suffering to the Sichuan people including Qiang people (Ran, Li, & Zhou, 1985).

As the general opinion, During the Late Qing Dynasty, the national education policy is mainly related to the minorities which has large population and big effect. As to the Qiang ethnic group which has less population, took “enforce its assimilation and unity” as the guiding ideology of its education. The government has adopted

special policies and strengthened the control of the local education.

## **3. THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOK ABOUT QIANG DURING THE LATE QING DYNASTY AND REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

The national education policy of the government decides the value orientation of school education of Qiang ethnic group. Curriculum design and the use of the textbooks of the Qiang schools reflect the government’s requirements.

### **3.1 Curriculum Design**

During the late Qing Dynasty, the school curriculum of Qiang schools is roughly the same with the mainland’s. According to the regulations, the elementary school should be taught 8 courses. The higher elementary school should be taught 9 courses which are 1 more than the elementary schools’. Because of the quality and quantity of primary school in Qiang area and other conditions was in poor conditions, it is very hard to open these courses.

During the period of the Republic of China, the design of curriculum of Qiang schools is not different from the mainland’s. Some materials showed the curriculum design of the Qiang schools was the same with the other parts of the country during the period of Republic of China. Due to the limited conditions, some courses can’t open. The record of a special national culture that is designed by the school has not been seen.

### **3.2 The Use of Textbooks**

During the period of the Republic of China, the textbooks in Qiang schools are all Chinese textbooks and they are compiled by the countries. Although the literature recorded that the local management authorities stressed local textbooks that according to some local customs, but not related curriculum appeared in the record. There are two reasons: a) The time has been away from us, so the record is not in detail. b) The school just advocated, but not implemented.

For the data that the author collected, there was no record of the local curriculum and the local textbook compiling in Maoxian. Beichuan which had small population, may compile local textbooks at that time. But it is still unknown whether the government implemented.

## **4. LOCAL PEOPLE’S ATTITUDES ON THE SCHOOL EDUCATION OF QIANG ETHNIC GROUP DURING THE LATE QING DYNASTY AND REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

We don’t find the information about the local people’s attitude on the school education in Qiang area because

the time of the Late Qing Dynasty is short. Parents had expectations on their children about their education. This material shows the local people's attitude on the school education during the period of Republic of China.

The education of Tun district which includes Qiang area is poor. There are several junior primary schools and 2 senior primary schools until the Tun region established in 1928. The equipment of these schools is very poor. Some political reasons are as follows. a) Officials didn't pay attention to the education of Tun district. They ignored it because of the difficulty. b) The schools were lacking for teachers. Many people knew a few words at that time and there were less educated people. There were seldom primary school teachers who were able to master the meaning, to understand the society and the nature. c) The funding of education was less. The board area is always poor. The salary of the teacher is also very less. Some social reasons are as follows: a) People don't understand the function of education. Most of them think the education is just to teach people how to recognize words, but in daily life, there is no need to know the word. Instead of sending their children to school, they would rather let them to collect firewood. b) People misunderstood the meaning of education. They thought the education was just a method to win promotion and get rich, but the distance between the status they would get and the status of intellectuals is still relatively far away. Even if one graduated from the school, it was also very difficult to get rid of the slave class. So they thought letting the children accept education was not in line with the actual needs and going to school was equivalent to waste time. c) People live poorly. Most of them cannot afford the tuition although the school provided food (Deng, 1936).

Because of that, Qiang people had no interest in sending their children go to school. Although the local government took some measures such as improving the condition of the schools, the number of children who went to schools is also small. It takes the education in Maoxian County for example. The square of the educated was fairly narrow during the period of Republic of China. The children who could go to school were limited to the rich families in urban and rural areas. Illiterate or semiliterate population accounted for more than 90% of the total number of population. By 1949 among the 1,095 primary and secondary school students in Maoxian, there were only less than 20 minority students which accounted for 1.9% of the total number of students in the country (The Bureau of Culture and education of Maoxian County, 1994).

Parents hoped that their children can get promotion and get rid of the membership class by going to school and therefore they were not interested in whether schools could inheritance local knowledge. On the contrary, most of them hoped the school could deliver mainstream culture because the people of Qiang ethnic group were

discriminated in society. Some people tended to conceal identity of Qiang and made every attempt to act as the Han nationality against their wills. As the material recorded:

Qiang people often had been humiliated by the others in daily life. They lived mainly by the excavation of wild herbs, caustic soda, hunting, and played firewood to sell before the founding of the People's Republic of China. The trade in Qiang area was in barter stage during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It was up to the sellers to decide the time and the place to do the trade and people were not allowed to overstep the boundary. Qiang people could go to the city to sell their products during the late Qing Dynasty and Republic of China. But the buyer often lowball the price of the products and bully them. When the Qiang people who carried things for a long journey had a rest in front of others' door, they must give some profits to them. There were many examples that Qiang people had been humiliated in the daily life. So they had to wear the Han clothing and talk with Chinese language. A lot of Qiang people made every attempt to find reasons so as to act as the Han people in order to get rid of discrimination and insult. We have found in the work (the implementation of national policy and the recovery of ethnic composition): Some Qiang people even intermarried with other people who were in different provinces and counties. Another Qiang people are forced to say that their ancestors were Han people (Qiao, 1991).

As the material reveals, Qiang people have been discriminated due to the dress, the language and the living habits. They are in a weak position in the society. Under the same value orientation of school education of the Qiang ethnic, culture of Qiang ethnic group is not compatible with the modern schools'. Many parents and children in Qiang area choose to get far away from the school and a few choose to enter the school to accept the "assimilation."

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## CONCLUSION

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During the period of the New deal in the late Qing Dynasty, the establishment of new schools in Qiang area transplanted the way of Han district school. Analysing the curriculum and teaching materials for schools, we can obviously find that the school education of Qiang ethnic group in the late Qing Dynasty embodies the value orientation of national assimilation. It is difficult to infer the people's attitude towards education because only a few children go to school. So the value orientation of school education had relation with the background at that time. As some research shows that nationalism played a leading role in the society from 1895 to the early of the Republic of China and all the aims of education are for the consolidation of the country.

During the period of the Republic of China, the economy of Qiang area improved backward and the

politics is out of chaos. It was extremely difficult to develop the education. The replacement of the government officials was frequent and there was no time to adopt the school education into account in 1920s. The education was poor. Educational expenditure was critical shortage and the teaching condition was very poor. Furthermore, the curriculum of the school transplanted the model of Han district and had little contact with the indigenous people's life. Regardless of the fact that the government took some measures such as providing meals in schools to develop education in Qiang area, Qiang people had no interest in education and few children went to school. As a document in 1932 shows that there were two goals of the implementation of education in minority areas, "one is making minority people obedient, the other is making them assimilate", "making them obedient, their belief must be established; and making them assimilate, their lifestyle must be changed." (Deng, 1936) All of that reflected the aim of leading a school at that time. The school education of Qiang ethnic group transplants the education model of Han district. This kind of education only reflected the government's will but cannot solve the practical problems of the masses. So people do not give a shit in it. The education they need is the way to get rid

of the identity of ethnic discrimination and how to solve their livelihood.

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