

Historical Changes of the Connotation of Chinese Patriotism

CUI Jian^[a]

^[a]Instructor and doctor, College of Marxism and the Research Centre of Marxism, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

Support by the stage achievement of the doctoral project “A Study on the National Identity of the Youth in the Context of Globalization” supported by the Social Science Fund in Chongqing (project No. 2012BS01), and is the stage achievement of the project “A Research on the Building of National Identity of Ethnic-minority College Students in the Context of Globalization” supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for Central Universities in 2014 in Southwest University (No. SWU1409193).

Received 3 March 2014; accepted 1 May 2014
Published online 20 May 2014

Abstract

The primary mission of ideological and political education of university students is to develop and cultivate national spirits with patriotism as its essence. Chinese people are a great people imbued with glorious patriotism traditions. During five-thousand-year Chinese civilization, patriotism was always the core of Chinese morality and spirit. Patriotism has different historical themes during different periods. Looking back and surveying the glorious days patriotism had went through and exploiting its useful parts, would be beneficial for expanding patriotism spirits and improving the ideological and political education of university students today.

Key words: Patriotism; History; Transition; Utterance

Cui, J. (2014). Historical Changes of the Connotation of Chinese Patriotism. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 6(3), 74-78. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/4819>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/4819>

1. PATRIOTISM IN ANCIENT TIMES, WITH “LOYAL TO THE EMPEROR” AS ITS ESSENCE

1.1 Concerning About His Nation and People, Protecting Public Interests at the Cost of Sacrificing His Own

Patriots in ancient times were deeply concerned about his nation’s fate and people’s sufferings. They would like to do anything good for national independence and prosperity whatever the cost is. Their words and actions were and are highly admired by people in old times and now. Qu Yuan, a famous poet in Spring and Autumn Period wrote in his poem, “What I’m not worried about is not my safety, but my lord’s country.” “The course to a powerful nation is long and tortuous, but I will still go through it.” “If I die for my country nine times, I shall not regret.” “Destroying my body cannot change my mind”. These poems fully express the poet’s great ambition to contribute his country and his pitiful heart towards his people. In Tsao’s poem, “I shall devote all my life to my country, and do the righteous until my life end”. His son, Tsao Zhi wrote, “Recreation is not what I pursuit, I pursuit managing the nation’s issue well” The famous poet Li Bai in Tang Dynasty wrote, “I always wake up in midnight and sigh for my country’s fate”, Du Fu, also in Tang, wrote, “In poor and disorder years, I’m worried about the folks lives.” “Every time at home, I cannot sleep late, for I’m always thinking about serving for my country.” Su Xun wrote, “A person of virtue worries not about his own life, he worries about his nation’s fate.” Fan Zhongyan, wrote, “Worrying about the nation before everybody else does, making everybody happy before making yourself.” All these poems show the great patriotism spirits of Chinese patriots in respect of worrying about nation’s fate, people’s future and folks’ sufferings, which has become the important ideas of Chinese People’s spirits.

1.2 To Be Vigorous and to Become Stronger

To be vigorous and to become stronger is an expression of Chinese People's patriotism in ancient times, concluded and explained by Chinese Classics. Han Fei in the pre-Qin period said, "Rely on yourself but not on others.", in *Dazhuan-the Book of Changes*, it wrote, "The nature is powerful and unconquerable, man should act like the nature.", in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, it wrote, "Extend your horizon, raise questions, think carefully, tell rights and wrongs and practice all of these. If you do things this way, you will find the truth however stupid you are, and will be stronger however weak you are." In *Commentaries on Change*, it wrote, "Rainstorm is inevitable, one has to learn to wait and grasp the chance once it appears." "In a peaceful and prosperous time, one should be moral and do things in the way it ought to be." "A man in good manner becomes nobler and more glorious day by day." Mencius said, "A man who would not lost himself in gold and not yield to the power is a real man." For hundreds of years, this national character have evolved into the patriotism spirits of striving for the nation's prosperity and fate, and is becoming an inexhaustible source for our patriotism.

1.3 The Mainstream of Being Loyal to the Emperor

Ancient China is a co-constructed structure of family and state. Family is the cell, and state is the body. As the ruler, emperor is the symbol of the nation. People's affiliated mentality towards the nation turned into a similar attitude to the emperor, which can also be described as the patriotism of being loyal to your emperor. In *The Book of Songs*, a saying naturally reveals this idea, "Everything on the earth belongs to the emperor, and every lord in the territory should submit himself to the emperor's rule." The patriotic poet Qu yuan jumped into river with a stone in his arms for having no access to serving his lord and country. General Yueh Fei wrote in his poem "I shall pay respect to my lord after recapturing the lost territory." Besides, what cannot be separated from the consciousness of being loyal to your emperor is orthodox ideology (thinking Han people is the orthodox Chinese). In *The Book of Songs*, "Since Tang built the Shang empire, the other tribes like Shi and Qiang dared not to send no tributes to Shang and submit to the emperor Tang." In *The Book of Rites*, "Chinese and other tribes have different characters, languages, ways of thinking and doing things, which are hard to be changed." In *Spring and Autumn Annuals*, "In the center of the earth are Chinese, and the surroundings are other tribes like Yi and Di.", "Other tribes should not and dare not to invade China." All these praises showed a sense of superiority and pride of the Chinese people. In *The Analects*, it emphasized the orthodox ideology by saying "In a proper society, the emperor makes the law, holds the power and declares the war", Jia Yi said "The emperor should be the head of a country; dukes under emperor should act like its feet.", which is also a reflection of the orthodox ideology.

2. PATRIOTISM IN MODERN TIMES, WITH SAVING THE NATION AS ITS THEME

2.1 Resisting Intruder and Saving the Country

After the Opium War, saving the nation became extremely urgent. Needless to say, it is a primary mission for Chinese people to strive for national independence, people's liberation, country's prosperity and people's well-off. Since the war, a furious patriotism movement themed by "anti-invasion, anti-oppression, and saving the nation" swept all China.

Lin Zexu (a general leading the opium war) said "If the things I am doing is good for my country, how can I stop for my own sake?" Lin took a serious pledge in the war. He even proposed the secret of killing enemies, namely, "fight together, be brave and stab accurate". Leading his soldiers, he fought to his last drop of blood, heavily threatening the invaders. In the war, generals and soldiers of Han, Manchu and Mongol shook hands and fought together, writing down the epic of national unity and patriotism. General Guan Tianpei, Yu Qian, Liu Buchan and many others died for their country. Besides, the masses also showed their love for country and hatred for the invaders. There was a song praising Sanyuanli people fighting against English intruders, "The sound of the masses in Sanyuanli is like a thunder; hundreds of people appearing in the street at the same time. They are angry for their country intruded, and brave for being angry. They unite to an overwhelming power that even can destroys their enemy." Boxer Uprising vowed "prop up the Qing, wipe out the intruders." They told their enemy the anti-oppression spirit of Chinese people with their own blood.

2.2 Beating the Enemies by Learning From Them, and Strengthening the Nation and Make It Prosperous

As the sound of a bomb (the Opium War) went through the air, China woke up from its thousands-year-long dream of "China is the center of the world". Since then, the gate of China was forced to open to the world. Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan proposed "open eyes to the world" "East and West are both parts of the world". These opinions yielded open the world view and theory of historical evolution like "beat the enemy by learning from them." Wei Yuan is the first man to walk out of darkness to find why China is so much weaker than the West. Li Hongzhang highly concluded the ways to become stronger in a new era by proposing "Learning what they are good at, and depriving what they are proud of." "Turn their weapon into our weapon" "For countries, the rising power could surpass the established one. If people can be well-off, this country will be increasingly stronger." Chen Zhi said "Business and commerce concern about a nation's future" "Strengthen the nation by boosting commerce and industry". His view not only greatly influenced the modern military industry

of China, but also stimulated China's national capitalism and opened up the modern history of China. Chairman Mao once said, "Since we lost the Opium War in 1841, Chinese people have been searching for knowledge and truth from the West. So desired for knowledge, Chinese people would read any western books available." It reflects the truth that numerous ambitious and responsible Chinese people tried everything they can to deplore the way for a stronger nation.

2.3 Constitutional Reform and Modernization

The theory of "coast defense" of the feudal bureaucrats Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan, and the theory of "keeping the dominant role of Chinese culture but using western science and technology" have their defects, which can be well described as "amending the defects but neglecting the most important" and "defending the rein of the emperor". Bourgeoisie Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Yan Fu and Tan Sitong commented these feudal bureaucrats this way, "What they learn is only the skin but not the soul." In their view, the West is powerful is not because of its military or science, but because of its academic ideas, scientific sprits and advanced political institutions. With this kind of idea in mind, Yan Fu translated eight famous western books referred to revolution, ethics, politics, laws and logic, which triggered the enlightenment movement in China, and provided abundant mental source for the Chinese in saving their country.

Liang Qichao called on reformation, "survive by reform". He further proposed three methods to save the nation, "rely on people's power" "foster civilized people" "improve people's morality". Tan Sitong, one of the six leaders of Hundred Day's Reform, attacked the blind loyalty with democratic thoughts. After the reform was suppressed (Before he was executed death penalty), he cried "Me, Tan Sitong, the first Chinese died for reform." "I laughed skywards when you put a sword on my neck, my dauntless soul will linger between great mountains of China after my death". His great mind and soul win respect from every single descendant.

3. MODERN PATRIOTISM FEATURED BY QUESTION FOR LIBERATION

3.1 Exploring the Truth

"The Revolution of 1911 is a collective reflection of Chinese people fighting for national independence, prosperity and survival." Limited by poor historic conditions, the Revolution of 1911 neither changed the semi-colony, semi-feudal China nor changed Chinese people's fate, not to speak of the independence of nation. However, it has its positive meanings. It opened up a truly national-democratic revolution, spread revolutionary ideas, and composed the prelude for China's development. Through the baptism of the

revolution, a multiple of revolutionary party members and patriots united under the banner of "revitalizing China". As the sound of bomb of the October Revolution went through the air, Marxism-Leninism was brought to China. The October Revolution of Russia built the first socialist country in the world, and brought Marxism to China. In 1919, the May 4th Movement broke out, which had a epoch-making significance in China's modern history. The movement fully manifested the deep and solid patriotism sprit of Chinese youth and promoted the thriving of socialist ideological trend. Generations of progressive Chinese youth united under the banner of Marxism to save the nation.

3.2 Anti-Japanese War

The Manchurian Incident and the July 7 Incident marks the outbreak of Anti-Japanese War, in that situation, China and Chinese people was in great danger of being ruined. Facing the danger, patriotism was endowed with new time connotation, and gradually evolved into an ethos trying to save the nation from danger. First, the course of patriotism in a new time became clearer and clearer. With continuous development of the New Culture Movement and through the test in Anti-Japanese War, Marxism became a merited choice for Chinese with advanced thoughts and gradually rose as a dominant ideology. To combine patriotism, Marxism and internationalism together was a new trend. Second, patriotism was rooted in most Chinese minds as a whole. In the survival-or-extinction moment, CPC sufficiently exploited the masses' power and made them play a major role in the war by enlightening and stimulating them. Third, patriotism was given a new character closely related to people.

3.3 Overthrowing the "Three Mountains", and Building A World of Socialist

Under the leadership of the CPC, Patriotism in China is perfectly combined with scientific socialism. In the New Democracy Theory established by the CPC, it pointed out that we must went through a new-democratic revolution before realizing socialism, which properly suggested that China's revolution is a two-step process. It realized the unification of patriotism and saving the nation theoretically and practically. Under the guidance of this theory, the Communist Party, on one hand, devoted to leading the new-democratic revolution, on the other hand, made preparation for the socialist revolution. As a result of the CPC's efforts, the historical issue on how to turn a economically and culturally backward capitalist nation into a socialist one was successfully addressed. Successively winning the Northern Expedition, Agrarian Revolutionary War, Anti-Japanese War and the Liberation War, or to say, after 28 years of bloody battles, we Chinese finally defeated the Japanese intruders, overthrew the rule of Nationalist Party and built the People's Republic of China.

4. MODERN PATRIOTISM WITH NATIONAL RENAISSANCE AS ITS MISSION

4.1 Exploring the Socialist Road

To build a socialist China is a great theory explored by the generations of CPC. Early in 1956, when the socialism system was established in China and Three Great Remould was put on schedule, Chairman Mao proposed that we should take Soviet Union as a mirror and find a socialist road suitable for China. On the basis of the proposal, he delivered two papers, *On the Ten Major Relationships* and *On Properly Dealing with the Disagreement among People*, proposing a series of socialism construction principles suitable for China. Since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CPC, the Party, leading its people, started a new round of exploration on how to build a socialist China. “We should combine Marxism theory with China’s specific reality, and build a socialist nation with Chinese characteristics”, Dong Xiaoping represented on the 12th Central Committee of the CPC. Hereafter, the Party, with Dong Xiaoping as its representative, put forward a series of new theories on “what is socialism and how to build socialism”, and the connotation of socialism with Chinese characteristics was basically formed. The history from the foundation of the new China till now proves the truth that we must march on the socialism road with Chinese characteristics so as to achieve modernization, create a better tomorrow for people, and bring about a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Since the beginning of the modern history, Chinese people have been persistently working on the enterprise of seeking for national independence and prosperity. The socialism road with Chinese characteristics is the inheritance and development of this enterprise and has become the most glorious part of patriotism.

4.2 Perfecting the Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

To realize the great rejuvenation of Chinese nation is a glorious cause full of hardship and challenges and thus is in want of innovative spirits. Great cause is in want of and will generate lofty patriotism spirit, while patriotism spirit in return will support and promote great cause. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is a reflection of the basic interests of all Chinese people, a representation of the most general voice and appeal of interests from the public, and is an expression of the essence of socialism--with “emancipating productivity, wiping out exploitation, eliminating polarization to finally achieve the common well-off” as its feature and with the realization of the great rejuvenation of Chinese nation as its pursuit. In modern China, we practice the socialism with Chinese characteristics under the guidance of the patriotism and socialism theory, which is a powerful engine for

encouraging people to make contribution to the nation. As President Hu Jintao pointed out, “What is the theme of patriotism? It is to promote socialist modernization, to build a well-off society in all around way, and to turn the blueprint of the great rejuvenation of Chinese nation into a reality” (Hu, 2009). China, with a population of 1.4 billion, is the largest developing country in the world. To build a well-off society in an all-around way, we have a long way to go. To turn China into a democratic, harmonious, prosperous and strong socialism nation, we must persist in patriotism and socialism together. It is the experience of our past achievements and the source of our strength to create a new legend.

4.3 The Reform and Opening-Up Policy

In 1978, the Party decided to implement the reform and opening-up policy on the Third Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. “The Reform and Opening-up Policy is a newly-started revolution led by the Party, it determined the fate of the Chinese nation, it is the only path to developing the socialism and to rejuvenate our nation” (Hu, 2011). “This policy is the cause of last 30 years’ fast development, and it will be a decisive element for the coming decades.” For over 30 years the reform and opening-up policy has greatly promoted the socialism enterprise with Chinese characteristics, and has made great achievement in the modernization construction, and meanwhile has infused patriotism with more forms and contents. On the one hand, the opening-up policy requires that patriotism should also open up itself to the world. Jiang Zemin once pointed it out, “The patriotism we adhered to is different to the nationalism. We should stick to the opening-up policy, and learn from the world and introduce in advanced science and technology and experiences of operation and management. These are nothing else but patriotism itself” (Jiang, 1991). On the other hand, the reform and opening up brings about different social institutions, cultures and views of value. Now, more than one culture coexists in China. In foreign contacts, we should not only protect our national independence and maintain its dignity, but also respect the diversity of cultures, which requires that the patriotism must be inclusive. We have a good reason to explain what we just mentioned: “It is a basic feature of the human society and is a driving force for human civilization that the world is diversified. Therefore, we need learn to respect the histories and cultures, social systems and development modes of different nations. All cultures and social systems should coexist in the same world and try for joint development by learning from each other in competition” (Jiang, 2001).

REFERENCES

- Deng, X. P. (1993). *The works of Deng Xiaoping* (Vol. 3, p. 292). Beijing: People’s Publishing House.

- Deng, X. P. (1993). *The works of Deng Xiaoping* (Vol. 3, pp.382-383). Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- Hu, J. T. (2009). *The speech made to teacher and student delegates from China Agriculture University*. Beijing: Xinhua News Agency.
- Hu, J. T. (2011). *Speech made on the 100-year anniversary of the revolution of 1911*. Beijing: Xinhua News Agency.
- Hu, J. T. (2011). *The speech made on the 90-year anniversary of the CPC's establishment*. Beijing: People's Daily.
- Hu, J. T. (2011). *The speech made on the 90-year anniversary of the CPC's establishment*. Beijing: People's Daily.
- Jiang, Z. M. (1991). Patriotism and the mission of Chinese intellectuals. *Selected Works of Some Important Papers Since the 18th Conference of the CPC* (2nd ed.). Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- Jiang, Z. M. (2001). *The speech made on the 80-year anniversary of the CPC's establishment*. Beijing: People's Daily.
- Mao, Z. D. (1991). *The selected works of Mao Zedong* (Vol.4, p.1469). Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- Mao, Z. D. (1991). *The selected works of Mao Zedong* (Vol.4, p.1471). Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- Sun, Y. S. (1981). *The collection of Sun Yat-sen* (Vol.1, p.856). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.