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**Commemorating Heroes and Martyrs in a Chinese Elementary School:
An Exploration of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual from the Perspective of
Educational Anthropology**

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Summary

Ritual is a classic research topic in anthropology. School ritual, as an interdisciplinary topic, has received increasing attention from educational researchers internationally in recent years. However, there is little international research on Chinese school rituals. This study focuses on the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in contemporary Chinese schools. Here, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is not a product of modern China but has evolved from ancient China. In China, ritual has a long history, which is termed “Li” (礼) in ancient China. Since the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, school rituals have existed in schools as educational practices. This study focuses on rituals in Chinese schools through the theoretical framework and research methods of German educational anthropology, hoping that ritual can be seen as a lens to present Chinese school education to international audiences from an intercultural perspective.

For such a study, I have chosen the paradigm of historical anthropology as a research perspective. This is a research paradigm proposed by Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf, dedicated to the development of cultural studies in a globalized world outside of European culture. This study researches ritual in educational practices in the context of Chinese history and culture, focusing on the rituals in modern Chinese schools and the Chinese schooling system, in which they are embedded.

This research is conducted under focused ethnography as the main data collection method, which is used to describe the ethnographic practice and reveal the cultural interpretation of phenomena. Participant observation and ethnographic interviews are used to describe the phases of the ritual, including ritual design, preparation, organization, performance and ending. The school that I researched is located in Beijing and partakes in systematic ritual activities at special times throughout the year. According to the characteristics of Chinese educational practice and the basic information of this school, I selected several interviewees as

representatives of various groups. The director of the school, a ritual expert, two teachers and four students gave in-depth interviews. The interview data are analyzed using the documentary method, especially relying on comparative sequential analysis and typification. The main task of the documentary approach is to interpret the implicit knowledge of the observed, which can deal with the question of implicit educational logic behind the ritual phenomenon. The question analyzed in the documentary method is not what the reality is, but how this reality is formed.

This study found that, the formation of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in modern Chinese schools is influenced by the intertwining of multiple factors. These factors include historical and cultural dimensions, social and political dimensions, school dimensions and teacher and student dimensions. Here, I give a summary according to these different dimensions. Compared to the political nature of the flag-raising ritual and the cultural nature of the Mid-Autumn Festival ritual, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is full of historical, cultural, political, and educational elements. Through the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, I can portray Chinese history, culture, society, and school education to German and European readers on a more multi-layered, multi-perspective, and multi-dimensional basis. The Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in schools is not entirely determined by school education itself, but is governed by multiple factors such as history, culture and the legal system. These are both the basis and logical preconditions for the formation and development of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual and reflect the importance and function of the existence of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual.

From a historical dimension, the modern Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is, in fact, the modern expression of an ancient Chinese Sacrificial Ritual. Chinese sacrificial rituals originated from the ancient Chinese culture of sacrifice. Initially, in ancient societies, people made sacrifices to the gods for a peaceful life. Gradually, people started worshipping their relatives and ancestors rather than gods. The core of this kind of intergenerational ritual is mainly derived from traditional concepts of ethics and the culture of intergenerational relations centered on filial piety in ancient China.

This culture has continued from ancient China to modern China and has been passed on from generation to generation through different traditional festivals such as the Qingming Festival. In terms of the historical development of the Qingming Sacrificial Rituals, both of the two main features of the modern Qingming Sacrificial Rituals (tomb sweeping and national sacrifice) are generated from the development of sacrificial rituals. Ritual has been recorded since the Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600 – 1046 B.C.E.) in ancient China. The custom of tomb sweeping was already established in the in the pre - Qin period (ca. 770 - 476 B.C.E.). However, it was not until the East Han period (25 - 220 A.D.) that the “tomb-sweeping ritual” was established and it was treated as a formal ritual during the Tang dynasty (618 - 907 A.D.) as the core of the Qingming Festival. For national rituals, this government - centered form of ritual began in the Zhou dynasty (ca.1046 - 256 B.C.E.). From the Zhou dynasty onwards, government officials used rituals to shape historical and cultural memory, which gradually developed a systematic structure of national rituals. The modern Qingming Festival in schools, that is, the ceremony of commemorating martyrs during the Qingming Festival, is a fusion of these two forms of ritual with western commemorative ceremonies, which began in the twentieth century and gradually shaped after the founding of the People’s Republic of China. In short, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is an ancient one, which has developed and evolved over thousands of years. Now, it is an inheritance and continuation of ancient Chinese history and culture in modern schooling education.

In terms of the social dimension, the design, organization, and implementation of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in schools are similar to the organization of other school events. School administrators have to complete the process of designing, organizing and performing the ritual in two weeks. At every step of the process, the ritual is interwoven with other elements. In the school I studied, the organization of the ritual was mainly carried out by the director, the person in charge of the ritual. He is responsible for proposing a preliminary idea for the design of the ceremony, including factors such as the location, setting, music, ritual content and evaluation of

the educational acquisition. This initial idea is discussed in a preparatory meeting with principals and class teachers and then revised by the ritual experts so that it more closely follows the theory. Finally, it is considered in terms of student acceptance, the balance between limited time, educational objectives and the funding system for the ritual. The final ritual design is developed in consultation with the principal who will make the final decision. Once the plan is decided, the director organizes the teachers' and other staff's work together, such as preparing the props and starting repeated practice and rehearsals. In addition to the school administrators, there is also a special group called "ritual experts", represented by various people such as university professors. The research shows that these ritual experts act as a bridge between national policy and school practice not only as researchers but also as teacher trainers, guides and evaluators of school ritual organizations. In general, however, the ritual experts are more than supporters and collaborators, joining the team of school administrators when necessary.

From the dimensions of educational policy and school practice, the study found that, there are two different logics behind the design, organization, and performance of school rituals in China that are intertwined and shaped together.

This first logic is the logic of policy. In China, school rituals, like other school educational activities, are strictly governed by educational policies. Educational policy is the starting point and goal of ritual design as well as the evaluation criterion for ritual performance (involving various aspects such as content, form and purpose) which has a strict guiding and regulating function. Specifically, Chinese school rituals mainly include festivals, memorials, flag-raising rituals, entrance ceremonies, graduation ceremonies and oath ceremonies for 18-year-olds. The administrators and the ritual experts try to ensure that the policy is practiced as correctly as possible in the school. Under this logic, ritual experts play a significant role in practicing the policy more successfully.

The second logic is the logic of practice. In Chinese educational practice, despite the educational policies, rituals are still only a "choice" for some schools and are not

widely practiced. From the research, the following influencing factors were identified: “the tedium of daily work”, “the pressure from society” and “the nature of the ritual itself”, for example, it is unlikely that the ritual can lead to improvement in the students’ educational behavior in a short period.

The study of two teachers’ ritual education practices in this context reveals that, at the practical level, the specific process of the realization of educational goals (i.e., ritual goals in the educational policy) does not strictly follow the logic of educational policy but is achieved through the intertwining of the logic of educational policy and tacit knowledge. Under the policy logic, students should acquire explicit knowledge, such as ritual actions related to external norms. However, in real practice, while students can act following the norms in their physical behavior, the policy logic alone does not allow students to accept and recognize implicit knowledge of ritual at a cognitive level. This creates an initial sense of mistrust and anxiety about the ritual. Teachers, who were not significantly involved in organizing the rituals simply, thought of the rituals as a task and were unwilling to organize and participate in the rituals. In their mind, ritual does not seem to be as effective as policy. In repeated practice, teachers found that when the role of the teacher changed from “supervisor” and “manager” to “participant” and “collaborator” in the design and organization of the rituals, the students could act on their initiative at a cognitive level. At this moment, teachers realized that, relying on policy and general class management skills could not increase students’ motivation for rituals separately. This is a compounding of the policy logic and the educational logic of ritual as tacit knowledge. When the part of tacit knowledge in ritual is focused on, rituals have sufficient time and space to ensure a dynamic process of the formation and production of behavioral knowledge, which leads to lasting behavioral changes at the cognitive level. For example, a student could independently and consciously realize that, keeping quiet in the Flag-raising ritual is important rather than only following teachers’ repeated words. For the students, they do not only acquire the specific “educational goal” that is designed at the surface, but they harvest other impressive moments and feelings that

the students think of themselves. However, what they harvest, or what they think, is not seen as important from the perspective of official policy. From the students' perspective, the acquisition of individual qualities like confidence and courage from the ritual is extremely significant. However, from the policy level and school level, these are not considered. These findings are notable and could be explained by implicit knowledge. Here, what the students learn is not only explicit knowledge that could be designed at the outset, but also some accidental surprises from the ritual, which could not have been predicted by teachers, administrators and experts beforehand. This explicit knowledge constructs a critical bridge that balances the policy and the practice. However, this situation seems not to have been realized by researchers and administrators.

Thus, I am looking forward to providing a modern picture of Chinese schooling education through rituals to international audiences, giving Chinese educational reforms more attention globally.

Introduction

This study encompasses empirical fieldwork research about a festival ritual, called Qingming Sacrificial Ritual. This ritual happened at a primary school located in a suburb of Beijing which was representative of Chinese students' school life. From the perspective of anthropology, this ritual offers a window through which the overall situation of the Chinese educational system, institutional system, history, culture, and modern society can be portrayed and observed.

Although the content and performance of each ritual in various schools are different, the process of preparing and organizing rituals by the headmaster and other staff is similar in all Chinese schools. For example, in each school, the director suggests, plans and organizes the ritual. Final decisions are made by the headmaster and the ritual is practiced by the teachers and students. From my research, some headmasters prefer more daily rituals in school, some just choose several necessary rituals to organize, like political rituals. So, based on this, my research about a ritual in primary school is crucial for current international educational research, especially for presenting school education in the Chinese context.

Core concepts: Ritual, school ritual, Li (ancient ritual)

Ritual is defined in this dissertation as “[...] a sequence of human actions that is characterized by standardization of the external form, repetition, performativity and symbolism and has an elementary effect of forming social structures. In contrast, ritualization in the broader sense is already spoken of when a certain behavior is regularly repeated in its external form”¹ (Stollberg-Rilinger, 2013, p. 9).

In this dissertation, school rituals refer to those group activities, in which group members participate with specific requirements on time and space, according to certain procedures and contents (Zhang, 2011, p. 24–26). The school ritual here is

¹ Own translation from German

limited to referring to those rituals in modern China, after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The school ritual is not new in modern society; it is based on a long history and culture.

In ancient China, different concepts related to rituals were grouped under the big category of “Li,” which can also be translated into “etiquette”, “ceremony”, and “ritual” (Radice, 2017). “Li” has a long history of more than 5,000 years in China. Since ancient times, China has been known as “the epithet of a country of etiquette and rites ” (Wang et al., 2020, p. 141).Ritual (Li) permeated every aspect of historical Chinese culture, and its content was very rich. Today, no one can use any totalizing description to comprehensively define it” .(Wang et al., 2020, p. 141)

In the ancient book “*Gong Yang Zhuan, Yin Gong seventh year,*”¹ the relationship between China and ritual was recorded. It said “China is the land of ritual.”² More recently, Cline posits that

“While most English speakers today separate social customs and matters of etiquette from religious rituals, early Confucians saw them as unified under the category of ‘ritual’ (here means Li in ancient China)³. They further regarded all of these things, things we would refer to as manners, as well as funerals, weddings, and forms of religious worship as having tremendous moral significance, partly because they understood them to serve both developmental and expressive functions for participants as well as observers” .(Cline, 2016)

In the book, *Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters* (Shuo Wen Jie Zi),⁴ supposedly written in the Han Dynasty, the first systematic work in Chinese grammatology and one which marked the beginning of this field (Chen, 2017), it was

¹ Own translation of 《公羊传·隐公七年》

² Own translation of “中国者，礼义之国也”

³ The author added the explanation

⁴ This book is called 说文解字, the sentence is translated from the Chinese “礼,履也,所以事神而致福也”

written that, “Li was the rule of behavior, just as feet had to walk with shoes, people had to act according to the rules of Li”. (Duan, 2006, p. 2)

The original meaning of “Li” referred to the vessel for offering sacrifices to serve God a blessing. Later, it was understood as a religious ritual for offering sacrifices to the gods (Wang et al., 2020, p. 141). Offering sacrifices to gods or ancestors in primitive society was the earliest and narrowest understanding of “ritual” (Rosenlee, 2017; Wang et al., 2020, p. 141). Since ancient Chinese society, different kinds of “rituals” have been conventionally or specially developed and implemented in practical life, which gradually gave rise to social rituals. So, a broad concept of ritual appeared, namely, “Li”.

In ancient China, “Li” was firstly a political concept, and secondly an ethical and cultural concept (Zhang, 2017, p. 276). “Li” in Chinese not only has the meaning of a ritual but can also be seen as an important rule system that social life should strictly adhere to in the Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 B.C.E.). As Rynes (2017, p. 3) says, Li could be understood as a kind of an “unwritten law” or a “social order”, which is mostly customary, rather than state-promulgated, making society virtuous, harmonious, and morally rectified. As the core of Confucianism,

“the underlying ideas of certain Western ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, hedonism, and social contract theories i.e., that human beings in everyday life are selfish, and their principle of action is the satisfaction of egoistic desires which are foreign to Confucianism. For Confucian thinkers, human beings in everyday existence are basically moral, and they behave themselves as ethical beings: being human means being ethical. This view is a part of the connotations contained in the concept of Li. It is not only on ceremonial occasions, such as marriage, funeral, or ancestor memorial, that observance of a ritual propriety is required; even in everyday life, Li ought to be observed and it actually is.” (Nam, 2017, p. 21)

In the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046 – 771 B.C.E.), “Li” is the core of the rule of the government. Three books recording Li, including *Zhou Li* (周礼), *Li Ji* (礼记),

and *Yi Li* (仪礼), are the theoretical forms of ancient Chinese ritual.

Zhou Li, or the *Book of Zhou Rituals* or the *Rites of Zhou*, emphasized political institutions. It was the classic book documenting the systematic introduction of the ritual system in ancient China. “*The Rites of Zhou* (周礼) is primarily focused on the bureaucratic system that is constituted by three hundred official roles and makes stipulations on systems involved with the political and legal dimensions of the state” .(Wang et al., 2020, p. 142)

It can be seen as a systematic collection of social institutions and behavioral norms. *Zhou Li* contained both national ceremonies such as sacrifices, pilgrimages, and funerals as well as specific norms such as the costume institution. It even included all aspects of social life such as food, living, sacrifices, and funerals.

Yi Li, or the *Books of Ceremonies* (仪礼) or the *Book of Rites and Ceremonial* focused on norms of behavior and mainly described the detailed organization of rituals, including *Guan Li* (initiation ritual), weddings, funerals, courtesies, and so on, which significantly impacted modern social rituals, customs, and cultural attitudes. “It stipulated the form of aristocratic social relationships”. (Wang et al., 2020, p. 142)

Li Ji or the *Ritual Records* was a book of various ritual institutions written before the Qin dynasty (ca. 221 - 207 B.C.E.)and Han dynasty (ca. 202 - 220 B.C.E.), in which there were not only the recordings of the ritual institution but also the theory of “Li” and the description of its ethics and academic ideas. *Li Ji* recorded the explanations of specific rituals. After the Han Dynasty (ca. 202 - 220 B.C.E.).It was transformed into a mechanism for shaping and maintaining order at the level of social life.

Overall, the idea of traditional “Li” in ancient China contains five categories. First, Li is a kind of institution including political, economic, and cultural institutions. *Zuo Zhuan* (左传) recorded “Li can govern the country, stabilize the land, order the people and make it possible for the next leader to continue.”¹ In ancient China, Li is

¹ Translated from “礼，经国家，定社稷，序民人，利后嗣者也，” 出自《左传·隐公·隐公十一年》

the basis and goal of politics.

Second, Li is the etiquette and manner of communication and the norm of behavior. In Confucianism, the concept of Li is a specific norm, standard, and prescription of performance (Lewis, 2021). Traditionally, Li means harmony, suitable manners, and respect. *Xun Zi Li Lun* (荀子·礼论) recorded that “understanding and following with Li is the highest stage that we should pursue.”¹ Actually, in ancient times, the core of Li in this category means a high degree of civility in culture and ethic level, representing the norms of spirit and behavior in nonlegal means. In the ancient book “*Lun Yu-Ji Shi Pian*” (论语·季氏篇), it was recorded that “If one does not learn Li, one cannot become a great person.”² From this perspective, we can clarify the centrality of Confucian ritual in moral education (Lewis, 2021), which is also the basic cultural root of school rituals in modern society after 1949.

Third, Li means custom. Custom has a strong historical, cultural, regional, and normative character, which is a set of standardized ritual systems, that have been passed down from ancient times to the present. In ancient times, customs were made by agreement, which was more social and public than etiquette. Sometimes, during this stage, Li was discussed in terms of its power along with the Chinese ancient law “Fa”. Tan (2011, p. 475) said,

“The earliest and widest meaning of ‘Fa’ probably includes standards of measures, standards of language use and interpretation, and norms or models that need not be articulated as propositions. Among these are ‘Li’, which were norms of behavior, traditionally believed to be established by sage-kings but which more probably emerged from practices socially sanctioned over time, as well as codified prescriptive rules imposed by rulers on subjects and coercively enforced, which could be identified as laws. Both provide ‘standards’ of what to do and the consequences of various actions in specific circumstance”.

¹ Translation of “礼者，人道之极也” from *Xun Zi Li Lun* 《荀子·礼论》

² Translation of “不学礼、无以立,” from 《论语·季氏篇》, Analects, Chapter 16

Fourth, Li denotes music for ritual, a kind of musical culture, developed from sacrificial culture. Every monarch attached great importance to music and dance and formulated the systematic institution of music belonging to ritual. Through music and dance, people were urged to cultivate their inner manner and consciously abide by the social order. The ancients believed that the cultivation of ethics was mainly through the process of “education by music for ritual” to emotions, rather than rational cognitive training. *Lun Yu· Wei Zheng* (论语·为政) recorded, “If govern citizen with the method and behavior of Li, ethic, and law, leading citizen to have the heart of Li, then everyone will be able to remove their bad habit from their daily lives at any time and remain unchanged.¹”

The ancients believed that ethics were the soul of Li, while the specific ethical norms and constraints of the spiritual dimension were the core of Li.

The fifth category is the education of “Li”. In ancient times, the education of “Li” requires educating citizens with the knowledge and culture of “Li.” Only after citizens understood the meaning and content of “Li”, can they regulate their ethics and behavior according to the norms of “Li”. In ancient China, it was believed that, all rituals were significant for morality and capable of exerting an educational function for both participants and observers, especially in terms of a variety of moral influences (Sigurðsson, 2012). Xunzi, a Chinese philosopher, particularly emphasized the role of ritual in moral education (Kato, 2020; Lewis, 2018). From Xunzi’s perspective, ritual education aims to teach people how to behave properly, which is also the core of the Confucian idea of humaneness (Ren, 仁). Therefore, from the ancient form of “Li” to the modern form of ruling the country by ethics, etiquette and ritual have been recognized as effective and vivid ways to shape ethics education and behavior (Zhang, 2012). Kato also expressed interests in the pedagogical perspective on the relationship between ritual and education in ancient China, saying “what is the educational merit of ritual from the ontological perspective?” (Kato, 2020)

¹ Translation of “道之以德，齐之以礼，有耻且格，” from 《史记·七十列传·酷吏列传》

As a means of governing a country and education, “Li” has influenced the development of China for thousands of years. Through rituals and ceremonies, Chinese people learn how to shape themselves from behaviors to language as well as how to make social life reasonable and orderly (Berkson, 2016). For Confucians, human beings should exist with morality and ethics, which is also the ethic and cultural expression of Li (Nam, 2017). Nowadays, the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven and so many scenic spots and historical sites in Beijing were all sites of ancient “ritual”. In summary, in ancient China, the word “Li” had a very broad conceptual scope, although the modern concept of school in modern China has more similarities with the western concept of “ritual”. Li in ancient China cannot have a similar meaning to western culture because of its broader meaning for the whole of Chinese society. The concept of ritual in modern China also has a broader meaning, referring not only to formal rituals, such as political rituals (like a flag-raising ritual) and life-cycle rituals (like weddings), but also to rituals in daily life (Berkson, 2016; Sarkissian, 2014).

Sacrificial Ritual in Qingming festival

In a famous ancient book *Zhou Li·Chunguan·Dazongbo* (《周礼·春官·大宗伯》), Li is divided into five categories “ceremonies to celebrate an auspicious affair, to appease evil spirits, to welcome guests, to bolster the military, and to offer praise” (Zhang, 2010). The first of these is “Ji Li”, that is, a sacrificial ritual. In modern society, the Chinese will perform this sacrificial ritual in various social settings, such as schools and museums during the Qingming festival.

The “Qingming festival”¹ is a traditional Chinese festival that takes place on April 5th (or 4th) in the Gregorian calendar each year. In China, the Qingming Festival is a festival about hope. Farmers begin their spring plowing and sowing for the whole year during the Qingming festival. In ancient times, emperors performed a

1 Meredith A. (2022) China’s Qingming Festival, Explained

<https://studycli.org/chinese-holidays/qingming-festival/>

ritual of sweeping their tombs and paying respects to their ancestors on this day, which was called the “Tomb-Sweeping Festival” (Meredith, 2022). Many countries around the world have their own festivals like Qingming in China.

In Germany, a similar day is called “Totensonntag”, which means “death day on Sunday,” when people visit cemeteries to clean the graves of their deceased relatives.¹ In Mexico, the Day of the Dead² is celebrated on November 2nd each year, when people set up altars and offerings in their homes to pay tribute to their loved ones and go to the cemetery to celebrate the “reunion” with their ancestors. Mexico’s Day of the Dead embodies a unique view of life and philosophy. Peruvians visit cemeteries on the day of this festival for traditional sacrificial rituals, where flowers and wine are offered and a meal is held to revive the spirits of the deceased. In France, on All Souls’ Day,³ November 1st, people visit cemeteries to lay flowers and pay tribute to their deceased relatives, while memorials are held at the monument to the Paris Commune and the monument to anti-fascism. In Poland, the Day of the Dead⁴ is also celebrated on November 1st every year to commemorate those who have passed away. On this day, people visit graves and have their children offer candles as a tribute to their ancestors and to teach future generations not to forget them.

During the Qingming Festival in modern China, as in other countries worldwide, people visit cemeteries to pay their respects to their loved ones, as well as visit monuments to honor the martyrs and pay tribute to those who died for the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Israeli schools promote the political socialization of students and a model highlighting nationalism through commemorative ceremonies such as Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers (Ben-Amos, 1999; Lomsky-Feder, 2004; Hermoni & Lebel, 2012).

1 <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Totensonntag>

2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day_of_the_Dead

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Souls%27_Day

4 <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/poland/all-saints-day>

Rituals in Chinese school education

“Education has a close relationship with Ritual. Ritual has an educational function and ritual can also be seen in a school education context. Education offers ritual a broad space and ritual encourages better development of education. Human development cannot exist without education, similarly, without ritual in education.” (Zhang, 2012, p. 16)

School ritual in Chinese school education is called ritual education (Zhang, 2012, p. 15). As a new educational philosophy, ritual education has developed relatively recently in China. It gradually started after the 21st century. Today, there are still a variety of rituals accompanying children’s daily lives¹. At the same time, education in ritual does not only take place in schools but also increasingly appears in family and societal settlements which can also constitute “ritual education”.

Over the past decade, ritual education in China has been developing rapidly and the relationship between ritual and education has gradually become clearer.² From the current theory and practice of ritual education in China, ritual education has been used as an educational resource in school education to promote children’s socialization in two specific forms: ritual education as educational content and ritual education as an educational approach or carrier. The latter is more common and has been applied more widely. In 2019, China promulgated a new policy named “Implementation Guidelines for the Cultivation of citizen’s ethics in modern society,”³ in which the connotation of ritual education is clearly emphasized, that is

¹ For example, in school education, there are Guan Li and Ji Li in ancient China but an 18-year-old Oath Ceremony in modern China (Zhang, 2010).

² In ancient China, the ritual was a very broad and unifying concept. Although the relationship between ritual and education was clear, ritual seemed to be a very holistic concept, including many concepts such as political education, ritual education, and so on, it was more focused on protecting the superiority and privilege of certain classes, manifesting the class nature of ancient Chinese society. After the birth of the school in modern times, the relationship between school rituals and modern schooling is something that has only just been discussed in the recent decade.

³ “Implementation Guidelines for the Cultivation of citizen’s ethics in modern society”: own translation from 《新时代公民道德建设实施纲要》

“etiquette and ritual are the forms of ethics and the carrier of ethical practice” (Ministry of Education, 2019).

However, there is no official definition of the concept of ritual education in Chinese educational research. To understand the basic meaning of ritual education in China, it is useful to analyze the concepts of “ritual” and “education” separately. So, a clearer understanding of the concept of ritual education would require a further, more sophisticated understanding of the requirements of time and space. Zhang divided ritual education into five parts, including “family ritual education”, “school ritual education”, “social ritual education”, “peer ritual education” and “media ritual education” (Zhang, 2015, p. 201). In a broad sense, ritual education encompasses the five domains of family, school, society, peers, and the media. In the early development of ritual education in China, around 2010, it first needed to be promoted in all types of schools at all levels. Against this background, the concept of ritual education is narrowly defined as “school ritual education”. According to Zhang, school rituals refer to, “ritual activities that take place in the school and in which students primarily participate. School rituals are often conducted in a collective form and have a certain educational value for students” (Zhang, 2017, p. 301).

Based on this understanding of “school rituals”, the concept of “school ritual education” can be understood as an application of school rituals as educational resources in the field of the school.

How can we understand “education” in Chinese discourse? As far as the content of “education and cultivation” is concerned, a connotation is, “teaching people how to be good humans.” Actually, in modern pedagogy in China, the concept of “education” is “a kind of practical activity that takes place in a certain social context to promote the socialization of individuals and the individualization of society (12 Chinese Normal Universities, 2008, p. 12).

This concept emphasizes the practical characteristic of education. As a practical activity, education has its own goal like every other practical activity of human beings.

From the perspective of the whole process, it is the combination of “the socialization of individuals” and the “individualization of society”.((12 Chinese Normal Universities, 2008, p. 12).

The “socialization of individuals” refers to the cultivation of individuals into people with certain attitudes, emotions, knowledge, skills and belief under the requirements of a certain society. The “individualization of society” is the internalization of the society’s ideas, institutions and ways of behaving into individuals with diverse needs, interests, and qualities, which results in the formation of unique psychological structures of their personalities (12 Chinese Normal Universities, 2008, p. 12). In the case of individual students, we tend to equate “education” with the process of individual learning or development. This concept emphasizes the social context, stressing the significance of the contact among education and society, politics, economy and culture. Zhang (2017, p. 285) thought of ritual education as making use of ritual activities to exert influence on school culture, school management, activity curriculum and the competence of teachers and students purposefully. Regarding the term for the narrow concept of ritual education, “school ritual education”, according to the concrete expression related to school ritual in most Chinese scholarly papers, there is no strict boundary distinction in the concepts of “school ritual”, like “ritual activities”, “school rituals” and “educational rituals” which are similarly used in Chinese papers. Regardless of the concrete term chosen, according to the research content, in fact, most researchers still focus on rituals in the field of school education and the specific application of rituals in the field of schooling, exploring the contribution of rituals to the field of school from a pedagogical perspective.

In summary, we can conceptualize “ritual education” as an activity that takes place in the school domain and in which students participate in a collective form, to promote the process of individual socialization and social individuation of students. School ritual education is characterized by its strong purpose, sense of organization and obvious educational function, which is used as an educational resource to

accomplish students' education goals, especially the individual socialization process.

Theoretical Perspective

For this dissertation, I follow a historical anthropology paradigm of educational anthropology proposed by Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf. This historical anthropology paradigm, specifically a paradigm of historical and cultural anthropological research, does not point to a particular discipline but is an open field of study. The central idea of historical anthropology lies in the emphasis that only investigations grounded in different historical and cultural contexts make it possible to interpret other different historical and cultural phenomena (Wulf & Weigand, 2011, p. 29).

At the same time, historical and cultural anthropology is characterized by interdisciplinarity and interculturality and is particularly committed to developing research on cultures in a globalized world other than European cultures (Wulf, 2009, 2013). Therefore, under this specific historical and cultural context of Chinese education, I try to demonstrate that the principles, standards and theories of historical anthropology are also applicable to educational research and practice in a Chinese cultural context that is different from European culture. However, this needs to be achieved by establishing a link between anthropology and a specific historical and cultural context and be specifically localized to be able to examine rituals under Chinese history, culture and education. Therefore, this study will not only provide a Chinese example of educational practice for the historical anthropology paradigm, but also provide a cross-cultural perspective and research ideas for other countries to use historical anthropological theory in their own or transnational research.

Methodology

Like most anthropological studies, this study adopts an ethnographic approach to research and, more specifically, focuses on ethnography. Focused ethnography is more suitable for researchers who have prior practice in studying a familiar setting over time (Andreassen, 2020). In the fieldwork of focused ethnography, the researcher

only stays in the field for a short period to collect data, rather than performing continuous observation (Rashid, 2019). When making observations of ritual performance, I rely on the methodology of ritual research proposed by Christoph Wulf in his Berlin ritual studies, which mainly emphasizes the practical and performative nature of rituals (Wulf, 2001,2004,2007). On all three levels (Jörissen & Wulf, 2013), observation focuses on:

(1) scenic arrangements (arrangements of bodies and ritual objects in space, design of spaces, and temporal rhythms and sequences)

(2) postures, movements, and gestures of the actors

(3) symbolic aspects (e.g., body staging through clothing, jewelry, equipment, etc.)

(4) involved cultural and media artifacts (photographs, “gadgets” such as cell phones or gaming devices, material and media games or toys).

Based on my observations, I also conducted interviews toward describing the concrete process of preparing and organizing rituals. During my fieldwork in the school, the principals told me that they usually ask for advice from ritual experts about the organization. According to this detail, I ultimately focused on ritual experts, school administrators, teachers, and students through the semi-structured interview. Based on the data from observation and interview, I also collected official documents concerning rituals in school education, including national, city, and district levels.

Research question

Guided by the theories of historical anthropology, the core question of this research is the structure and symbolic meaning of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in primary schools. By combining the theoretical perspective of historical anthropology with the concepts derived from the interview data, I further approach the following sub-questions.

First, from a historical and cultural perspective, why has the Qingming Sacrificial

Ritual been performed in a special procedure in China? What are the historical origins and cultural foundations of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual? Answering these can help clarify the historical and cultural logic behind the characteristics of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in China.

Second, in terms of the social dimension, what processes do school administrators go through in organizing rituals? Under the cooperation of school headmasters, directors, ritual specialists and teachers, how do they organize each ritual according to requirements considering the different influence factors, for instance, national policy, funding system and school culture?

Third, in an educational policy and school practical dimension, how can this example be used as a typical case to reveal school rituals in China? What kinds of typical rituals exist in Chinese school education at the political level? What are the functions of each of these rituals in education policy? This will serve as a logical starting point and a key foundation for the understanding of Chinese school rituals and their relationship to other educational practices.

From a practical perspective, what do rituals look like in Chinese school practices? What difficulties do teachers face in the organization of rituals in their daily work and how do they resolve them? What kind of position do rituals located in Chinese school practice take? How do teachers deal with the difference and distance between educational reality and educational policy? From the perspective of students, what impression do rituals leave on students? Do teachers and students gain the same from the ritual? If not, what do they think separately?

Research value

In terms of research content, first, a model of Chinese school ritual practice is constructed through the rituals of a primary school in Beijing as a lens. At the same time, in the practice model, this research responds to Turner's argument that the preparation process of rituals and the ritual performance should be given equal importance. My research provides an in-depth description and analysis of the

preparation, organization, and rehearsal process of the ritual, revealing the key factors that influence the formation of each ritual, including policies, social systems, education systems, school culture and expert guidance, to provide a blueprint for theoretical researchers to move from a focus on the ritual performance, to a focus on the formation process of ritual performance. Second, very few studies are related to Chinese primary school education in international academic literature. As this paper focuses on rituals in Chinese primary schools, this also can provide international readers with some basic understanding of the current status of newly developed primary school education in China such as educational policies, educational goals, moral education policies and educational systems.

In terms of methodology, a policy logic analysis model of ritual research is proposed, developing a new analytical perspective for international ritual research. Based on interviews with headmasters and teachers, I also interviewed “ritual experts”, who are represented by “university teachers”. They are responsible for guiding different schools on the organization of rituals. In China, this kind of guidance is an important role and task for university teachers in addition to their teaching and research. Whereas, in Germany, university professors are free to conduct any kind of research that interests them. Therefore, the focus on the group of “ritual experts” points to a new type of interviewee for researchers, who want to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese rituals through fieldwork and provides a new direction for the comprehensiveness of gathering data.

Organization of the Dissertation

In the first chapter, Qingming Sacrificial Ritual as a Chinese sacrificial ritual is analyzed from the perspective of historical anthropology. The development and cultural foundation of the Chinese sacrificial ritual will be clarified including ancestor devotion as the ancient Chinese sacrificial culture and filial piety as the center of social ethics. From a historical perspective, the sacrificial ritual can be traced back to Ji Li (祭礼) from the Shang Dynasty (ca.1600 – 1046 B.C.E.). With the development of various dynasties until modern China, the Qingming festival has become a

combination of tomb-sweeping rituals and a sacrificial ritual centered on the commemoration of heroes and martyrs.

In the second chapter, the theory of Chinese sacrificial ritual is introduced in three parts: ritual and ritual function; memory theory and identity theory; and key concepts from the perspective of historical anthropology. First, the comprehensive development of ritual studies under anthropology is discussed and various classical representatives of ritual studies are introduced. School rituals emerged around the 1960s in academic discourse. The study of school rituals by educational researchers in different countries is classified according to topics especially focusing on ritual function. Second, considering sacrificial rituals, it is crucial to introduce the basis of memory theory and identity theory. Third, a framework for analyzing the educational function of rituals from the perspective of historical anthropology is presented.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter. Because of COVID-19, details of the data collection stage are described in a special context. According to my research background, I chose focused ethnography as the methodology. Following focused ethnography, participant observation and ethnographic interviews are used for data collection including the design, organization, performance and ending stage of the ritual. During the ritual performance, videography is used to capture the performative process of the ritual. For the interview, the ritual expert, the director of the school, two teachers, and four students partook in in-depth interviews. The interview data are analyzed by documentary method, especially relying on comparative sequential analysis and typification.

Chapter 4 is the description of the field. Rituals can only be understood against their historical and cultural context. Thus, the environment, culture, curriculum system and daily rhythm of the Chinese school researched are described for readers to shape a kind of imagination and impression.

The analysis of the ritual relies on the description. In Chapter 5, I describe the whole process of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual step by step. Ritual design, ritual

preparation, rehearsal, and the final ritual performance are shown. This chapter provides an interesting perspective on how Chinese schools organize rituals, that is, rituals are not only influenced by theory, but also by ritual experts and principals. After introducing the ritual preparation, a detailed ritual procedure of the performance is presented. Finally, I analyze and discuss the Qingming Sacrificial Rituals more clearly from the theoretical perspective of anthropology, especially the relationship between rituals and education.

In Chapter 6, I continue to discuss the educational logic of school rituals in China, that is, policy and practice. Based on Chapter 5, the political influence of ritual is gradually clarified. So, in Chapter 6, the role of ritual in the whole educational framework under the national policy is explained. Mostly, Chinese school rituals are limited in the education system by national policy. Besides the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, other forms of ritual in Chinese educational policy are also introduced simply. Although ritual is presented clearly in policy, it is a choice not a necessity in practice. Two cases of ritual practices are shown to demonstrate the distance and difference between ritual policy and theory (expert's view), school administration (director's view), and ritual practice (teachers' and students' views). Considering the theoretical perspective of implicit knowledge (tacit knowledge) by Michael Polanyi (Polanyi, 1992), there could be a further focus on implicit influence and its realization of ritual.

Chapter 7 shares a summary of the research, presenting the core of Chinese school ritual which is an important component of modern Chinese school policy and the education system. Besides, I also review the methodology of this research.

Chapter 1 Sacrificial rituals in China

This research focuses on the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, a kind of Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in a primary school in Beijing. In this chapter, three questions are clarified as follows. First, why do sacrificial rituals exist? What are their historical origins and cultural foundation? Second, what are the differences among sacrificial rituals throughout the development of ancient China? Third, what are the typical characteristics of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in modern China? What is the function of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual for the whole national system?

1.1 Ancestor worship: the spiritual world and cultural foundation

Sacrificial rituals, as central expressions of the Chinese culture of ancestor worship, have a history of over 2500 years and occupy an important position in the political and cultural history of China (Hu, 2012). In ancient China, sacrificial rituals were traditional rituals performed by the ancient people to pray to heaven, earth, gods and ancestors to eliminate disasters. The core of Chinese sacrificial rituals is mainly ancestor worship, which is a kind of public and ritualistic expression for ancestors.

1.1.1 Ancestor devotion as the beginning of ancient Chinese sacrificial culture

In all dynasties of ancient China, there are traditions of sacrifice. In the most primitive times, natural disasters occurred frequently such as severe cold and hot temperatures, landslides, floods, droughts and so on. The severe consequences of natural disasters made the ancestors fearful of them (Wang & Yu, 2014). However, in traditional agricultural societies, technology was not yet developed and people's level of knowledge was limited. The emperors and officials of the various dynasties could not explain these natural disasters reasonably and were not able to organize the people to

resist them. Faced with these “strange phenomena”, the ancestors believed that, there were many gods in the world besides human beings and that those untouchable spirits could be in charge of everything. To make life less catastrophic and more peaceful, the ancestors invented sacrifices (Wang & Yu, 2014). Sacrifice was initially a means of preventing disasters by people fearing nature and praying for good fortune (Hu, 2012). For rulers such as emperors and officials, praying to the gods for help not only catered to people’s perceptions at that time, but also shifted the responsibility of disaster relief to the gods, allowing emperors to escape certain responsibilities. So, sacrifices became a popular way for rulers to face natural disasters in all ages. With the development of society and the gradual improvement of people’s cognitive understanding of nature, the objective of sacrifice shifted from all the gods to the ancestors of people’s relatives and the connotation of sacrifices evolved to commemorating and worshipping the ancestors’ great achievements.

1.1.2 Ancestor devotion cultural basis: filial piety as social ethics

In each dynasty, although the objectives and methods of ancestor worship have changed, the core culture has remained the same: the social ethic is centered on “filial piety” (Seiwert, 2016). “Filial piety” is an important concept to understand many Chinese rituals, termed Xiao (孝) in Chinese. It is also the most significant concept in understanding Chinese ancient ethics, politics, religion, and culture which is also the characteristic of Confucian morality (Radice, 2017). What does “filial piety” mean in Chinese culture?

“Xiao is a central concept in Confucian moral philosophy and has a special position within it. There are roughly three senses to Xiao. First, supporting and respecting one’s parents. Second, inheriting and continuing the work left by one’s parents or completing the unfulfilled the undertakings of one’s forebears. Third, to ritually remember the ancestors, that is to perform rituals for one’s deceased forebears”. (Wang et al., 2020, p. 151)

We can try to understand the Chinese character for “filial piety”, which is written

as “Xiao”. It is a simplified Chinese character that has evolved through different periods (Figure 2.1).¹ In ancient times, the original character for “Xiao (孝)” appears to be a hunchbacked elder man facing the left, with a child in front of him, supporting and accompanying the elder man. In *Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters* (Shuo Wen Jie Zi), “Xiao (孝)” was recorded as “those who serve their parents well, respecting and obeying their parents and being devoted to them with your heart”² (Duan, 2010, p. 398).

Nowadays, the character “Xiao (孝)” has two parts, the upper part of which is “老” and the lower part of which is “子”, representing the “elder generation” and “younger generation” respectively. This is also the core connotation of the character “Xiao (孝)”, that is, “the inheritance between these two generations”. This kind of inheritance includes not only the reproduction of human life but also the transmission of ethics, history, experience and traditional culture.



(Figure 1.1)³

There are two important elements in the ethical system of filial piety, one of which is the daily act of filial piety. In Mencius, it is said that “the greatest thing that a filial son can do is to honor his parents.”⁴ In “the Analects”, Confucius clarified the relationship between filial piety and sacrificial rituals, as explained in the original text “when you are born, you will be treated with rituals; when you die, you will be buried and sacrificed with rituals.” The meaning of this sentence is, “when parents are alive,

¹ http://www.bdzzz.com/bd/ziyuan/9/UFdJQkM-.html?ivk_sa=1024320u

² Translation of 善事父母者，从老省，从子，子承老也.

³ <https://doc.wendoc.com/b69bfce3e564721772fe0a506-3.html>

⁴ Translation of “孝子之至，莫大乎尊亲”

serve them according to rites; when parents die, bury and sacrifice them according to rituals.” Under Confucian ethics, the Chinese pay special attention to family, especially to the ties between people, including parents, their relatives, and the country.

“It is the family and not the individual that is the basic unit of humanity in China and it has been that way since the beginning. The doctrine of filial piety is fundamental and essential to Chinese ethical and social life” (William, 2010. p. 59).

The emphasis on familism is the oldest religious concept in China, as well as a key feature of Chinese culture.

From the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046-771 B.C.E.) to the Spring and Autumn Period (ca. 770- 476 B.C.E.), ancient Chinese society was a clan society, in which family relations were the core and constitution. A central feature of this kind of society is the ethical relationship, where it was not the law that played the dominant principle but rather the emotional connection. These cultural characteristics formed a kind of ethical culture that valued filial piety evolved through the dynasties, which was mainly reflected in the rich and extensive ancestor worship activities in the Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046-771 B.C.E.; Chen, 2018, p. 26 – 28). With this institutional background and cultural roots, ancestor worship does not only encompass a memory of ancestors, but also a link between ancestors and the present generation. Filial piety connects the past and modernity of a family, emphasizing a kind of unity and organized order of the whole society based on family organization. This ethical idea of filial piety influences each family and even the rule and construction of the state by the governors.

“The fundamental purpose of ancestor rituals was the incorporation and continuation of the family and its extension to kin and to state society; it was a strategy for the continuation of Chinese culture (William, 2010, p. 84)”

For the state, administrators who want to rule well must also consider filial piety as an important value. The manifestation of this value is through the ritual of ancestor worship.

If daily filial piety is a discipline for individual behavior, then ancestral rituals are a system to regulate the ritual behavior of the whole society. These two points were most systematically implemented in the Han Dynasty (ca. 206 B.C.E.–220 A.D.). Han emperors and officials not only made filial piety the foundation of their ethical thinking but also emphasized the need to “rule the world with filial piety.” Nowadays, this is only reflected in the rituals of traditional festivals, such as the tomb-sweeping at the Qingming Festival and the moon sacrifice at the Mid-Autumn Festival. The festival traditions of the Qingming Festival are described in further detail below.

1.2 The history of sacrificial rituals in ancient China

Above, I introduced some of the cultural traditions behind sacrificial rituals. As an important part of traditional Chinese sacrificial culture, rituals are still highly valued in modern times, both at the official government level and at the private level, in anticipation of keeping this Chinese culture alive.

Various events reflect sacrificial culture, for example, the tomb-sweeping ritual and the national memorial ceremony. Both of these rituals are held at different times throughout the whole year. In the Qingming Festival, these two kinds of rituals occur at the same time, called the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual. The modern Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is the inheritance and integration of the above two ancient rituals. Next, I introduce the historical development of the sacrificial rituals and focus on the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual.

1.2.1 Sacrificial ritual recorded in ancient works: Ji Li

In ancient China, Ji Li (祭礼) was highly valued as an important national event. The earliest records in ancient works about sacrifice can be traced back to the oracle bone script in the Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 B.C.E.; Coe & Begley, 2016). These are the earliest written Chinese characters we have found so far. Since these characters were first found carved on the surface of bones or tortoise shells, this kind of language was called oracle bone script (Holzman, 1998. p. 186). This also indicates that,

sacrifice was one of the significant ancestors of civilizations in ancient China. However, at that time, people had not yet developed the concept of “sacrifice”. According to the archaeological excavations of written language and relics, we can deduce that, there were already sacrificial behaviors and these were mostly out of fear of nature and to pray for good fortune.

In the Shang (ca. 1600–1046 B.C.E.) and Zhou dynasties (ca. 1046–256 B.C.E.), especially from the late Shang dynasty, the content of sacrificial rituals was gradually institutionalized and their religious nature gradually weakened. However, at that time, rituals still belonged to the nobility. In the Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046–256 B.C.E.), the rituals were given more extensive attention. The annual ritual of ancestor worship at the end of agricultural activities was recorded in *The Book of Songs* (诗经). In addition to agricultural activities, different social events such as political activities, military activities, and marriages also warranted holding sacrificial rituals. Compared with the Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600-1046 B.C.E.), the sacrificial ritual in the Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046-256 B.C.E.) contained more realistic concerns and rational thoughts (Liu, 2002).

By the Song Dynasty (960–1279 A.D.), Zhu Xi’s *Jia Li* (家礼), recording rituals in the family, profoundly changed the historical trajectory of the cultural development of Chinese ancestor worship and truly opened a new era of the secularized transformation of rituals (Yao, 2018). Zhu Xi developed a basic model of family sacrificial rituals in five aspects: time, place, people, objects, and ritual order. In the following, I briefly introduce this ritual model. Regarding time, the ancestor worship ritual is held yearly. Depending on the sacrificial objectives, various specific rituals will be held in different months and seasons throughout the year. Considering the location, ancestral halls and cemeteries are often used. The construction of a special ancestral hall dedicated to ancestor worship is a theory proposed by Zhu Xi. Those participating in the sacrificial ritual written in *Jia Li* (家礼) should be two groups: ancestors who have become “gods” and people in the real world. Here, I give a brief example of an ancient sacrificial ritual performed in the family, named “Jia Ji li” (家

祭礼), which consists of seven main steps. The formal ritual procedures consist of fourteen main parts:

(1) Preparation before the ritual

Before the ritual performance begins, preliminary preparations should be made. First, the specific date for the ritual is determined through divination. Second, a set period of fasting should be done, usually three days. All of the participants are required to have a bath and change their clothes and they are not allowed to drink alcohol or eat meat. Third, the location should be set up and the sacrificial utensils and offerings for the ancestors prepared one day before. After all the items are ready, the eldest son has to check if the sacrifices have been prepared correctly. His wife and others are responsible for cleaning the utensils and setting them aside. Before the ritual, it is important to make sure that the offerings are clean and not contaminated. Fourth, all items should be prepared again and the offerings should be arranged neatly. Once the arrangement is done, the eldest son and his wife go to the ancestral hall and invite the ancestors. The others stand in order and the eldest son starts to burn incense.

(2) Formal ritual performance

First, everyone performs the rituals of worshipping the gods. Then, the eldest son burns incense and offers wine to welcome the gods. When the ancestral spirits arrive, people offer sumptuous offerings to the ancestors.

Second, three separate offerings are given. During the first offering, the eldest son offers wine to the ancestors and a person specializing in reading the blessing words (祝文) for the ancestors. Next, his wife starts to offer meat to the ancestors without reading the words. Finally, every participant can offer sacrificial offerings.

Third, after offering all the sacrifices to the ancestors, it is expected that the ancestors will enjoy the food. This is known as the persuasion of food. Then, everyone should stand in position after worshipping twice.

Fourth, there is the closing and opening of the door. After the persuasion of food,

the eldest son and his wife will tell the ancestors to enjoy the offerings alone, while everyone else has to wait outside the door. When this is over, everyone can enter again and offer tea to the ancestors.

Fifth, the eldest son will receive the blessing from the ancestors.

Sixth, the sacrificial ritual comes to an end and everyone exchanges farewells with the ancestors.

Seventh, the family members drink wine and eat meat, sharing the ancestral blessing.

1.2.2 Qingming Sacrificial Rituals centered on intergenerational life transitions

The Qingming Festival, a traditional Chinese festival, is one of the four traditional Chinese festivals, along with the Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. The Qingming Festival usually falls around April 5th (or 4th) of the Gregorian calendar. It is called the “Qingming Festival” because the beginning of April is early spring, with clear and sunny weather (Xu et al., 2018). Some Chinese scholars believe that, the beginning of April is the moment when the cold, harsh winter has just ended and spring gradually arrives. At this time, under the warm spring breeze, the air is fresh and heaven and earth are clear, so “Qingming” gets its name (Xiao, 2016).

In ancient China, agriculture was the main work for most Chinese. During Qingming, all things were flourishing and it was the time of the year when agriculture was starting. Farmers would choose sacrificial rituals to pray for good weather and rain to have a bumper harvest. Therefore, it gradually became a tradition to offer sacrifices during the Qingming Festival. After the Tang and Song dynasties, the Qingming Festival was not only a ceremonial moment to convey the change of the seasons, but also truly became a traditional Chinese folk festival that has been passed down through generations for thousands of years. Nowadays, there are many folkloric activities and a large number of rituals centered on sacrifice during the Qingming

festival. Below, I introduce the tomb-sweeping ceremony.

As I mentioned in the first section, the Chinese have attached great importance to sacrificial rituals from generation to generation. Within the atmosphere of revival symbolized by the change of seasons, Qingming Festival is more related to life than other traditional festivals. Thus, ancestor worship becomes the most significant sacrificial ritual in ancient China.

In the pre-Qin period (Paleolithic Period – 221 B.C.E.), a custom of tomb sweeping existed. During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (ca. 770 – 221 B.C.E.), tomb-sweeping gradually became popular. In the Han Dynasty (ca. 202 B.C.E. – 220 A.D.), people’s concept and awareness of ancestor worship gradually increased, and more attention was paid to the graves that held the souls of ancestors. At this time, this festival spread among the public, further extending the rituals from the upper class to the general public. During the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 A.D.), the tomb-sweeping ritual had already formed a fixed custom. When Emperor Xuanzong Tang of the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 A.D.) found that all officials were sweeping the tomb during the Qingming Festival, he commanded that, the custom of tomb sweeping be fixed in decree form so it could exist in future generations.

In an old Chinese book, *Jiu Tang Shu · Xuan Zong Ji*,¹ tomb-sweeping was mentioned as “it was appropriate for all the officials and ordinary people to visit the tombs, which could be codified in the ‘Five Li,’ forming a permanent ritual.” In the Song Dynasty (ca 960 – 1279 A.D.), Zimu Wu’s written book *Meng Liang Lu* 《梦梁录》 recorded that during the Qingming Festival, “all officials and ordinary people would go out to the suburbs and visit the tombs” (Meng, 2017). The tomb-sweeping ritual in the Qingming festival had two parts, on the one hand, repairing the grave which included replacing new soil and removing weeds and on the other hand worshipping ancestors, essential activities of the Qingming Tomb-sweeping ritual.

¹ 《旧唐书·玄宗纪》

Until now, Chinese people still worship their ancestors to express their filial piety and nostalgic sense in every Qingming Festival, New Year's Eve and other special festivals. Whether it is a family-based tomb-sweeping ritual or a national public ceremony (the next session), tomb sweeping is the core. On the other hand, various offerings are made. In ancient times, tomb-sweeping rituals were usually personal and family-oriented. People would bring different offerings, such as food, flowers, firecrackers and so on. As time went on, the Qingming Festival in modern society has gradually become a public activity. Here, the emergence of environmental problems forced the ancient festival customs to transform into new ritual expressions that are more environmentally friendly and in line with the characteristics of the new era.

From the perspective of Chinese cultural philosophy, the Chinese believe that the deceased ancestors and the people alive are still in the same society that existed in different spaces. They can still cross the boundary between life and death through the ritual time created by religious rituals, to obtain mutual feeling, dialogue, and communication, integrating the past life and the present into a larger life continuum. In short ritual time, the deceased could also feel this kind of calling (Zhang, 2014).

From the perspective of Van Gennep's "rite of passage", the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is a transitional ritual of intergenerational life. According to religious anthropology, important transition rituals are generally associated with the cyclical changes of species which show the transition of life. The Qingming Festival happens at the transitional moment from winter to spring and the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual at this time is a ritual centered on the transition of intergenerational life. On the one hand, through the Qingming tomb-sweeping ritual, people express their gratitude to their ancestors for giving them life through the ritual. At the same time, people also create a dialogue with their ancestors, reflecting on the situation of their own lives and pray that their children will cherish their own lives. While mourning the deceased, people also pray for a safe and healthy new year, practicing the concept of passing on life from generation to generation.

1.2.3 Qingming Sacrificial Rituals centered on the commemoration of heroes and martyrs

In traditional Chinese Confucian culture, family and country are closely related. There is a famous saying in China, “the family is the smallest country and the country is the largest family,”¹ which is a crucial idea in people’s hearts. In modern times, during the Qingming Festival, in addition to worshipping their own families, the state also leads the public to memorialize heroes and martyrs in the Public Memorial Ceremony. It is a form of sacrifice held by the government or a public organization to express respect and mourning for national heroes in public. This can be seen as a ritualized manifestation of traditional ancestor worship at the national level.

In ancient China, before the concept of “country” was formed, such government-oriented public ceremonies already existed. In ancient times, there were three main types: “the sacrifice for the king”, “the sacrifice for the imperial court and temple” and “the sacrifice for the family ancestors” which were carried out at three different levels: national, local and family which is different from the modern national public memorial ceremony (Wang, 2020). From the Zhou dynasty onwards, mountain and river worship were gradually normalized and institutionalized, forming a religious activity closely integrated with the state system (Wang, 2020), finally, a governmental worship ritual appeared.

In contrast to the people in the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 B.C.E.) who attempted to control the nation by divination and mysticism, the people in the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046–256 B.C.E.) seemed to know how to use characteristics, documents and worship rituals to shape national history and cultural memory. In the Spring and Autumn Period (ca. 770–221 B.C.E.), a systematic system of national sacrifices was initially formed, as written in *Guo Yu-Lu Yu Shang*,

¹ Translation of “家是最小国，国是千万家”范仲淹《渔家傲·秋思》

“the sacrifice was the great institution of the country and the institution was the basis for the success of governing the country, so the rules and regulations of the rituals about the sacrifice should be carefully established.”¹

All future dynasties carefully developed their sacrificial systems and recorded them in the *Li Zhi*. The formal formation of the public sacrifice system from the local government to the imperial court was first seen in the Tang Dynasty (618–907 A.D.).

After the 20th century, this kind of ritual held by the government also underwent a major transformation. The modern Public Memorial Ceremony emerged in the early 20th century under the influence of nationalism, which combined western commemorative ceremonies with traditional Chinese sacrificial rituals. In the late Qing Dynasty, Liang Qichao (a Chinese Politician) advocated using public ceremonies to strengthen national consciousness and cultivate patriotic sentiments. In 1912, the provisional government of the Republic of China (ROC) held the founding ceremony in Nanjing, memorializing the Ming Xiaoling Mausoleum led by Provisional President Sun Yat-sen. He also took 15 delegates to the Mausoleum of the Yellow Emperor for the memorial ceremony and honored the spirits of the martyrs who had died fighting the Qing Dynasty. This represents the start of the modern Public Memorial Ceremony. Compared to the public rituals of different dynasties in ancient times, this ritual was very different in ways such as ritual form, connotation and function.

After the 1930s, when Japan invaded Chinese territory, the Nanjing government used the spirit of nationalism to unify people’s minds and unite the national forces, starting a new stage of Public Memorial Ceremonies. During the Qingming Festivals in 1948 and 1949, the government held a new form of ritual at the Mausoleum of the Yellow Emperor, beginning the tradition of holding Public Memorial Ceremonies for the ancestors of the nation and the Communist Party.

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Public Memorial

¹Translation of 《国语·鲁语上》中有言：“夫祀，国之大节也；而节，政之所成也。故慎制祀以为国典。”

Ceremony has been appearing in public discourse and the connotations have gradually concentrated and clarified, which can be roughly divided into three different series, namely the ancestor sacrifice series, the cultural sacrifice series, and the national hero sacrifice series (Yao, 2018). Among the ancestor sacrifice series, the highest one memorializes Yellow Emperor Xuan Yuan. He is the humanistic ancestor of Chinese civilization, so the Chinese usually call themselves “the children of the Yellow Emperor.” The ritual of memorializing the Yellow Emperor has become one of the most important rituals in the world today. Among the cultural sacrifice series, the most typical one is the memorial ritual in Qufu, Shandong Province, which is in honor of Confucius (Cui, 2020).

Confucius’s worship is a tradition in Chinese culture which has maintained the highest status throughout the dynasties, culminating in the Qing Dynasty (ca. 1636–1912 A.D.), especially in the late Qing Dynasty. In the series of national hero sacrifices, commemorating martyrs who died in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation was held to the highest standard. In modern society, various local governments all over China actively organize various kinds of memorial rituals.

With gradual development, local sacrificial rituals with religious meaning gradually evolved into folkloric activities held regularly, while memorial rituals for martyrs became national-level rituals. Chinese scholar Wang Xiaobing summarized three characteristics of modern public sacrifices. First, modern public memorial rituals no longer emphasize the cumbersome ritual system but rather adopt a combination of Chinese and western ritual performances. Many aspects of the rituals have been combined with typical elements of western rituals. Some memorial rituals are incorporated into the memorial rituals that come from the west, which have been localized and transformed. At the same time, their connotations are more linked to modern nationalism. Second, they do not highlight Confucian ethics and the traditional idea of loyalty to the king, but rather highlight the revolutionary dedication of the martyrs to national unity and social progress. Finally, the ritual dates are mostly

incorporated into the national holiday system by the government (Wang, 2020). In July 2013, the Opinions on Further Strengthening Martyrs' Commemoration was issued, which requires that martyrs' commemorative activities be held every year on festivals and important commemorative days such as the Qingming Festival, National Day and so on. In 2014, public sacrificial rituals officially incorporated China's national legal system. With the promulgation of the Measures for Public Sacrifice for Martyrs, the expression of "national public sacrifice" was officially announced and established in national law. At the same time, the places and procedures of rituals have been further regulated and emphasized.

Article 1: "This Law is developed in accordance with the Constitution for purposes of strengthening the protection of heroes and martyrs, safeguarding the public interest, upholding and passing on the spirit of heroes and martyrs and the spirit of patriotism, fostering and practicing the core values of socialism and unleashing the strong spiritual power to realize the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

Article 2: Martyrs and heroes are "[...] those who sacrificed their lives bravely and devoted all their lives to fighting for national independence and people's liberation, realizing national prosperity and the well-being of the people, and promoting world peace and human progress."

Article 6: "On the occasion of the Qingming Festival and other important memorial days, state organs, social groups, villages, communities, schools, enterprises and public institutions and entities affiliated to the armed forces shall organize and conduct commemoration activities for heroes and martyrs according to actual circumstances."

Graph 1.1 Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Heroes and Martyrs¹

Chapter Summary:

In this chapter, I provided the readers with an outline of a Chinese ritual: the sacrificial ritual. First, this chapter attempts to explain to international readers the roots of the development of the Chinese Qingming Sacrificial Ritual through the lens of ancient Chinese ritual culture and the ethical core of Chinese people. In ancient societies, most Chinese rituals emphasized the worship of gods and spirits. However,

¹ Adopted at the 2nd Session of the Standing Committee of the Thirteenth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China on April 27, 2018

with the evolution of time and the advancement of human cognition, the connotations of rituals shifted to emphasize the commemoration of relatives and ancestors, adhering to the filial-centered ethics of Confucian ethical thought. In this study, I am concerned with a typical Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in schools. This ritual, which is centered on commemorating martyrs, has developed for thousands of years and has not only been in existence since the founding of the PRC. Nowadays, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is not only a tradition but is also written into the law. Thus, conducting the ritual correctly is not merely an educational practice in schools but extends to the entire society, including legal and public moral levels.

Chapter 2 Qingming Sacrificial Ritual as ritual education

Since ritual is a focus of interdisciplinarity, it is inevitable that when we discuss a particular ritual, different academic fields should be involved simultaneously. Therefore, first, it is crucial to provide a major introduction to the different fields of ritual research. Second, the discussion of rituals in the educational field is presented. How exactly can the relationship between ritual and education be understood from a global perspective? How can ritual be seen as an educational activity from a pedagogical perspective? This paper argues that ritual is largely an educational practice for ritual participants. In the case of memorial rituals, this educational practice is mainly at the level of memory and identity. The whole process of performing a memorial ritual is one in which students strengthen their social memory and shape their identity. In this process, the body plays an important role. Finally, the key concepts of body, mimesis and symbols, which mediate the relationship between ritual and education, will be further explained in depth. This paper argues that, within the theoretical perspective of historical anthropology, mimesis should be of interest to educators as the main carrier that allows for the transmission and reconstruction of memory. The process of education through ritual can also be understood as a process of learning through mimesis.

2.1 Ritual and ritual function

2.1.1 The development of ritual studies under anthropology

At the beginning of anthropology, ritual was one of the most fundamental research topics. The discipline of anthropology is closely related to evolutionary theory, which is generally considered to put anthropology into the historical stage, especially with Lewis Spencer, Edward B. Taylor and Lewis H. Morgan as the anthropologists who directly influenced the later theoretical development of anthropology.

Anthropologists who focus on classical evolutionary theory, first began the study of ritual, resulting in the study of myth-ritual, founded by William Robertson Smith.

In Smith's view, in the first stage of the development of religion, ritual existed alone. In the second stage, myth arose and was used to explain ritual. In the third stage, myth is separated from ritual and becomes philosophy, politics, or poetry, and ceases to be a simple and pure part of religion. It was not until the fifth and final stage, the modern stage, that there was no longer any mythology but rather a doctrine that began to guide religion and was more important than ritual. Through his study of human life and its cultural patterns in primitive societies, Edward B. Taylor, known as the "father of anthropology" pointed out that ritual was an important way of presenting or worshipping the spirits and formed the main body of the religious system together with doctrine (Taylor, 2010). Levi-Strauss also argued that it is precisely myth and ritual that drive the existence and development of human culture (Levi-Strauss, 1974).

Strictly speaking, the systematic study of rituals began with van Gennep. In his book *The rites of Passage* (Van Gennep, 1960), he listed different rituals such as birth rituals, marriage rituals and funeral rituals, thus forming a classic concept of "rite of passage" for the study of rituals. Anthropologists such as Douglas and Turner's research about ritual, symbols and their related social categorization and cultural order were influenced by this model (Van Gennep, 1960). The key to understanding rites of passage lies in the analysis of ritual processes. For van Gennep both individuals and groups experience, there exist transitions from one situation to another in space, time and social status throughout their lifetimes and in the development of their existence. van Gennep termed this kind of transition "rite of passage", which is divided into three stages, first, acts of separation (*séparation*); second, acts of transition (*marge*); third, acts of incorporation (*aggrégation*). The first stage marks the separation from the previous stage and the second stage marks the entry into a special space. The stage of aggregation marks the entry into a new social paradigm in which new social relations are formed, integrated and strengthened. So far, the rite of passage has been regarded as the classical model in ritual studies, which can distinguish different stages of rituals in the process of rituals to interpret and analyze the ritual behaviors, ritual symbols and their meanings in different stages.

As a new model of ritual behavior analysis, the “rite of passage” is not only applicable to life transition rituals, but also includes rituals, such as festival rituals, initiation rituals, graduation ceremonies and other rituals with obvious temporal and spatial separation and identity and cultural custom transformation before and after the rituals.

In ritual studies, especially the study of ritual function, Durkheim is considered a pioneer. He developed ritual theory after Smith. Durkheim believed that, ritual was the basis of religion and that religion was composed of ritual and belief (Durkheim, 1947, p. 45). Durkheim used ritual as the basis of religion and drew the dividing line between the sacred and the secular. The sacred, as a representation of social collectivity, is isolated from individual secular social life and its effectiveness is realized through periodic collective rituals. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim discussed the function of ritual in the context of society as a whole. The most barbaric and eccentric rituals, according to Durkheim, embody human needs. Further, the process of participating in ritual is useful to unify society, reinforcing a sense of individual belonging while also helping to maintain order (Durkheim, 1947, p. 3). Throughout the process of ritual, the ritual must inspire, maintain or reshape some power (Durkheim, 1947, p. 11). Eventually, the individual power is strengthened into a kind of collective power and social order is reshaped and strengthened (Wang, 2008, p. 116).

For Durkheim, society is external collectivism, formed by the gathering of each individual. The excitement and feelings that these individuals generate through their physical contact with each other can produce a common collective consciousness (effervescence). This collective consciousness is a common belief of the particular collective. Each individual in the group not only pledges their allegiance to this common belief, but also follows the various rituals associated with this belief. Through the process of ritual performance, this collective consciousness can further transfer the collective experience to the individual experience, so that all those present share common beliefs. During rituals, people’s thoughts can focus on common beliefs,

including the common memory of their great ancestors ,and at this time, they consider themselves to be the concrete embodiment of the ideal, and their souls are reawakened and rekindled to participate in the collective (Durkheim 1947, p. 477). Throughout this process, the members of the collective feel their common belief with each other and are further united by this common belief (Durkheim, 1947, p. 54). Additionally, Durkheim points out that, the rituals are not a single ritual, but a group of rituals, a system of various rituals, festivals and celebrations that recur periodically. This is because every once in a while, people feel the necessity to strengthen and reaffirm the connection between themselves and the sacred objects on which they depend. Each believer makes sure that, rituals can generate the spiritual power they need to be reborn (Durkheim, 1947, p. 476). Therefore, for Durkheim, rituals can be considered a significant tool for the positive purpose of uniting society and bringing different individuals together into a collective. Using ritual function as a research lens has exerted an important impact on the research of ritual function in different fields, as well as providing a new framework for analysis such as collectivism.

After Durkheim proposed a new perspective on the study of ritual function, the analysis of ritual processes and ritual structure became a new exploration point for ritual research. By introducing different concepts into the consideration of ritual process and ritual structure, the analysis of ritual function may be expanded, and ritual process and ritual behavior may be interpreted more effectively. Here, it is necessary to mention the anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner is a representative figure of symbolic anthropology. Turner's theory related to symbols and rituals in *The Forest of Symbols* introduced symbols into the framework of analysis and interpretation of ritual processes, which has since changed the way people think about analyzing rituals at the methodological level and made a remarkable contribution to the comprehensive understanding of the critical role of rituals in human thought and behavior. In Turner's study, the role of ritual can be realized through symbolic ritual performances which are thought to possess the power to make visible, audible, and palpable those beliefs, ideas, emotions, and spirituality that cannot be directly felt (Turner, 1967, p.

48). Rituals can build a relationship with people through symbols by eliciting emotions and expressing and mobilizing desires that move people toward something better or change their desired direction (Turner, 1967, p. 53). Thus, Turner reveals the significance of not only observing rituals through fieldwork, but also paying particular attention to new modes of interpretation of the symbols in rituals. Many anthropologists have recognized the connection between ritual and symbol. Durkheim pointed out that, one should learn to see the real meaning through the symbol. Turner also emphasized the necessity for an interactive connection between the ritual process and the culture as a whole, which means one should also pay attention to the connotation of symbols beyond rituals. Thus, symbols become an essential tool for decoding rituals as well as the social and cultural context behind the symbols. Another anthropologist who also explores the analysis of symbols in rituals was Geertz. Geertz laid down the basic model for the study of culture, stating that the only way to effectively understand all types of symbolic behavior is to go as deep into the theoretical analysis of symbolic behavior as well as the social and psychological activity (Geertz, 2017. p. 125). Finally, in Turner's theory of ritual, two original concepts, social drama and *communitas*, make Turner's theoretical contributions significant.

2.1.2 Ritual and school ritual in the educational field

Ritual study is a lively international interdisciplinary academic field that originated from anthropological field research and has been of high interest to educational researchers in recent years. School rituals emerged around the 1960s in the academic discourse. After decades of development, the study of school rituals began to receive the attention of educational researchers in different countries.

In terms of types of rituals, explicit rituals have received much attention. These can also be called macro-rituals, including initiation rituals (Zhang, 2010), circle rituals (Chen, 2016, 2020), entrance rituals (Kellermann, 2008), opening and closing rituals in class (Hansen, 1989; Wagner- Willi, 2005), parent involvement as rituals

(Bushnell, 1997; Doucet, 2011) and teaching rituals (McLaren, 1999; Wuttke, 2010). Some studies focus their perspectives on informal micro-rituals, such as interactive rituals (Goffman, 1967; Collins, 2004; Quantz, 1999, 2011; Kofoed, 2008).

Ritual is an interdisciplinary subject and definitions of ritual vary and are broad. Even though understandings of ritual vary from country to country, when the ritual is restricted to the school context, discussions can be relatively focused. Much educational research regarding school rituals has primarily focused on function and value dimensions, exploring value transmission through ritual and children's development. In this context, a common concern is what value rituals in schools have. What does ritual bring to the school, teachers and the development of students? To answer these questions, extensive empirical research has been conducted.

Research has revealed that ritual is part of school culture and school culture and values can be created, reinforced and consolidated through ritual. Thus, ritual is considered a window and important mechanism for presenting, transmitting, spreading and uniting school culture (Thapan, 2012; Deal & Peterson, 1998, 2016; Mehmet et al., 2017). Bernstein et al. (1966) argue that ritual is the main mechanism for the transmission of expressive culture in schools through an analysis of consensual and differentiating rituals in British public schools. In Bernstein's view, for schools, consensual rituals serve the function of integrating school values, building school communities and "facilitating the transmission, reception and internalization of the values of the expressive culture." Henry (1992) suggests that school rituals are an effective way of sustaining school culture and symbolically displaying and expressing school culture. He also considers that ritual plays an essential role in building, sustaining and uniting school communities. Young (1999) affirms the essential function of rituals in transmitting values and highlights the necessity to clarify and identify the value of rituals themselves, that is, the function of rituals and the values they are expected to transmit.

Current research also focuses on the function of rituals, clarifying the positive educational value of rituals in the socialization process of students. Researchers

particularly consider analyzing the mechanisms, around which this educational value is realized and then have explored different perspectives on how this value can be better realized through well-designed rituals. Recent studies show an increased interest in the educational function of ritual, which is mostly seen as an effective bridge to improve engagement, socialization of students and social interaction between teachers and students. Concerning the socialization function of rituals, Jennings (1982) approaches the concept of ritual knowledge. According to Jennings, ritual has the function of transmitting knowledge which is called “the pedagogical model of ritual knowledge”, under which the “knowledge gained through ritual action itself is transmitted” (Jennings, 1982). More specifically, by focusing on the opening and closing ceremonies in two private secondary schools, Kapferer (1981) posits that the ideas and actions of students that need to be developed in the process of socialization can indeed be realized and achieved in rituals.

Addressing the specific dimensions of this socialization function, by conducting grounded theory research, Henry (1992) concludes that students can be socialized and embrace the values of society in rituals on three dimensions, mainly including the perception of the world, relationship with others, and perception of the individual or self. Rituals can also help students with transitions. Besides, McCadden (1997) found that teachers will choose to use rituals to help children with role transitions, transitions and reinforcement via a participant observation study about teaching rituals in a public kindergarten in the USA. By presenting a case study from a school, Scully (2008) highlighted the significance of rituals for young children to build a sense of belonging, helping young children to make a smooth transition from home to school. For example, teachers in kindergarten would use rituals to help children understand the separation from their parents and by presenting class mascots as symbols to help children develop a sense of belonging. According to Warnick’s (2011) analysis of R. S. Peters’ ritual theory, rituals can also help teachers develop students’ value identification by creating a special atmosphere.

Since rituals can help students gain knowledge in different dimensions, is it

possible to design rituals according to a variety of educational goals? How should they be designed? Nikkanen et al. (2017) analyze musical performance as a ritual from an anthropological perspective, suggesting that regardless of the specific educational values in different national contexts, educational values should be allowed to guide the development of rituals as a goal to be achieved in schools so that they can fulfill their specific function as a critical educational mechanism. Mullis (1996) designs a ritual for schools, revealing that a well-designed ritual is an efficient media that can serve as a “powerful means of building a shared worldview between adults and children in schools” to help children understand school values and develop a worldview. Maloney (1997, 2000) focuses on teaching rituals used by teachers in kindergarten. Maloney points out that for teachers, well-designed rituals with symbolic meaning in the classroom not only meet certain specific intentions of the teacher but also help teachers to better organize their teaching.

Since a well-designed ritual can help teachers carry out their daily work in an orderly and efficient manner and can also enhance students’ sense of belonging to the school, their values, and cultural identity, how should teachers design rituals? Mullis (1996) stresses the importance of the structure and symbolism of the ritual, noting that the preparation and end of the ritual should receive the same attention as the actual performance of the ritual. Participants need to understand and believe in the symbolism of the ritual to ensure its effectiveness. Young (1999) illustrates that, rituals need to be designed in terms of ritual symbols, ritual space and the complete ritual structure. For example, the symbols should be sufficient and must include some complex emotional and spiritual symbols. Profound meaning should be conveyed at the point of deepest engagement, not at the beginning. Further, when the end of the ceremony arrives, time should allow for personal reflection. Maloney (2000) offers a new outlook on teachers’ ritual competence and ritual literacy, arguing that teacher educators should include ritual theory and practice in their teacher education.

2.2 Qingming Sacrificial Ritual as a way to strengthen collective memory and unite national identity

2.2.1 Memory theory

Memory is a mental activity. The academic study of memory began in the field of psychology. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the study of memory moved from psychology to other disciplines and, quickly, became a topic of study in anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines (Su, 2020). The study of “historical memory” in western countries began in the early 20th century.

The first to propose a theory of memory was the French social psychologist Maurice Halbwachs. He put forward the concept of “collective memory” into the field of social psychology based on concepts of “collective consciousness” and “collective effervescence” related to Durkheim (Cheng, 2020). In his book *Social framework of memory* (Halbwachs, 1975), he defined collective memory as the process and result of past events shared by members of a particular social group. It is not merely a review and description of the past but a reconstruction, transmission, and maintenance of social emotions and psychology in the present, through rituals and other forms. For Halbwachs, the memory of the past can only be preserved in people’s minds through commemorative rituals and celebrations that reproduce the collective memory through the participants’ re-enactment of the past. In his eyes, there is no such thing as purely individual memory. Memory itself is a collective social action that needs to be acquired in social interaction. Halbwachs argues that, it is the interaction of individuals, groups and even human beings as a whole that realizes the “collective memory” of past experiences (as cited in Liu, 2021). Many of our social activities are designed to strengthen our collective memory with other members of a particular social group, thus awakening memories of the past and perpetuating collective cohesion (Halbwachs, 1992).

If Maurice Halbwachs was the originator of the theory of collective memory, it was German professors Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann who made a breakthrough

in memory theory, inheriting the social and cultural orientation of collective memory and clarifying the various concepts of memory and their interrelationships (Shi, 2016). They propose the theory of “cultural memory”, developed in their representative work *“Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen”* (Assmann, 2018). Here, they elaborate on how cultural memory is formed. Halbwach’s collective memory is based on everyday interactions and Aleida Assmann further proposes three dimensions of memory forms “neuronal, sozial, and kulturell”, making a more precise distinction between individual, social, and cultural memory including political memory (Shi, 2016). The paradigm of political and cultural memory is based on intergenerational communication, constructed through symbolic and performative acts such as monuments, museums, rituals and other media. This paradigm explores how to investigate how memory is activated, constructed, presented, and used in the formation of national identity, obtaining stability to achieve intergenerational transmission in this way.

The American researcher Paul Connerton brought the study of memory theory to the consciousness of society. More attention should be paid to how social memory is created, transmitted, and maintained (Gao, 2011).

Two crucial elements of this are rituals of remembrance and body practices. According to Connerton’s study, memory, especially collective memory, needs to be communicated, shaped and maintained through ritualistic performance. The memorial ceremony is a critical means of realizing social memory and a decisive framework for analyzing social memory (Sun, 2008). From the perspective of a memorial ceremony, social memory is also one of the key symbolic elements.

According to Connerton, what is remembered in commemorative rituals is something other than personal and cognitive memory. He understands social memory as ritual content and views memorial rituals as external structures that carry social memory. There is no doubt that he argues for a further elaboration of the content and function of memorial ritual, for example, and what it can bring to the ritual participants because ritual has some typical common characteristics like ritual

symbols and structure. Although Halbwachs initially proposes the essence of collective memory, he does not point out the invisible relationship between power and collective memory (Sun, 2018). However, Connerton points to the manipulation of collective memory by power. In Connerton's view, the choice of what is remembered is largely determined by the holders of power. Thus, national ritual reflects the consciousness of the power class and is seen as a way of expressing certain social ideas and therefore as a means of achieving a specific function at the same time. In the case of the commemorative ritual, it differs from the ordinary ritual in that, in terms of content, it is not reconstructed in isolation but based on certain historical events that have taken place and of which the public already knows.

As an important means of transmitting social memory, Connerton focuses on ritual as a physical act that reinforces social memory. In his work, *How Society Remembers*, the body-based performance of rituals plays a crucial role in cultural penetration. For a ritual to work for participants, it must be performed based on the practice of body performance by the participants. Through the participation of the body, a series of ritual actions are performed to reenact known social facts, so that the audience can witness and immerse themselves in shared emotions, experience shared values and form a kind of bodily social memory (Guo, 2011). In rituals of remembrance, the social nature of this bodily social memory becomes more pronounced, not only reflecting the meaning of social action at all times, but also being conditioned and influenced by society. If body actions conflict with the values of society, the individuals are inevitably punished by society. He argues for an emphasis on the stability of body practices for the transmission of social memory. Body memory, when repeatedly performed, forms a habitual memory that can express meaning clearly and accurately, providing us with an extremely effective memory system. Body memory are thought to exert an impact on society under a variety of regimes. Whatever the society, body memory with rituals of remembrance can maintain group identity and social control. In short, the body functions as a transmitter of social memory and repetitive body practices shape and transmit social

memory, thereby reinforcing intrinsic social memory.

2.2.2 Theoretical development of identity theory

The concept of identity was originally a topic discussed in traditional philosophy by philosophers such as Plato, Heidegger and Erikson. Freud has explained identity as the individual or group differences and sense of belonging found in the process of interpersonal interaction in psychology. There are different levels of discussion around identities, such as self-identity, ethnic identity, national identity, collective identity and political identity. It was not until after the 1950s that it became apparent that, there was immutability between identity and identification. As a result, identity slowly shifted to the exploration of social, national and cultural attributes.

At the individual level, Yael Tamir divides identity into two types, self-identity and collective identity. Self-identity focuses on the construction of an individual's identity, while collective identity reflects an individual's need for social belonging to a collectivity (Ai, 2019). In the case of a nation as a collectivity, collective identity is also known as national identity, which is a subjective emotional attachment and recognition by citizens of the nation to which they belong, including cultural and political identity. In the case of collective identity, it is not acquired directly as in the case of status but is internalized and actively constructed by the individual after it has been created by the institution. This construction relies mainly on collective memory. One of the distinctive features of collective memory is its ability to store culture and knowledge from which individuals gain a sense of their individuality and uniqueness. This, in turn, helps them find a group to belong to and survive identity crises, forming a new identity.

In his book, *The difficult identities* (2010), Alfred Grosser points out that identity comes from the memory of the past and the traces it leaves in the body and consciousness and each time memory participates in the reconstruction of identity. However, this process of memory and reconstruction is not entirely in pursuit of an objective historical context but is susceptible to the influence of power. Often, identity

is constructed after it is filtered, obscured, shaped, and reinforced as a result of the complex interplay of memory and power structures. As Halbwachs points out, any kind of memory must be discussed within a collective framework or structure. The ethics of identity emphasizes that identity is always articulated through the concepts (and practices) offered to you by religion, society, school, and the state, and these concepts are also adapted through family, friends, and peers. When a new regime emerges in the country after the past collective change, there is always a tendency to deny the legitimacy of the previous regime to strengthen the identification and reinforcement of the new regime.

David Morley and Kevin Robins, in *Space of Identity* (1995), argue that shaping collective identity is a process of continuous engagement that not only relies on collective memory, shared traditions, histories of heritage, and so on but also spans the space and adheres to the principles of inclusion and exclusion of group identity to maintain its cohesiveness. This collective memory is not only closely linked to reality, but also points more toward the historical development of the country and is performed in various forms such as word, image, body, and ritual, constructing a collective identity, that is passed on from generation to generation by the cultural forms like symbolic systems.

2.3 A framework for analyzing the educational function of rituals from the perspective of historical educational anthropology

In historical educational anthropology, contemporary historical anthropologist Christoph Wulf sees ritual as a central element of education and these rituals are often performed unconsciously but can also be shaped consciously. According to Wulf, it is through rituals that schools transmit values, norms, and ideas. For example, the ritual has a transitional function, in which school values and norms are transmitted to students with the help of rituals, allowing children to gradually recognize their “student” identity (Wulf & Weigand, 2011). In this section, why education can be achieved through rituals from an anthropological perspective is further analyzed, that is, the mechanisms of educational achievement through rituals. In the view of

historical educational anthropology, ritual is a kind of bodily and performative activity and education in rituals is mainly realized through the body, mimesis, performance and gesture, which all appear directly or indirectly in rituals and influence the realization and performance of the educational function of rituals.

2.3.1 Ritual function in historical anthropology

From ancient times to the present, rituals have played an important role in the process of educational, cultural and social change and development. Contemporary educational anthropologist Christoph Wulf argues that, rituals contain elements such as gesture, mimesis and performance that play essential educational functions. According to Christoph Wulf, traditional educational anthropology has not considered its own historical and cultural conditions comprehensively and has not sufficiently considered the interrelationship between the basic concepts of educational anthropology and the development of the society on which humans relied (Wulf, 2001). While one sees the historical nature of educational anthropology in its research, it still does not consider the double-historicity that exists within the object and the subject (Wulf, 2007). Based on this, Wulf proposed a new paradigm of educational anthropology with a historical dimension, called “Historisch-Pädagogische Anthropologie” in German (Wulf, 2021). He emphasizes that educational anthropology has changed into the historical-cultural anthropology of education, which accounts for the historical and cultural nature of the researcher as well as the object. Its aim is no longer to explore the human being as a universal person but to examine the real human being in its particular historical and cultural context (Wulf, 2001). It emphasizes history and culture as the starting point of educational anthropology research, intertwining the historical perspective, research methods, and research object with its historical nature in an interdisciplinary way, reflecting a “double-historicity”. On the one hand, it is significant to reflect on the history of the “research object” itself and its complex social relations; on the other hand, it is also crucial to reflect on the intrinsic referential framework and the complex relations in

which the researcher is embedded (Wulf & Chen, 2016). Wulf's educational anthropology follows the current development trend of historical and cultural anthropology and successfully introduces the concepts related to the body such as mimesis, gesture, performance and ritual into educational anthropology. This provides us with some new perspectives and ways to understand the internal mechanism of education and learning and to organize the process of education and learning effectively (Zhang, 2011).

The unique contribution of Wulf's educational anthropology to ritual research is applying the body, mimesis, and performativity to the study of educational rituals, forming a new paradigm for the study of educational rituals except for the affirmation of the positive significance of rituals. This research paradigm, primarily, is a performance-based, bodily, and practical research paradigm. This paradigm is mainly focused on the bodies of ritual participants and the ritual process (Qu, 2018). Second, this new paradigm explicates the role of ritual elements such as gesture, mimesis, and performativity in education, culture, and society. The paradigm states that these ritual elements will work together so that the educational functions of rituals can be re-examined and explored from a new perspective. Third, the research paradigm provides a new perspective for updating learning theory. Rituals can shift the focus of research from "teaching" to the specific learning behaviors of students themselves (Sun, 2016). According to Wulf's Berlin ritual study, rituals have several key functions, among which, for schooling education rituals, the educational function is mainly reflected in the following.

First, ritual can produce sociality. Ritual forms and expresses social order. There is no community without ritual and ritualization. Community is the reason for conducting rituals while symbolic contents of the ritual process, as well as the performance process, play a role in the ritual process. Second, rituals can represent order. Rituals can impart valuable standards upon participants, such as educators who can intentionally attach value standards to rituals and make the social rules structured. Third, rituals can help people generate a sense of identity. The entrance ceremony can

ensure that students who have just entered school identify with the new structure. At the same time, rituals can create memories. Through ritual performance, rituals can elicit emotional flows that capture the emotions of participants, ensuring that individuals and members have a sense of belonging in the past, present, and future and shaping effective and sustainable individual and collective memories. Fourth, rituals contribute to the generation of practical knowledge (Wulf, 2011). Wulf argues that the educational realization in rituals implies the development of social competencies based on this “practical knowledge” centered on the body (Wulf, 2017). This practical knowledge cannot be acquired through analysis, speech, and so on but relies on a kind of tacit knowledge (Wulf, 2017). It is precisely this tacit knowledge that guides students to construct relationships with society to understand others, society and the world (Wulf, 2001). Focusing on the ritual space in the educational field, it is evident that although not all educational rituals are strictly educational, they all present the dominant values of society. The main purpose of organizing and conducting rituals in schools is also to help students construct a sense of identity with the dominant values of society and to promote their social identity. When the rituals mixed with values are structured into the students’ daily school lives, the values are consolidated and strengthened and will be maintained and reinforced by the repetitive characteristic of the rituals.

2.3.2 Body and gesture

The human “body” (*der menschliche Körper*) is a central concept in German educational anthropology. In the early 1980s, Christoph Wulf began historical anthropological research with the theme of the “return of the body” (*Die Wiederkehr des Körpers*). The “body” represents the biological body, similar to the “body” studied by physical anthropology. The human body has both natural and historical-cultural forms, so the “body” also represents the “body” in historical social development and culture, and finally, the “body” represents the “body” in education. According to Merleau-Ponty, the human body is the pivot of the world, and people are

aware of the world through their bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1978). German educational anthropology also considers the body as the center of human existence and self-understanding and takes the “body” as the starting point and key mechanism of social operation. From an anthropological perspective, the body is a bridge between the internal and external worlds and objective information enters the internal subjective world through the senses. After processing fragmented information, people can create expression, self-expression, and self-understanding. In addition to acting as a bridge between the internal and external world, the body is also a mediator of nature and culture (Zhang, 2010, p. 54).

The body can incorporate historical and cultural connotations into the outer behavior of the body. For example, people will use the body’s performance to show their understanding of the relationship between others and the outside world. Embodying the body’s external behavior, such as rituals and key concepts, such as mimesis, gesture and performance will also be directly or indirectly shown in the ritual, influencing the realization of the function and value of the ritual. In addition, the body has a certain mimetic nature, through which the body can acquire gestures and other behaviors, while performance offers the possibility to make the body the center of the whole bodily activity. Through the performative nature, the body realizes the process of participation and the construction of socialization.

Throughout the process of ritual performance, ritual participants must experience a flow of energy and emotion within which the body works in the ritual. The process of ritual performance requires the participation of body movements. In the process of body movement, specific behavioral actions must be presentable and expressible (Wulf, 2018, p. 215). This movement of the body is termed “gesture” and is used to express the specific behavior of the body. The gesture is the expression and manifestation of practical knowledge related to the body (Wulf, 2014). Only through the mimesis of gesture can the physical expression of gesture be internalized. With the help of this bodily processing to achieve imitative perception, the connotation of gesture can be understood (Wulf, 2012).

Gesture as a requirement for ritual behavior contains the body posture of the ritual participant and its system of meaning, as well as the imaginary and actual interpretation of the ritual observer (Sun, 2015). In ritual action, gesture is a form of nonverbal expression that accompanies expressive discourse. Emotion is expressed in gesture, which is articulated in and evoked through. In ritual performance, gesture is the approach of meaning-giving, which helps to establish connections and form understandings (Wulf, 2012, p. 74). As the external expression of the body, how to maintain the distance between bodies and what specific gestures are formed in the ritual should be considered and it is gesture that carries the ritual behavior of an individual. At the same time, gesture is also a method and way of interpreting meaning and, more specifically, gesture is the expression and manifestation of practical knowledge within the body, which is bodily practical knowledge. This practical knowledge cannot be acquired through analysis, speech, and so on, but needs to be acquired through mimesis of bodily expression. It is only through mimesis that the body expression can be internalized and the mimetic perception can be understood through imitation of this bodily processing (Wulf, 2012, p. 64).

From the internal structure, the presence of gesture in rituals is a two-way flowing cyclic process. This happens through the process of similarity with the outer world to understand the world and build a bridge with the outer world, as well as realize self-expression and self-formation. People can gradually establish some kind of relationship with the body of the self and with the inner world of the self through somatic language (Wulf, 2012, p. 237). First, ritual participants will use gestures to externalize and concretize the emotions inherent in the self-body, and to show their knowledge, feelings, and experiences of the external world in a personalized way. The various gestures of different rituals express the diverse special emotions of ritual participants and reflect both the internal values of ritual participants and show the individual's understanding of the whole ritual community including the external world. Especially, the individual's role perception in the community is reflected. Through the imitative experience and expression of others' gestures, individuals can

gradually understand the emotional world of others and simultaneously actively absorb and internalize them in the process of mimesis, which enriches and reconstructs their understanding and cognition of the external world and expands their own emotions. The new emotions often stimulate changes in ritual behavior. This process of internalizing and absorbing the gesture of others is not simply absorption. It is a process of enriching and expanding people's internal world of themselves. In different school rituals, teachers will ask students to present different gestures, often with certain values and norms embedded in them. In this process, students' roles in the ritual are reinforced and strengthened through each mimesis and performance of gesture.

2.3.3 Mimesis

Mimesis, an important concept in anthropological research, is also a crucial theme in the field of historical anthropological research. The educational process can be considered a mimetic process. Mimesis here does not mean "imitation", "simulation", or "representation" and "expression" (Wulf, 2001), which can mean "making oneself similar", "presenting oneself", "expression", "pre-imitation" and so on. Rather, mimesis is a mechanism of communication between the internal world of human beings and the external world, creating the possibility for human beings to face the world, feel the world, and act on the world. At the same time, it reflects an essential way for human beings, especially children, to interact with the external world and develop (Zhang, 2017).

In the process of mimesis, as the subject absorbs the external world, an imitative transformation of the previous world is formed, which leads to the acquisition of a kind of practical knowledge. This practical knowledge enters the individual's internal imaginary world, staying in storage, being integrated into the body, and being retained in the body's memory. When people come to a new environment and repeat the performance with different people in different settings, the internal imagination is activated to reenact the new scene. This practical knowledge is the base for the

performance of the ritual. In the process of imitation, ritual participants acquire impressions of the ritual process and integrate them into their imagination, behavioral imitation, and bodily cognition thus forming practical knowledge, which they apply creatively to the ritual and other contexts (Sun, 2015). The practical knowledge acquired in the process of mimesis is very generative because the individual is always open to the external world and when the internal world becomes similar to the external world and forms a unique linking point, a newer external world will be constructed and a new round of mimesis will follow. Thus, the mimesis process contains both a collective component constructed by the imitated world and an individual component determined by individual characteristics, individual historical and cultural background, individual composition, and life history (Wulf, 2012, p. 55). It is not simply an act of copying but is always constructed and generated by the cross-stacking of the external world and self-expression. The individual's experience will be greatly supplemented by imitative activities, and the valuable events or meaningful structures of things in the environment will be transformed into the individual's experience of the world subtly as the child interacts with his or her surroundings (Qiu, 2017, p. 85).

In ritual activities, children who participate not only perceive and understand the rituals but also absorb and incorporate the social norms, values, and action patterns involved in the rituals through the ritual scenes. Thus, practical knowledge is created and stored in the children's conceptual world, forming the basis for the children's social abilities. With the mechanism of mimesis, the children can actively approach the external world and construct an understanding of it through the use and expression of the body and the imitation of this behavior that embodies the body paradigm. The children's understanding of the external world then moves from a preliminary understanding to a step-by-step rooting in the inner world, where the external experience begins to be gradually internalized into an internal concept that becomes part of his or her inner world of images and ideas. This eventually builds his or her understanding of the object, transforming the external world into his or her internal

world. The internal world is finally expanded. While the internal world is enriched, the internal world will be expressed and shown at the same time, and the bridge between the internal world and the external world will be built. Once the new internal world is reconstructed and the external world reappears, the children will be able to act positively through the mechanism of mimesis, using external bodily behaviors to express, thus alleviating and reducing the individual's sense of alienation and unfamiliarity with the external world. The educational function of rituals that lead to the socialization of individuals is based on the mechanism of mimesis. Since the process of mimesis is always open to the external world, each ritual contains both repetition and differentiation as well as individualization at the same time.

2.3.4 Performance

The significance of ritual lies to a large extent in the fact that rituals are performative, which is also widely recognized in international ritual studies (Wulf, 2011). In the field of educational anthropology, the performativity of rituals (Performativität) is a crucial sign that ritual has an educational function, from which the educational nature of ritual arises, connecting rituals with education.

The German historical anthropology research team argues that performance is what is visible, exhibited (inszenierte). Rituals in school can be expressed through performance. Performativity is related to the appearance of the person, the particular form of the body, and its display of traces of life, which is the abstracted expression and inner meaning of performance (Jörissen & Wulf, 2013). Wulf argues that, it is this performativity that constructs ritual activity as knowledge, thought and emotion (Sun, 2015). Only with the participation of performativity can educational practice activities, including rituals, have a socialized meaning. Through performativity, children's and adults' behaviors can form a connection (Sun, 2016). Here, educational function is mainly realized through the physical and mental effects of rituals on participants. The performativity of the ritual is mainly reflected in different aspects such as the layout of the performance space, the content of the performance, the

process, and the performers and the viewers. In the process of ritual performance, the scenic and virtual nature of the ritual space, the symbolic nature of the ritual symbols and the body of the participants together constitute the performance elements in the ritual. To analyze the performativity of ritual from the perspective of educational function, three aspects should be focused on. First, ritual is a cultural performance with communication, and this process concerns how the scenes of rituals are arranged, and the roles and tasks that need to be assigned to the participants. Second, the performative character of the language in ritual practice is of great significance. Third, the performativity of ritual also has an aesthetic character (Wulf, 2018, p. 217).

Specifically, the analysis of the performativity of a ritual event can follow three mechanisms, the first mechanism is cognitive and captures that which transmits information through ritual performance. This mechanism elucidates the relationship between ritual performance and cognitive capture. The second mechanism is effective anchoring and orientation, highlighting the relationship between ritual performance and affective impact. The third mechanism is a behavioral response, which explains the relationship between ritual performance and other behaviors (Sun, 2014). Due to the educational requirements of ritual performative elements, rituals have an extremely strict structure. The layout of the ritual scene and the creation of the ritual atmosphere all have unique symbolic meanings to achieve a comprehensive educational effect.

Chapter Summary:

Ritual has been a classic central theme in anthropology. Through the development of Van Gennep, Durkheim, Turner, and others, an analytical framework centered on the function of the ritual was proposed, emphasizing the meaning of ritual and its realization, which was later gradually applied in different fields. Rituals in schools, unlike rituals in society and family, focus on the fact that rituals are first and foremost a school educational activity, and therefore, school rituals are highly educational. This includes the knowledge, emotions, and values that educators expect the educated to acquire through rituals, highlighting the educational significance and educational

process of rituals. This study focuses on the public memorial ritual of the Qingming Festival, which concentrates on the establishment and promotion of participants' senses of identity, with collective memory. In the analysis of this educational function of rituals, the theoretical framework of ritual functions from a historical anthropological perspective is applied. Among them, the concepts of body, mimesis, and performance, as well as the whole process of educational realization, are given great attention.

Chapter 3 Methodology and methods

In this chapter, I explain in detail the specific process of conducting this empirical study. Here, I do not intend to provide a “standard” for ritual research but only to provide a detailed description of the whole process of the fieldwork I conducted.

There is no linear process in terms of data collection. Data is continuously generated as the context changes. In the data analysis, I describe how I chose the different modes of analysis and how I applied the concepts and analytical framework of the documentary method to this study.

3.1 Encountering Covid-19: the timeliness of the topic

3.1.1 The twists and turns in selecting a research topic under COVID-19

The choice of the Qingming Sacrificial Rituals is a reflection of the times. This was not my original intention. My initial research project focused on examining the entrance ceremony, particularly the differences and connections between Chinese and German schools. As a “foreigner” to Germany, I was intrigued by German rituals. Thus, after completing my registration in Germany in 2019, I attempted to contact the appropriate German primary school. With the help of my colleague, I was able to contact a primary school teacher and was allowed to observe the class. Additionally, my professor provided me with assistance in completing declarations that were necessary for empirical research.

Initially, I believed that the research would proceed as scheduled, until the first round of Covid-19 in February 2020. With the close of German schools, I had to change the subject. Finally, I chose to research Chinese school rituals. If I research the ritual of one country, from an anthropological perspective, it is important to be able to see all aspects of the country’s politics, society, culture and education through this ritual. However, the entrance ceremony is still not a condensation of Chinese culture. But, what rituals can be studied? Once again, I was lost in thought. In China, ritual is

a concept that has existed since ancient times and is named “Li” (礼). In modern Chinese schools, there are some fixed rituals such as political rituals, festival rituals, and so on. How do I choose a suitable field to integrate with ritual theory so that it allows the readers to view rituals while also seeing China’s ancient and modern times?

Based on this consideration, I eventually returned to the scope of the festival ritual after constant adjustments. In China, primary and secondary schools in Beijing attach great importance to traditional festivals. During each traditional festival, schools organize rituals to lead students to learn about traditional Chinese festival culture. The festival rituals are not just a product of modern times, many of them are the legacy of civilization that originated in ancient China. The choice of festival rituals will provide a better understanding of Chinese culture. In China, the Chinese New Year is the most important festival, just as Christmas is in Germany. The strong festival atmosphere reflects the folk culture and customs that have existed in China since ancient times. However, this ritual is held mostly in families. The main festive ceremonies organized in schools include the Qingming Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival. All three festivals share a common cultural starting point, namely ancient sacrificial culture. The Mid-Autumn Festival is a festival dedicated to the moon. The Dragon Boat Festival has its origins as a festival dedicated to Qu Yuan (a figure in ancient China), while the Qingming Festival has evolved through the ages, retaining some of the ancient traditions while adding new-era festival features and educational elements. In summary, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is a suitable topic through which German and European scholars can experience the depth of Chinese history and culture over five thousand years while gaining an insight into the modern Chinese schooling system.

3.1.2 Constraints of the epidemic: difficulties in accessing field schools

After settling on a topic around July 2020, it was planned that I would need to return to China to complete the data collection by the Qingming Festival in April 2021. As

an ethnographic researcher, I would inevitably encounter many difficulties upon entering the school. However, before I entered the school, I already felt more challenged than ever before due to Covid-19. The status of my flight was uncertain. Chinese customs introduced new policies which reduced the number of flights so the ticket prices were much higher than usual. Even if I was lucky enough to get a ticket, there was a high risk of cancellations before the actual departure due to the high number of positive cases on previous flights. Under this risk, I bought a ticket back to China in October 2020 for January 19th. In November 2020, China updated its entry policy, requiring everyone to submit certification of a double negative test (including a negative PCR test and a negative antibody test) within 48 hours and apply for a green code from the embassy before boarding. After successfully obtaining the green code, I packed my goggles, N95 mask, gloves and boarded my flight to China.

Due to Covid-19, the plane could not go directly to Beijing and had to land in other provinces. All passengers had PCR tests at customs and had to answer several questions about their reasons for coming to China. There was a particular staff member who called my family members to verify my true identity. After several rounds of questioning and signatures, I was allowed to collect my luggage and then each person had to wait for transport to their final destination. My destination was Beijing, so I chose the out-of-province lane, following the signs to wait for the bus. After over an hour, we arrived at a hotel. Finally, after 36 hours of not eating or drinking, everything had settled down. For 21 days, I was not allowed to leave the room and food was brought to the chairs in front of the door three times a day by hotel staff. During these 21 days, there were constant PCR tests and antibody tests as well as two temperature tests per day. I was not allowed to leave until all the tests were negative. After leaving, I purchased a train ticket back to Beijing and was taken to the train station by hotel staff. When I arrived in Beijing, I was not yet allowed to enter public places such as schools. It would take another seven days for a round of new quarantine and another negative test. I was grateful that I had managed to get through the frightening journey safely despite the obstacles. However, what I didn't realize at

the time was that Covid-19 would also bring trouble regarding entering the school.

3.2 Focused ethnography as an ethnographic technique

3.2.1 Theoretical principles of focused ethnography

Throughout the data collection process, I chose focused ethnography as the data collection method, a particular ethnography that focuses on the cultural interpretation of phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Fetterman, 2010; Wolcott, 2008). “Focused ethnography” is used to describe a “particular form of ethnographic practice” (Knoblauch, 2001, p. 125). In the fieldwork of focused ethnography, the researcher only stays in the field for a short period to collect data quickly, rather than through continuous observation (Marghalara Rashid, 2019). Unlike the requirement for the length of field research in classic ethnography, “focused ethnography” emphasizes relatively short periods of focused fieldwork, requiring a combination of data collection methods, for instance, participant observation, interviews, and documents. In contrast to classical ethnography, the researcher needs about six months to a year to conduct field research so that the researcher can become familiar with the local language and cultural context (Fetterman, 2010).

However, this emphasis on the length of time is because ethnography in the traditional sense assumes that the researcher is not part of the cultural group under study. Here, the researcher can observe what is happening more neutrally and objectively (Higginbottom, 2013). If the researcher has relatively extensive knowledge about the field (Morse, 2002; Wolcott, 1999) or has studied the field before (Hooper et al., 2014), then choosing “focused ethnography” is more appropriate. Focused ethnography is more suitable for researchers who have prior practice in studying a familiar setting over time (Pernille Andreassen, 2020). This familiarity rather than strangeness with the research field makes long fieldwork research unnecessary. However, the researcher must acquire more knowledge of the topic to preserve the quality and intensity of the data collected in the short period of targeted field collection.

According to Knoblauch, focused ethnography is a research practice that focuses its research interests not on the field itself, but on the specific “phenomena of action and interaction” that occur within that field (Tuma, Schnettler & Knoblauch 2013, p. 77). Focused ethnography and traditional ethnography are not opposite but complementary to each other. The application of focused ethnography also follows the general research purpose of ethnography, which is describing and explaining culture. However, focused ethnography is more focused on specific events and the people in the events. Not only did I have enough background knowledge about Chinese elementary school education but I had also visited the school and conducted research on the school before. Thus, I had a relatively clear direction for the research questions before the research began, rather than simply relying on my “research interests” to explore an unfamiliar group of people. This is why “focus ethnography” is an appropriate approach, especially for a one-time event such as a school ritual that needs to be held at a specific time and space. In general, for focused ethnography, no significant changes are allowed when entering the field, especially when the observation is a one-time event (Pernille Andreassen, 2019).

However, for focused ethnography, another challenge for the researcher is their need for alterity (Knoblauch, 2005). The researcher needs to consciously shed his familiar known identity of the site, including a basic understanding of the research context and culture, and attempt to transform into “the others” (Thomas, 2017). This stance can make the researcher “strange” and “unfamiliar” enough to be able to overcome his background and examine the phenomenon objectively (Knoblauch, 2005). In summary, when conducting school ethnographic research, overall, the main differences from classical ethnography are (1) the researcher has some knowledge and experience of the cultural context to be studied (2) the researcher enters the field with specific research questions, (3) the time spent on fieldwork is relatively short, (4) audio-visual recording equipment is used, and (5) data is collected from an emotional perspective but focusing on specific aspects of interactions, situations, and activities (Knoblauch, 2005).

Conventional ethnography	Focused ethnography
long-term field visits	short-term field visits
experientially intensive	data/analysis intensity
time extensity	time intensity
writing	recording
solitary data collection and analysis	data session groups
open	focused
social fields	communicative activities
participant role	field-observer role
insider knowledge	background knowledge
subjective understanding	conservation
notes	notes and transcripts
coding	coding and sequential analysis

Table 3.1: Comparison between conventional and focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005)

3.2.2 Participant observation as a data collection process and tool

For focused ethnography, a common type of sampling is purposive sampling, which is necessary for focused ethnography (Higginbottom, 2013). Generally, the researcher contacted key informants before entering the field, as the informants had specific knowledge and experience (Andreassen, 2019). In this study, I first spoke with the director in charge to learn about the specific process of ritual designing, organizing, and performance. Under the recommendation of the director, I then followed the grade leader to participate in daily activities such as listening to special Qingming Festival courses with videos, audio recordings, notes, attending meetings of ritual design and organization (audio recordings) and attending the final ritual performance (video).

3.2.2.1 Scene of the field: the school environment

Turner's observation of Ndembu rituals was preceded by a thorough analysis of the

social context of Ndembu society and Turner also noted that if one wants to analyze rituals, one must not only analyze them in the context of a particular ritual but also explore them in the context of the system as a whole (Turner, 1967, p. 42). In this broader context, of which the ritual itself is only a fragment, a deeper exploration of the context will help to bring about a more accurate interpretation of the ritual. (Turner, 1967, p. 44). It can be seen that it is difficult to understand the full meaning and function of school rituals if school rituals are limited to the interpretation and analysis of rituals themselves without a deep examination of the context of school education and culture. Thus, I must provide a basic introduction to elementary schools and elementary education in China with detailed field notes.

3.2.2.2 Participant observation on ritual design and preparation

After completing the basic description of the school, in the second phase, I focus on describing the design and preparation phase of the ritual, the performance phase of the ritual, and the completion phase of the ritual. I obtained some videos of the ritual performance before visiting the school by contacting the school teachers in October 2020. Then I made a phase of the intensive visit to the school for a few months in 2021.

When I was new to the school and unfamiliar with the daily routine of the school, I was very confused about what to focus on and did not want to miss anything I thought was important. Of course, I reminded myself to be alert to unexpected information and to capture new information as it emerged. At this time, I was very worried that I would fall directly into school education because of my background and forget that I am an ethnographer who should maintain an objective distance between school and myself. Actually, I myself got bachelor and master degree in elementary education in China, so I was too familiar with Chinese elementary school context. Based on this, I directly expressed my core research purpose to the director, saying that I wanted to collect data from the beginning of ritual design to reveal the entire development of the ritual and gradually construct a basic model of school ritual practice. The director told me, “you can start with the ritual preparation meeting,

which is generally the starting point of ritual design every year.” Under the director’s guidance, starting with the ritual preparation meetings, I went into classrooms and offices, trying to participate in all the necessary work leading to the ritual performance. There was no fixed time for many parts of the ritual preparations, especially the preparation work for the final ritual performance which was performed by teachers and students together. Rather, meetings were scheduled in teachers’ spare time, squeezed into intervals among their daily work.

Thus, I usually walked back and forth between offices and corridors, staying alert at all times so that I would not miss any moment that I might find valuable information outside of the fixed ritual preparation meetings and the fixed class times. Eventually, I observed the detailed process of the ritual from design to the decision-making of the final procedure of the ritual in the conference room (the people involved and the way the process works). I also observed each specific process of preparing the ritual by teachers and students in the classroom as well as the rehearsal process of students performing the ritual in the office repeatedly guided by teachers. In addition to this particular Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, I also attended the opening ceremony, New Year ceremony and flag-raising ritual. At the same time, I watched other school rituals on video. To some extent, I was able to expand from the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual to an overall understanding of school rituals.

It is worth emphasizing that many of the rich observations were not “carefully designed” in advance. Most of the materials were improvised following each day’s data collection and analysis. I did not know from the beginning what I would need to observe. Further, the administrators and teachers themselves were not able to specify everything in a fixed time, except for the final performance time of the ritual. So, in fact, in the process of data collection, I had no idea what information might be collected. What I could ensure was reminding myself repeatedly to uphold the competence and principle of ethnographic researchers and qualitative researchers, trying to capture every detail that might guide the emergence of new information in time. Everything interesting in the research process may lead to the next object to be

observed and analyzed (Turner, 1982). It was significant to keep myself open to all new information while reminding myself not to be overwhelmed by the complexity of the educational context. Keeping this in mind, I would analyze a great number of data once finishing the day's collection, especially combining the clues of details in the data that I was sensitive to and trying to find the logic in those details. According to the directions that emerged from these details, I would adjust my observation plan for the next day, adding new elements of observation, or conducting further detailed observations of a more certain observation, readjusting the design of the interview outline according to the new directions. In this process, data collection and data analysis were circular and crosswise. I followed the order "who did I meet", "what information was collected", "what new resources did the information suggest", and "what new directions should the research design develop" to complete the analysis of each day's data collection. This also ensured that I did not become overwhelmed when faced with a wealth of data. I could always grasp the direction and the sense of the logic of the overall research framework, to offer the next day's data collection some useful information. After collecting nearly enough data, I would compare the data with the research questions and again intentionally search for some specific data around the logic of the writing.

However, to follow a qualitative research approach and maintain a certain degree of openness to the data, this acquisition of data did not take place at the beginning. In addition to the observations, I also did informal interviews with different teachers during this period to be able to get a clearer picture of the available research resources and to guide me to the next steps in the direction of observation.

3.2.2.3 Videography in the performative process of ritual

For the description and analysis of rituals, in Grimes' (2013: 20) viewpoint, we should not just analyze the values and beliefs within the rituals but should first give a comprehensive description. Based on Turner's view, it is important to observe not only what the ritual says but also what the ritual does and how it is done (Turner, 1967: 51). As per Turner, this study follows the general time order of organizing

rituals in Chinese school rituals, divided into “ritual design,” “ritual preparation and rehearsal,” and “ritual performance and ending.”

The preparation of the ritual and the actual ritual performance receive the same amount of attention (Mullis, 1996). Moreover, in the ritual performance phase, I added video besides field notes, relying heavily on the video to record the entire ritual performance to realize a detailed description. In educational anthropology, for example, in the Berlin ritual study (Wulf, et.al. 2001, 2004,2007, 2010), video recording made a crucial contribution to data collection and data analysis.

When making observations of the ritual performance, in addition to classical participant observation and reflective field notes, I consider fixed cameras and participatory videography to capture the necessary scene. According to the ritual methodology, I relied on attached emphasis on micro-actions such as body, gestures, and interactions, often in short periods. These can only be more clearly explained through video and detailed descriptions of video clips. There are no strict and fixed criteria for the specific content of ritual observation, mainly due to different ritual theories. So, I rely on the methodology of ritual research proposed by Christoph Wulf in his Berlin ritual studies, which mainly emphasizes the practical and performative nature of rituals (Wulf, et.al. 2001, 2004,2007, 2010). Under this methodology, the focus of observation (Jörissen & Wulf, 2013) is:

- (1) Scenic arrangements (arrangements of bodies and ritual objects in space, design of spaces, and temporal rhythms and sequences)
- (2) postures, movements, and gestures of the actors
- (3) symbolic aspects (e.g., body staging through clothing, jewelry, equipment, etc.)
- (4) involved cultural and media artifacts (photographs, “gadgets” such as cell phones or gaming devices, material and media games or toys).

3.2.3 Problems in the implementation of ethnography

In conducting the ethnographic research, I encountered several challenges. First, is the

contradiction of identity alienation and integration when entering the field. This school was contacted and recommended by my master's supervisor as a result of my good existing relationship with this school. Meanwhile, the school is also an internship school, which had good cooperation with my university. When the director met me, he first gave me a warm welcome. Based on the warm introduction, some teachers were willing to invite me to the canteen at lunchtime and spoke with me about some daily educational confusions, trying to make me a member of this school as quickly as possible. However, while I was in the office, I met my undergraduate classmate who was also a teacher at this school. As a former classmate of mine, she said kindly to me, "the principal and director must be responsible for agreeing to your request to enter the school during this time. We also couldn't tell the parents that there was an international student in our school for her research. If something happens, the parents would ask the school about their concerns. So, actually, everyone was very nervous about this. Although I was able to integrate quickly because of the special relationship with this school, however, I felt a certain degree of alienation through words and some polite rejections.

The second challenge is the paradox of changing identities in the process of conducting ethnography (Powdermaker, 1966, p. 19). On the one hand, as a researcher, I had a clear research goal and I could focus directly on the research questions to obtain valid information. Even though I was very familiar with elementary education, I had to try to make myself curious and deliberately objective, even though I was already familiar with the teachers and could understand their behaviors due to my background. However, on the other hand, school leaders thought of me as a director, or a kind of ritual expert, hoping that I would think from the school's perspective and help them organize rituals that are in accordance with ritual theories. Sometimes, I felt the collision of differing identities. In addition, the teachers treated me more as a kind of "inspector". When I tried to express my desire to observe some lessons, the teachers would say "I am not so professional, please don't listen to my course" or "my courses lack any theories" and so on.

These feelings are not seen as a strange phenomenon by Chinese researchers, especially by the group of Chinese specialized “ritual experts” who take on the roles of mentors and collaborators. However, for me, at the end of the day, when I left the school and sat at my desk, looking at every piece of data again, I also tried to rethink and re-examine scenes from a specifically “German perspective”. I tried to ask questions that might be of interest to foreign readers as well as to think about and examine the integrity of the data through a self-questioning process. This was one of the key judgments that guided me in considering whether I needed to change to a new direction of data collection the next day or modify some of the interviews further.

3.3 Ethnographic interview as an ethnographic tool

3.3.1 Ethnographic interview

In traditional ethnographic research, there are two main research tools, participant observation and ethnographic interviews. This certainly applies to my research as well. Thus, I focus on the specific application of ethnographic interviews in this study.

In contrast to traditional ethnography, this study could not begin with a natural conversation because the interviewees’ time was very limited. Throughout the interviews, I told the interviewees the general topic straight away at the beginning of the interview. Specifically, I first developed a set of semi-structured ethnographic interview questions based on Spradley’s (1979) general questions framework. Each interviewee was given an outline of my interview in advance. Nonetheless, I tried to maintain a neutral stance to keep the interview as open as possible. This allowed the interviewees to focus on the topic and ignore the context of the “interview” more easily and communicate with me in a more natural way about what was happening in the school. Following the principles of ethnographic interviewing, no assumptions should precede the design of the interview questions, as ethnography is more inductive than deductive (Thornton & Garrett, 1995).

In terms of the interview questions, I followed the characteristics of ethnographic

interviewing by focusing on “everyday experience”, collecting descriptive data and trying to focus on ritual practices in a multidimensional way. For example, “have you ever experienced such a moment before when you had a lot of work and at the same time you received the task of organizing a ritual? Can you tell me how you felt at that time and how you handled it ?” It was noteworthy that teachers were sometimes hesitant and timid in their responses, like “I don’t know if this is what you want to know; I don’t know if what I’m answering is exactly what you want to ask.” In contrast, the student interviews were freer and more extensive in content.

In ethnographic research, it is important to present and understand the world as it is seen from the cultural systems of the people under study to present the lives of local people better and understand their perspectives (Spradley, 1979). Thus, in selecting interviewees and classifying the content of the interview questions, I consider the reality of ritual practice in China.

3.3.2 Interview participants and process

Specifically, an elementary school was selected as a case study for this research. Based on my many years of fieldwork experience in a Chinese elementary school, the process of conducting ritual practices in primary schools involves school administrators, ritual specialists, grade-level teachers, classroom teachers, students, parents of students, and other staff. For the feasibility of the study, a total of eight interviewees were selected for data collection, including one university professor, one school administrator of the elementary school, two elementary school teachers and four students.

The interview was based on a semi-structured in-depth interview. All interviews were recorded. In my school research, I first conducted structured interviews with Director M, the director of the elementary school. Then, I observed teachers throughout the process of organizing ritual activities daily and collected information. Next, the teacher’s interview outline was revised based on the results of my observations and the analysis of the interview with Director M. Subsequently, I

conducted a semi-structured interview with Mrs. H, the fifth-grade director who organized the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, obtaining more detailed information about the ritual practice model in a comprehensive manner.

During my interview with Mrs. H, the other five teachers in the office provided similar insights into the interview questions. Although this study did not initially expect to achieve a group discussion, the results of the group interviews added further credibility to the study.

At the end of the interviews with Director M and Mrs. H, I found that the organization of the rituals was not the same from class to class and that there was a certain amount of autonomy. The specific ritual organization in each class was performed by the teacher together with the students. So, how did the teachers prepare with the students regarding the specific organizational tasks? What attitudes do the students hold toward the rituals in school and grade level? Based on this, I further adjusted the interview outline based on the results of the interviews. In coordination with Director M, I contacted two more teachers, Mrs. J and Mrs. Y from the fifth grade to conduct separate semi-structured interviews.

For the students, I asked Director M to select two class groups for my daily observations at the school and ritual performance scene. One boy and one girl from each class who were willing to be interviewed were selected to be interviewed, which allowed me to focus on the possibility of gender factors. The study has followed ethical requirements and individuals' private information has been anonymized. Also, the text was organized in an audio-transcribed format.

3.4 Analytical tool as documentary method

As far as the methodology of ritual research is concerned, a multi-perspective methodology has emerged because of the existence of complexity in the field of ritual research. On the whole, the current methodology of ritual studies is various and transforms to be further integrated and developed based on the grounded theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. On this basis, a diversity of theoretical

paradigms have approved disparate interpretative and analytical procedures according to their respective understandings of ritual (Jörissen & Wulf, 2013).

As a method for analyzing qualitative data, the documentary method was first developed in the 1980s by Bohnsack, building on Karl Mannheim's sociological theory of knowledge and ethnomethodology. In the 1920s, Karl Mannheim proposed a "documentary method of interpretation" (Mannheim, 1952). This was followed in the 1950s and 1960s by Harold Garfinkel, the originator of ethnomethodology, who brought the documentary approach to social science research. However, both Mannheim and Garfinkel recognized the importance of the documentary method as a methodological concept and did not consider defining the documentary method as a method to guide empirical data investigation (Garfinkel, 1961, as cited in Chen, 2016). It was not until the 1980s that Bohnsack began to develop the documentary method, both as a methodology for qualitative research and as a specific empirical investigation.

The main task of the documentary approach is to interpret the implicit knowledge of the observed. This is mainly related to the basic assumptions of the documentary approach as an epistemology. The documentary method presupposes that the research goal is to gain access to the knowledge held by the actors. Therefore, in the documentary method, the researcher does not assume or presuppose that they know more than the actors in the field, but the actors themselves do not know everything they know either (Bohnsack, 2014). From the perspective of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, the documentary method is an important way of reconstructing the implicit knowledge that guides our practice. Regarding theoretical knowledge, it is very complex to fully explain the process of its formation theoretically or conceptually. However, the implicit and theoretical knowledge could be represented in narratives and descriptions, so using video and photos of the action as a medium for understanding theoretical knowledge enables an understanding of the concrete created processes of theoretical knowledge reconstructed.

The documentary approach applies different research steps for different materials.

For the analysis of images and videos, Bohnsack has developed the key research steps of Formulating Interpretation & Reflecting Interpretation. As for formulating interpretation, for example, this includes decoding and formulating the thematic structure of texts and reordering the topics by distinguishing between the most important topics, the less important topics and the minor topics. While formulating interpretation addresses what happens in the text, reflective interpretation distinguishes between the meaning of the words and the meaning implied by the text. For example, reflective interpretation describes the transition from the explicit topic described to the meaning of the document, from what happens to how it happens. In the documentary method, the reconstruction of thematic order is the basic scaffolding of formative interpretation (Bohnsack, 2010).

In the documentary method, the analysis of the interview text is mainly reflected in different processes, including Comparative Sequential Analysis, Typification, and Multi-Level Analysis. In contrast to grounded theory, which is more focused on theoretical construction. The documentary method, like narrative interviewing, focuses more on interpreting the data, aiming to capture other different dimensions. Instead of focusing on a single case from the outset, the data from each case is first analyzed sequentially as part of a comparative analysis. The documentary method, like the narrative interviews, considers that the underlying and implied meanings are the critical element of the analysis rather than what is explicitly expressed in the interview text. The documentary method distinguishes between two levels of meaning, the first being the intentional expression of meaning and the objective meaning. Intentional expression is “the meaning expressed by the subject when his consciousness is focused on the subject” (Mannheim, 1952). On the other hand, objective meaning refers not to the intention of the actor, but to the objective social situation that exists over and above the intention and specific characteristics of the actor. It is important to show what exactly the text we are studying is concerned with. The question asked in the documentary method is not what the social reality is, but how this reality is produced. Here, reflective interpretation seeks to reframe and

clarify the framework of a problem (Bohnsack, 2007, p. 135). Initially, when explaining individual cases, researchers analyzed the texts in their general conceptual context, which was based on a combination of the researcher's personal experience, theory and previous research. The researcher could only be aware of those aspects of the interview that were consistent or conflicted with their usual expectation. After analyzing the text for each case, according to how the interviewees articulated the themes, the researcher would compare the interviews and identify different theoretical concepts and frameworks. Finally, different types are formed from the empirical results under different abstract frameworks.

Chapter Summary

Historical anthropology emphasizes the importance of analyzing rituals with their broader historical, social, and cultural contexts. The ethnographic approach was chosen to provide the reader with as much empirical data as possible, such as video material, interviews and official policy, to present a picture of the ritual that is as rich as possible. However, it is particularly important to emphasize that this research presents an example of a Chinese ritual and Chinese education. From an educational perspective, this school could be a classical example and case to show the development of Chinese basic education, because each school has to follow national and regional policies. From a ritual perspective, the basic organized ritual procedure could be seen as the foundational procedure for organizing school activities. However, as a political center, Beijing attaches more importance to the Qingming Festival than other provinces. I did not travel to other provinces and cities for research, so I could not investigate if the whole procedure of the Qingming Festival is similar to other places. However, there are relatively clear recommendations in terms of national policy.

Chapter 4 Ritual context: primary school and primary education in China

4.1 The environment of the school

4.1.1 The school in the city

This primary school is located in the northeast of Beijing, which is in a district with around 1,324,044 inhabitants. In 2021, according to the official census¹, 875,261 people live in urban areas and 448,783 in rural areas.

This school was established in 2016, in cooperation with the education committee of this district and a university. Five years later, this school has 76 classes, with nearly 3,300 students and 230 staff members. According to the policy of entering schools nearby, only students living in certain fixed areas can study here. The property prices of the different areas vary, some are expensive properties while others are not. According to the teachers, the family backgrounds of students are very complex. For some students, their parents are highly educated, working as executives and heads of enterprises and institutions, while others' parents are not well-educated.

4.1.2 The inner structure of the school

The construction area of this school is around 9,880 square meters. The coverage area is 12,350 square meters in total. There are two different campuses, which are approximately 1,000 meters apart. One of the campuses is called “lower grade” and hosts students from grade 1 to grade 3. The other one is called “higher grade” and hosts students from grade 4 to grade 6. There is an Olympic Forest Park, museums, and other recreational facilities in the vicinity of the school.

My case study location is one of the campuses, which is situated near the residential area. There is a sign saying “school ahead, no noise” a five minutes walk from the school. Walking past the sign, there is a wall about 10 meters long, decorated with pictures and photos, showing some pupils participating in a speech contest and a

¹ <http://www.bjshy.gov.cn/web/ywdt84/gggs/tzgg/972217/index.html>

New Year's party, displaying the daily life of pupils at the school. The wall serves as a link between the school and its surroundings. Simultaneously, the sign and the wall separate school life from the social environment. Like with many other primary schools in Beijing, there are special architectural signs to mark the fact that there is a school nearby. Usually, there is a wall with special photos introducing this school. For some schools, there are information boards placed on the ground with the name and the history of the school.

A short distance further along the wall, the gate appears. On the right side of the gate is a security office, where a staff member checks the necessary permission for entering the school for each person who is not a student or an employee. This gate is the entrance gate of the school. After obtaining permission from the staff member, visitors are required to fill out a form including their time of entry, name and reasons for visiting the school. On the left, there is a white wooden board hanging on the wall with the name of the school written in a large, clear black font from the computer. The handwritten name is directly above the gate. Next to the name, there is a circular pattern in the shape of a double ring with the school's badge. In the center of the inner circle is a colorful pattern. On the outer ring, the words above are the name of the school in Chinese and the English name is written below. All schools in China have school badges. This is part of the school's culture, a typical feature that distinguishes this school from others.

Upon entering the school, there are two four-story teaching buildings in front of me and behind the school buildings is a playground. The inner side of the playground is green grass for ball games, equipped with two football nets. The outer side is a red plastic track, which is a non-standard semi-circular plastic track with only five lanes. In general, only the playground in secondary schools and universities in China are Olympic standard tracks which is a semi-circular track of 400 meters. There are stands along one side of the playground but there is only a rectangular platform without seating. Looking around the playground, there are several loudspeakers and sound amplification devices installed at the four bends of the playground, pointing

into the center. On the straight side of the playground, there are lights every 10 meters, each of which is strapped with small speakers. During the activities, the hosts (teachers or students) stand in the stands, organizing activities with wireless microphones. All of the participants can hear no matter where they are standing on the playground.

Between the school building and the playground, near the track of the playground, there is a flag-raising platform with 3 flagpoles. The national flag is in the middle and the school flags are on the two sides. The playground is used for flag-raising rituals, P.E. classes, school club activities and school sports days. Apart from these special needs, the playground is usually empty at other times.

The building on the left side is mainly used by the students for their daily classes and the teachers' daily work. The walls of the building are colored green, pink, orange and blue from the first to fourth floors, which symbolize the four seasons from spring to winter. The teachers' offices for each grade are located on the floor of the corresponding grade of students. They are on one side of each floor with around 8–12 teachers in one office. In the office, a school calendar is posted on the noticeboard, marking the major events of this semester. Each teacher has their own desk, equipped with a computer. On the corner of the computer, there is a special timetable for each teacher, marking the location and time of the class each teacher will attend each day. There are professional books, notebooks, and pupils' homework filling the desks neatly. Some teachers have shelves next to their desks, filled with students' test papers, exercise books and other materials. For the lower grades, teachers also have stamps and stickers on their desks offering students rewards.

The building on the right side is specialized classrooms such as music, dance, orchestra, art, science, computer, calligraphy, psychology, Peking Opera, labor education, library and seminar rooms for students to meet in small groups. After school, students can read and complete their homework in a seminar room if they cannot go home immediately.

The students' classrooms are located on different floors according to various grades. The layout and arrangements of each classroom are almost the same. A classroom consists of two doors, the front door, and the back door, both of which open for students to enter and exit. There is a small sign beside the top of the front door stating the grade and class. As part of the class culture, a class badge is painted on the wall to the left side of the door, designed by the teachers and students of this class. For example, the badge of one particular class is a circular logo like the school badge, with flowers as well as leaves in the inner circle. While on the outer side, the Chinese name of the grade and class is written above and the English version is written below. Some classes are also renamed with "little" plus various names of the plant, animal, or natural phenomenon, for example, "The Little Water Drop Class" "The Little Rabbit Class" and so on.

At the entrance to the classroom is the sliding blackboard, divided into four sections. The teacher can freely choose between the blackboard and the projection screen. Most of the time, the projection screen is hidden behind the blackboard. When the teachers are prepared to use the projection screen, the two parts of the middle blackboards can be directly pushed out to the opposite sides and the touchable projection screen behind the blackboard can be brought to the front.

In the middle of the classroom are the pupils' desks and chairs, distributed horizontally and vertically in a tabular format, with seven columns and five rows vertically, a total of 35 pupils for each class. Class sizes of primary schools in Beijing are strictly limited to no more than 40 students for each class. At the same time, according to Beijing's educational policy,¹ the distance between the seats of different students in each class is also fixed.

¹http://jw.beijing.gov.cn/xxgk/zfxxgkml/zfgkzcwj/zcjd/201912/t20191205_867158.html 关于印发《北京市中小学校办学条件标准》（建设部分-试行）的通知京教建〔2018〕11号 2018-05-25



(Figure 4.1 The front of the classroom)



(Figure 4.2 The back of the classroom)

Besides the student desks, there is a teacher's desk at the front or back of the classroom. On the back wall of the classroom, there is a blackboard on which the students' wishes or blessings for their class, school, and country are displayed. Here, the classroom also has the function of cultural education. In the book, *Classroom Culture in China: Collective Individualism Learning Model*, Professor Xudong Zhu

and Jian Li in Beijing Normal University clarify this special phenomenon in Chinese schools from the perspective of classroom culture (Zhu & Li, 2020).

On one side of the classroom, there are separate materials storage compartments for each student. On opposite sides of the classroom, two windows face the playground. At the back of the classroom, there are separate wardrobes for each student, with their name written on the corner, for the student's school bags, clothes and so on. Above the wardrobe, there are water bottles for each student neatly arranged.

The hallways on each floor and the corridors between the two floors display the work of students and teachers, including paintings, paper cuttings, calligraphy, and photos of students, mostly in school activities. Overall, the schools in China are full of similarities in terms of hardware facilities. However, the internal structure of individual schools, such as the decoration of the hallways and corridor, is filled with the school's culture.

4.2 The culture of the school

After this brief introduction to the school's environment, the school culture should be described. The principal's educational idea determines the kind of school that will be built, and each school's school culture is an outward expression of the principal's educational idea and the hallmark of a school's uniqueness. In a sense, a large part of the difference between schools stems from the difference in educational culture. Everything from the design of the school logo and the school standard to the school motto depends on the school's culture. The design of the hallways and corridors, including the layout of the floors of the school building and the roots of the design of the students' curriculum are all derived from the mapping of the school culture. The principal's educational idea is the starting point and ultimately the endpoint of the school's culture.

4.2.1 The school culture: “growth education” thought

This school is young; it was built in 2016. In its first year, the school had only grades 1 to 4, 20 classes in total. These students were a combination of students from 26 primary schools in this district. The culture of this school is “growth education”, a result of the school administrator’s discussions of John Dewey’s growth education thought. According to the interviews and statements of the principals and other school directors responsible for the foundation of this school, the original idea of choosing this thought is the educational philosophy of John Dewey; here, “education as growth” is regarded as the school spirit. They believe that children are like crops. For them, finding the best soil to cultivate children in this kind of unique and special atmosphere is central to consider. They focus on providing an approach to create a growing and ecological environment for students to develop. Thus, they expect that this school could become a place in which each student can be cultivated and improved based on their original background and culture after they received school education here. Now, the school has marked itself as a “Growth Education school,” adhering to the educational ideas of “following and developing advantages,” “implementing growth education,” and “awakening internal potential power.” As per “growth education,” child-centered systems and following their interests become the center of school spirit. Respecting the uniqueness of each student, cultivating the humanity of each student, developing the infinity of each student, and building the soul of each student’s life were central beliefs when this school was built. All of the teachers comply with the value of “common school, common group, common heart, common career.” Under the context of this culture, teachers feel satisfied with their work.

4.2.2 The school curriculum system: “family-country collective consciousness”

As per growth education, the school created a kind of new curriculum system as an additional curriculum based on the national curriculum, starting with the logic of children’s daily life, centering on children’s life experiences, fully combining school, family, and community.

Before I describe the unique curriculum system of this school, I first introduce the Chinese curriculum framework system. In China, as in other countries with centralized governments, the Chinese government — the Ministry of Education — provides a framework and plan for the curriculum and specifies the content of most courses. This is called the national curriculum and it leaves some small courses for each province and each school to design by themselves, called the local and school-based curriculums (Cui, Lei & Zhou, 2020). These different courses support the educational curriculum system. What I introduce below belongs to the school-based curriculum which mostly relies on the school's culture. It has been built in three dimensions, highlighting the significant growth stages in elementary school life, creating the atmosphere of education for ideals and beliefs, education towards life. Based on these three dimensions, a new curriculum system has formed, full of a strong sense of belonging in the country, firm ideals and beliefs and rich life experience. This leads students to feel and identify with Chinese culture in actual educational practice, truly adding the gene of traditional culture in their minds so that every student not only has a Chinese face but also a Chinese heart and a Chinese feeling.

The school-based curriculum in this school:

Ritual curriculum: Planting a seed of love for family and country is the original intention of rituals. The ritual curriculum takes four key stages of growth (Welcoming Ceremony of Grade 1, Entrance Ceremony to CYP of Grade 2, Ten-year-old ritual of Grade 4, and Graduation Ceremony of Grade 6) in elementary school life as educational content, designing different topics like self-study, setting goals, time-planning and so on. For example, for the Qingming Festival, Labor Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Children's Day, various rituals will be organized based on certain topics.

Experiential curriculum: The experiential curriculum is based on traditional Chinese culture, focusing on important national festivals including poetry recitation, literary writing and job experiences carried out by grade level to promote ideological

and emotional identification with family-national culture.

Social practice curriculum: The social curriculum is selected with learning, experiential, and practical projects, integrating quality resources from home, school, and society to create a comprehensive, systematic, and exploratory learning and growth process for students and cultivate a sense of patriotism.

4.3 The daily rhythm in Chinese primary school

4.3.1 A routine day for teachers and students

There are 6 grades with a total of 3300 students studying in 76 classes in this primary school. At the same time, 230 staff members work here, most of whom are young, with nearly 70% having taught for less than 3 years and nearly 80% being under 35 years old. In addition to administrators like principals and vice-principals, there are two types of teachers. One is the head teachers (“班主任”), who are responsible for the management of a class and for teaching (usually Chinese or Mathematics, sometimes both). The other is general teachers, who are responsible for teaching only but teach more grades and classes than head teachers. In general, each teacher has 15–20 courses per week in different classes. Now, I take a closer look at one routine day of elementary school teachers in China.

Around 7 o'clock, the school day begins with a little welcome ceremony for students entering the school. The principal, vice-principal and some teachers and students representatives stand beside the entrance gate of the school, waiting for all the students to enter. As the students enter the school one by one, those who stand beside the gate wave their hands and say “good morning teachers, good morning students” to everyone. Teachers reply “good morning children,” smiling and waving their hands to everyone entering.

At this moment, the head teachers are already waiting in the classrooms, scanning every corner of the classroom to see who has not yet arrived. Between 7:00 and 7:20, it is time for submitting homework and preparing the materials for morning

reading. From 7:20 to 7:50 is the school's morning reading time, three days for Chinese and two days for English. At 7:20, the teachers responsible for the morning reading will enter in every classroom and start to organize the morning reading. Usually, the educational goal for morning reading for the whole of China is reading text from a textbook, reciting and memorizing how to pronounce and write Chinese characters, phrases, and paragraphs as well as practicing listening and reading in English textbook. They practice how to read and write English words and phrases, focusing on pronunciation, accent, and spelling. Usually, the head teachers have their morning reading in Chinese. If that day belongs to English, they will start by checking the students' attendance in the office. If someone does not arrive at school, they will contact the parents immediately to find out the exact reason for the absence and write this down in the attendance book. Then, they contact the catering company responsible for delivering lunch to the school and report the change. For example, if a student is absent, their lunch must be canceled. In Beijing, the majority of pupils eat lunch at school which is usually delivered by special catering companies. The money for the lunch delivered also must be counted by head teachers each month.

At 8:00, the bell (in some schools it is soft music) rings and the first class starts. Each lesson lasts 40 minutes. At the end of the bell, the teacher walks up to the platform with the materials for this lesson and stands firmly announcing, "Class begins! Good morning, everyone." Then, the class monitor immediately stands up with a loud instruction "stand up" and all the students stand up quickly and neatly from their seats, bowing towards the teacher and greeting with "Good morning, Sir/Madam"" In response, the teacher usually says "sit down please" and then the lesson starts. Lessons often begin with a ritual like this, called the class beginning ritual.

"The class beginning ritual serves at least two purposes: one, it clarifies the social relationship and status between teachers and students. In the ritual of exchanging greetings, both teachers and students have clear norms of behavior, which reflects the different statuses and positions of teachers and students. Second, it achieves a

change in the statuses of students. The class beginning ritual marks the formal beginning of classroom life and reminds students to move from being relaxed into the serious state of getting ready for a new lesson (Zhang, 2015. p.211)".

In the office, teachers who do not have lessons are usually very busy. Some teachers correct the homework students handed in this morning. There were more than 200 exercise books to be handled, including Chinese character writing, passage reading, and composition books, piled up like a mountain on the teachers' desks. The sound of red markers quickly scratching across the books, mixed with the sound of rapidly turning pages, filled the whole office. Some teachers are constantly demonstrating their PowerPoints, while others were busy cutting paper to make cards and other various teaching materials in preparation for the lessons that begin soon. One teacher is watching online courses and lectures for teacher training with earphones and making notes. Three other teachers are preparing for their teaching skill competition.

At 8:40, the bell rings again which means the end of the first class. When the class is over, the teacher will say "Class is over!" Students will stand up again and respond with "Thank you, Sir! Goodbye, Sir!" At this moment, the head teacher is waiting at the front door of the classroom with a portion of homework that had already been corrected. There is a 10-minute break between each lesson. During the 10-minute break, the head teacher goes into the class and lets the class representatives distribute the homework to the students for correction when they have spare time. At the same time, the students are instructed to have a break and make the preparations needed for the next lesson. During each break time, if students do not need to go to the bathroom, they usually stay in the classroom, waiting for the teacher of the next course. Some students choose to stay in the hallways or corridors to have a chat with each other. Sometimes they, especially the boys, prefer chasing each other. However, it is easy for students to injure themselves in the narrow hallway. Keeping quiet as well as chasing and fighting are not allowed; these are the most common words of the head teacher.

At 8:50, the bell rings for the second period and, one by one, students run into the class and take their seats. Some students are not yet ready for their materials and rush to the lockers at the back of the classroom, opening the lockers and taking out their necessities for the next class, sitting in their seats and breathing heavily. Some students seem to be stuck in the moment of excitement, still chatting with the students around them, laughing hard back and forth. At this point, a girl cannot stand it anymore and shout loudly, “Class has already started, please be quiet.” After a few seconds pause, the noise seems to be less, but it is still noisy. At this point, the teacher comes to the class with the materials, walking into the front door, looking around silently, and clapping her hands rhythmically. When the students hear the sound of clapping from teachers, they immediately stop talking and follow the teacher, clapping in rhythm. Several seconds later, only the sound of clapping could be heard in the classroom. At this point, the teacher immediately stops clapping, walking towards the platform, pausing a while, and starts greeting in a short but strong voice, “Class begins.” Two minutes passed since the bell and the second class could finally begin. According to teachers, this rhythmic clapping is one of the most effective ways to help students be quiet and get ready for new lessons. Other teachers have chosen to use some skills to keep order in the classroom, such as “little mouth, no talking” (小嘴巴, 不说话), “little eyes, look at the blackboard” (小眼睛, 看黑板), and “little ears, listen to the teacher” (小耳朵, 听老师). When the teacher says half of the phrase, the students will respond with the rest. Gradually, the students become quiet. The head teacher always watches all of this from the back door to see if someone is still talking or is absent-minded. Actually, each of the lessons in each class is highly similar and ritualized. However, keeping students disciplined is still considered to be a big challenge for every teacher.

After the fourth lesson, students eat their lunch in the classrooms. The staff from the catering company delivers the lunches to the front door of each class, usually four dishes with rice are offered. When the bell rings after class, the students responsible for distributing the lunch in each class start to prepare the cutlery. Other students

stand in a queue outside the classroom, waiting for the lunch distribution one by one. At this point, one teacher (head teacher or others) stays in the classroom with the students, keeping an eye on them for silence and safety until they finish their lunch. Usually, during lunchtime, the teacher will show the students some videos or programs they like, encouraging them to relax. However, these teachers do not have lunch with the students together. They have their own teachers' cafeteria. Thus, the teachers' cafeteria offers lunch until 1 p.m. for these teachers. After lunch, the students have a break. Usually, they have a short sleep in the classroom. The class teacher must keep an eye on them during sleep time.

During lunchtime every day, the office is very busy. Some teachers are helping students prepare the rehearsals for ritual performances. Some are acting as mediators, resolving conflicts and fights between students. Some teachers are checking their students' reciting assignments. Students lined up next to their desks, reciting the text one by one. Some teachers are contacting the parents of sick students, asking them to arrange a time to pick up their children and take them home. Others are discussing the progress, problems and daily performance of the students in each class.

At 13:10, a bell rings and the afternoon session starts. It has 3 lessons in total and lasts until 15:40. After the seventh lesson, the head teacher arranges for the students without club activities to go home. If parents are not available to pick them up, students can join school clubs such as soccer, volleyball, roller skating, painting, and so on voluntarily. Since the school teachers cannot lead these various activities, the school hires qualified teachers from society to organize club activities for students. Based on the feedback and evaluation from students and parents, the school decides whether to hire them again in the next semester.

At about 5 p.m., it is time for the students to go home. Once the head teacher dismisses the students, they immediately carry their bags, rushing out of their classrooms and stand in two queues beside the front door, one for boys and one for girls. Since all the classes are in line at the same time, the hallway is crowded and noisy. The headteacher has to raise the volume twice as loud as she normally does in

the classroom so the students can hear her instructions. Some of the students are so excited, it seems that they cannot wait anymore and keep chatting with the students next to them. The teacher does not have other choices to calm them down, telling them to keep quiet is the only way for them to leave quickly. “Let’s wait for the last student to calm down. If all of you can’t keep quiet, then we’ll stand in the hallway and learn how to keep quiet with all students in the class.”

The headteacher asks one student to organize the others in good order according to the class board. Every class has a class board showing the grade and year of the class, the same as the board held by the volunteers who walk in front of each country’s team during the Olympic entrance ceremony. After walking out of the school, the head teacher will take the students to their class location outside the school gates. To prevent students from mixing, each class has a fixed place for them to stand in a queue. This is the place where parents can wait. When the P.E. representative shouts “dismissed now”, the students can go home with their parents. Some parents can also have a brief conversation with the headteacher, asking about their child’s recent performance at school. Later, the head teacher will return to the office and prepare for their meeting in the lecture hall.

4.3.2 Parents as the cooperators

Parents are considered to be one of the most important educational resources in the school. Each class has a parent council. Parents are involved in school life in a variety of ways.

First, all of the parents can participate in a “parents’ course” which is usually held weekly. During the parents’ course, parents teach a lesson like a teacher. The topic will be discussed between the head teacher and the parents, usually closely related to their professional background. For example, if the parent is a lawyer, the topic of the lesson is mostly obedience of the law. If someone’s parents work in the museum as a docent, then the topic is a lesson about museum education. Second, parents can be invited to school to help the teacher rehearse art activities if they have

the capacity for art, like singing or performing. Finally, some parents will also organize weekend trips for students who have certain interests. The headteacher is also invited to participate in these activities, but the parent council is responsible for the whole organization process. Of course, students are required to pay the fees associated with the trips. The school does not provide any financial support.

It is also worth mentioning that parents are also invited to participate as guests at various festivals and ceremonies, such as New Year's Day, Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and so on. Some parents prepare yogurt, cookies, drinks, and other snacks for their children and other classmates. Some parents also help decorate the classroom with ribbons, paper cuttings and so on.

During the whole school life of students, teachers try to establish a close relationship between school and family to achieve the goal of family-school co-education. The school also holds several parent conferences each year, usually at the beginning and end of each semester. At grade-level parent-teacher conferences, family education workshops from experts are arranged. The director of each grade introduces the schedule and educational goals of every educational activity to be organized during the semester. At the class level, the head teachers communicate with parents about the current status of the class, usually about the children's daily performances and parents' urgent needs.

Chapter Summary:

In this chapter, I outlined the daily routine of a Chinese primary school by description, including the natural environment and cultural context. In China, the basis of building a school is that everything in the school should be beneficial for cultivating the socialization of students. For schools, rituals are significant components of school culture. Furthermore, the complex relationship between ritual and school life can be revealed, which shows the special status of rituals. Under this special circumstance, how is the ritual performed? How does it contribute to students? I discuss this in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Sketch of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual: education of national identity in the sacrificial ritual

The birth of a ritual can facilitate readers' understanding of rituals in school education in China. It enables readers to see the different situations that rituals occupy in the actual educational practice and the educational policy in Chinese school education as a whole. In this chapter, I focus on the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual performed in a primary school in Beijing.

Each year, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is held just before the official holiday. Usually, the whole ritual lasts for two weeks. I describe the entire process of organizing the ritual including ritual design, ritual preparation, rehearsal, and the final ritual performance. I focus on the specific ritual process and ask detailed questions about the background information and things related to the ritual participants in as much detail as I could. This chapter provides an interesting perspective on how Chinese schools organize rituals step by step.

I focus on the whole process of ritual preparation. Specifically, this includes who is involved in the preparation stage, the factors that influence the preparation, and the relationship between the ritual and other pedagogical elements. I also analyze ritual performance from the perspective of ritual. I follow the order of ritual organization with various ethnographic data, including ritual design (5.1), ritual preparation and rehearsal (5.2), and ritual performance and ending (5.3). Simultaneously, according to Turner's theory, each ritual can be regarded as a configuration of the symbol (Turner, 1967). Thus, the principle symbols found in the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual will also be explained (5.4), especially the culture, social, and educational circumstances that the symbolic system represents. These are described primarily based on my observations with informants' descriptions, comments and feelings.

Before I arrived at the school, I contacted my informant, Director M, expressing my desire to begin my observation of the ritual preparation. Director M gave me a warm welcome and then asked if I had a negative test certification or if I had been

vaccinated against Covid-19. After I submitted the vaccination material, I received permission from Director M to enter the school. During this special time, not all elementary schools allow people other than teachers and students to enter. The fact that, this elementary school allowed me to visit as much as I wanted during the fieldwork, provided an imperative condition and space.

The first time I visited Director M, I wanted to find out when the preparation for the Qingming Festival would begin and what the teachers had already done beforehand. Director M told me that the ceremony would officially start at 1:30 p.m. on March 31st. There would be a preparatory meeting with the class teachers before that and I would be informed once the date was set. At that moment, I had not realized the complexity of organizing the ritual.

A week later, as the ritual performance time was getting closer and closer, I still had not received any notice and felt a little worried. So, I contacted Director M again to ask again about the date of the preparation meeting. He said directly, “the meeting will be held tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. in the conference room on the second floor.” Later, Director M explained to me that the date of the meeting had just been confirmed because they had received two different inspections by Beijing’s educational committee, so the preparation time was not set until the inspections finished. This reveals the complexity of the various tasks in elementary schools. Everything is “urgent” and “short”, which are the most frequent words used by elementary school teachers when talking about rituals. In the following days of fieldwork, I did find that teachers were working on many things at the same time and did not have much time to dedicate to the rituals. Instead, much of the preparation for the rituals was often done during “break time”.

5.1 Ritual design model centered on school administrators

Early in the morning, I arrived at the school. Since Director M was organizing a flag-raising ritual for the children, he asked another teacher to welcome me in advance. After the flag-raising ritual, Director M immediately gave me a warm

welcome and invited me to evaluate the students' ritual performance during the flag-raising ceremony, leading me to the meeting room. This reflects the general attitude of primary school teachers toward researchers. They are particularly interested in being evaluated and receiving advice on organizing rituals.

When everyone was there, Director M introduced me to the teachers again. Then, Director M officially began to explain his thoughts on the design and organization of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual. During the whole preparation meeting, Director M was explaining and each class teacher was listening carefully, taking notes and occasionally asking questions. At the end of the preparation meeting, I had a brief conversation with Director M. He told me that he decided on the idea of the ritual design, but each class was given autonomy to discuss exactly what they would perform in the ritual. The purpose of the ritual preparation meeting was to arrange some preparatory work and let all the teachers discuss the program in the final performance according to the various situation of each class. Then, he told me that in two days, there would be a school-level ritual preparation meeting for all grades.

Among other things, Mrs. J, the 5th-grade dean, would make a presentation about the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual and Director M asked me to follow up with her for further data. He then asked Mrs. J, who was about to leave the conference room, to wait for a second and introduced my research plan in detail to Mrs. J. He emphasized to her to help me to coordinate the time to visit the different classes related to the preparation of the ritual. This ritual preparation meeting was more like a task-setting meeting and I did not know more details about the discussion.

In general, there are three key participants in one ritual: the headmaster, director, and ritual expert. The headmaster, who can be called the leader of the ritual, has the power to decide the content and level of the ritual. The director, who can be thought of as the executor, is responsible for organizing the ritual. The ritual expert, as a consultant and instructor, is another significant decisive character in the ritual. However, for the majority of schools in China, an expert is not necessary, but optional. Below, I try to explain the mutual relationships of all the participants. I mainly talk

about how different factors influence the design of the ritual and the specific contribution of various roles in the ritual.

When I was doing field observations at the school, I found that all of the work was performed with great uncertainty, except for the definite ritual performance. This is closely related to the characteristics of the school, where the class schedule already divides one day into different parts. From this point of view, the ritual practice is a rather uncertain thing in operation. Under this condition, I am particularly interested in what schools do to prepare for one ritual after another. How many different perspectives are considered in this? Is there a relatively structured process? I am also interested in how the ritual is prepared and developed step by step, compared with the content of the ritual. Construction of the procedure of ritual practice is of great significance for understanding the “actual role” of ritual in school education practice. The “process” in this case is not only sequential but also includes the people involved in the different stages and their roles and responsibilities in the process.

5.1.1 Director M: design balance between theory and practice

The school did not have a clear procedure for the organization of the ritual, specifying what steps to follow for the design, organization, rehearsal, and performance. However, from my observations, I found that the process of the ritual organization was similar to other school activities: design, preparation, rehearsal, and performance. The ritual design is the first part of the preparation, which usually begins two weeks before the final performance. During these two weeks, students have approximately one week to prepare and rehearse so that the ritual can be performed under the designed plan. The design of the ritual is the most complex part of the overall organization. Director M is a key central coordinator in the early preparation phase of ritual design.

“I need to know what equipment is needed here, or how many people and things need to be coordinated. Some things are what I need to do personally, others have to be entrusted directly to other

teachers or staff to coordinate together. For example, for some work that needed communication, such as the background and theme of the board, it was definitely my idea...I was mainly responsible for this. So the determination of content was my task... ” (Director M)

According to Director M’s expression, in the design of the ritual, it is essential to emphasize the balance of two elements, theory and practice. On the theoretical level, location, content, and educational effect must be considered. For example, in 2020, when the Covid-19 situation was severe, students were only able to complete their study of the festival culture of the Qingming Festival online but were not able to participate in the rituals in terms of physical performance. By 2021, when the Covid-19 situation gradually stabilized, Director M added a series of preparations to the ritual, such as the selection of the ritual location and the setting of the ritual scene. In Director M's opinion, all of these require theoretical considerations. It is worth emphasizing that the theory includes ritual theory, educational theory, folklore, culture, history and other contents related to the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual such as the specification of the location setting, the selection of background music, the rehearsal of students’ physical movements, students’ educational acquisition in the ritual and so on.

Interview transcript with Director M:

The plan and design took more energy which requires more brain power because we can’t just decide what step we want to do randomly. What is the goal and task of rituals? What problem needs to be solved by rituals? What ability of students should be cultivated by rituals? I also need to clarify what the final educational effect of the ritual is, such as what kind of effect the stage should be realized... At this time, we have to consider two points. First, we need to take into account if the ritual place is appropriate. For example, we would ask students whether all of the rituals need to be applauded or not. In the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, applauding does not express respect to the martyrs and ancestors. Second, some of the tunes of the background music are very nice but are unsuitable for the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual because the music is too cheerful and so on. Choosing the music depends on the requirements of the atmosphere, so we have to

consider these when designing every ritual. These are also a kind of education for children. (Director M)

In addition to theoretical considerations, Director M also needs to consider a variety of educational practices, which can help readers achieve a greater understanding and appreciation of the complexity of school ritual practice. As a result of these factors, ritual design becomes more realistic and operationally feasible. From the interview, we can know that, although there are no regulations, it seems that he completely realized what a “proper” ritual should look like.

At the practical level, Director M considers two main factors:

The first factor is student acceptance, that is, considering whether the ritual can highlight the student’s subjectivity. The theoretical level of design, often from an adult’s perspective—although to some extent the idea has been changed to be as childlike as possible—still needs to be reflected upon regarding whether students can achieve it. In student interviews, it became clear that those adult-designed rituals still do not quite match children’s ideas. How to make rituals that are truly accessible to students has been the core of ritual research by Chinese researchers in recent years, but in fact, the interviews so far have shown that there is still a large gap between theory and practice. More discussion on this topic is presented in Chapter 6.

The second dimension is the balance between limited rehearsal time and the achievement of reasonable educational goals. As can be seen from the description of school life in Chapter 4, daily life in the elementary school is very well organized. Rituals are not part of the daily school routine and are held approximately 1–2 times per month. Each ritual is rehearsed individually during class or break time and then as a group for the grade level or the school level. This requires each teacher to adjust their classes to the appropriate time, leaving rehearsal time available for preparing for the ritual. Neither the teachers nor the students want to spend too much time on the ritual rehearsal. In terms of time, if the selection of a particular program takes too long in rehearsal, it might be replaced with another option in the design.

5.1.2 University professors as ritual experts: a bridge between ritual policy and practice

Director M told me that before each ritual, he shows the designed ritual plan to some “ritual experts”. Who are the “ritual experts” here? What is their main job? How do they each see the role and function of the “experts” in the real ritual practice?

Director M explained that some of the experts he invited are university professors, specialized teacher trainers, retired professors who are still experts in conducting school rituals, and others who work in museums and other places. Anyone who can provide more professional assistance in the design of the ritual can be considered an “expert” of the school. On Director M’s recommendation, I contacted a “ritual expert” Professor K, who often comes to the school to conduct rituals. Professor K is specialized in pedagogy and works at a university. He has also been invited in designing and conducting rituals in many elementary and middle schools in the whole of China. Director M told me that he is always willing to ask Professor K for advice whenever he organizes a ritual and invites Professor K to watch the final ritual performance with them whenever he has spare time.

5.1.2.1 Teacher trainers in higher education

As a result of Covid-19, I conducted an online interview with Professor K to find out how university professors as “ritual experts” play a role in ritual practice and what they do in ritual practice besides guiding schools in designing and organizing rituals. Since I was interested in the process of Professor K’s involvement in ritual practice, I considered this as a good place to start the expert interview with Professor K in an open way that would encourage the interviewee to tell their story and thus reconstruct the process based on the interpretation.

Q: “Could you tell me a little bit about the efforts you have made over the years to implement the theory into school practice?”

A: “In terms of practice, the first step, is teaching courses, including postgraduates and undergraduates about some

introduction knowledge of ritual and ritual education. From the perspective of courses, we hope that the fact that “ritual has an educational function” can be introduced to these future teachers, which is a kind of practical exploration. The second one is the lecture. Lectures are given all over the country, from Beijing to Daqing (northeast of China), from northwest to Suzhou (south of China), to various teachers, which is also a way to let those teachers know that the ritual has educational value. Maybe it will become part of his job, maybe it will become a kind of sense of awareness, both are fine, at least let them know first. A great number of programs are also given to the head teachers and directors responsible for moral education so that they can be aware of the educational function of rituals in terms of the whole school system and school governance. The third is to enter the school and act as a consultant to design the school’s curriculum, activities, and even culture.

Prof. K explained that, in fact, regarding ritual practice, he is generally involved in three aspects of related work: daily theoretical lectures, for example, pre-service training; lectures for teacher training; and participation in ritual practice in primary and secondary schools as an instructor. As per Professor K’s interview, this is certainly a common phenomenon in Chinese universities. Throughout mainland China, many college professors are doing similar work to him, both from normal universities and from comprehensive universities with school-related majors. Teachers from these universities are involved in educational practices with primary and secondary schools in their surrounding areas and even with schools in different provinces and cities throughout China. This also includes training related to rituals.

In Germany, post-service training for teachers is an essential part of teacher education and according to German law, professors in German universities are very free in what they should do. In this regard, Professor. K also talked about the influence of the Chinese national policy on teachers. They “follow the guidance from national education policy.” In China, article 5 of the law of “professional ethics for teachers in universities” (Ministry of Education, 2011), emphasizes “offering society service.” Specifically, it includes “popularizing scientific knowledge, actively

participating in social practice, consciously undertaking social obligations, and actively providing professional services.” Here, “social service” has also been incorporated into the evaluation system as an assessment indicator of university teachers’ academic performance. In 2016, the Ministry of Education promulgated the “Instructional Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Deepening the Reform of the Evaluation System of University Teachers”¹ which particularly emphasizes the “comprehensive assessment of teachers’ social services.” Highlighting social benefits and long-term interests, teachers are comprehensively evaluated for their participation in discipline construction, student cultivation, science and technology promotion, expert consultation, and undertaking of public academic affairs. Under this policy, teacher training and providing expert consultation for primary and secondary schools as “ritual experts” are actually one of the important components of the responsibilities of professors in Chinese universities.

Q: Can you describe, as an example of ritual guidance in a specific school, the process by which you have guided the school through rituals and some of the key changes in the development of ritual reform in schools?

A: “The first thing they felt was that they could find some theories during their whole practical process, something that they could rely on it. At least they felt that all their attempts were not exploration without any direction. They will first of all feel that they are scientifically doing this, and they are not just in a mess. The second thing I want to say is that they would tell me about some basic ideas of their ritual design and I might make some suggestions. Thirdly, owing to the fact that for some of the rituals I was present during the whole performance of the ritual, which could also be a kind of process monitoring. Finally, that is the conclusion and evaluation part. They will also ask me for my opinion and evaluation on a series of activities that the school does every year would give them positive feedback and they would have the confidence to go ahead. ”

¹ http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/s7151/201609/t20160920_281586.html

In this interview, Professor K introduces in detail the main types of work he undertakes when he visits primary and secondary schools for expert consultation. This interview with Professor K provides readers with a window into a specific group of Chinese ritual experts. There are several categories of work that they undertake, corresponding to several different roles: researcher, trainer, instructor, and evaluator. Thus, university teachers act as a bridge between “policy” and “practice”, using their academic ability in their field to help improve the ritual organization. This is a win-win situation, not only can the elementary school achieve the educational practice expected by the policy but also the university teachers themselves can be recognized and accepted in the evaluation of teachers because of their social service work such as expert consultation.

5.1.2.2 Defenders of ritual theory and auxiliaries of ritual practice

Whether it is teacher training or expert guidance on ritual practice, Prof. K believes that it is important to follow a series of theories, for example, rituals should have structure, and the core elements of rituals should be included. Regardless of the type of ritual, Professor. K believes that the nature of the ritual is essential and therefore the basic elements must be considered. For example, in Grimes' *The Beginning of Ritual Studies* (Grimes, 1982), the elements of ritual that must be presented as a whole include ritual space, ritual object, ritual time, ritual sound and language, ritual identity and ritual action. Therefore, considering the elements and characteristics of ritual is a significant aspect. In the case of school rituals, the difference between them and rituals in the anthropological sense is not reflected in the ritual elements but in the educational purposes that the rituals are meant to reveal and the culture in the rituals.

“Firstly, respecting the theoretical system, if the school asks me how to design the ritual, how to design the activities, I still have to consider the integrity of the ritual. It should have a beginning, an end, the whole process, and so on. If they ask me how the ritual should be designed, I will consider the framework, integrity, and conscientiousness of the ritual, guiding them as to which aspects should be emphasized or taken out, making it like a real ritual rather than a game or another activity. I have to use the theoretical

framework of the ritual to give them the necessary suggestions. Secondly, we have to respect the culture of the school. The reason why he wants to organize this ritual has to be communicated. At the core of the ritual, the culture of the school should be seen. So these two things have to be combined.” (Professor K)

In fact, from his perspective, ritual design is based on two principles. One is that ritual design should follow ritual theory to ensure that it is separated from other school activities. The other is that ritual design should reflect the culture of the school. Overall, the ritual design, in particular, the ritual scene and ritual procedure, is mainly led by the management team of the primary school. After this, if Director M asks Professor K. for some suggestions, he will make some adjustments consciously and purposefully, offering suggestions for additions, modifications, and deletions. Some examples here are rethinking the setting, the rationality of background music, the rigor of the ritual structure, and the accuracy of the ritual content. Whether the advice is effective or general positive feedback, the expert usually provides a relatively unambiguous response to any confusion or queries raised by the school. In summary, if the school is willing to ask for guidance from an expert, the final performance is mostly based on a collaboration between the school and the expert. After the ritual has been performed, the expert’s evaluation can also give the school a new direction for the next ritual. At this point, the school’s ritual practice seems to enter a new procedural and structured cycle.

From the interview with Director M, it is clear that Director M believes that ritual theory does give them a clear understanding of what constitutes an appropriate school ritual. In Director M’s opinion, the advice from the ritual expert is a critical element for the successful organization of the whole ritual. The knowledge provided by the ritual experts, including the theoretical knowledge related to rituals, the details behind the ritual performances including the standards and norms of the ritual organization, could help them to organize the rituals better.

“For me, it is very effective. On the one side, I can know the theory of the ritual and gain a clear understanding of the purpose and meaning of this ritual activity. On the other side, these experts

not only tell me the specific standards and norms of how to organize the ritual but also introduce how this came about and how this developed.” (Director M)

Here, Professor K gives an example to emphasize the value of such an expert’s help in the accuracy of the content of the ritual,

“For example, I suggested that if they want to perform a ritual in ancient China, not only should they wear ancient clothes but also pay attention to how to sit, how to stand, how to bow, and so on. All of these elements should follow history. If they didn’t know this before, I recommended they ask for advice from experts... All in all, what I want to express to teachers is if they want to organize a ritual that reveals ancient culture, then the essence of ancient culture cannot be replaced and affected. Furthermore, the elements we can inject into modern society should also be considered, including new means, new values, and new relationships between human beings. These should also be injected reasonably but not too much.”

Certainly, this does not mean that for all schools the organization and design of rituals should be entirely dependent on ritual experts. The director is not indifferent to this but rather plays an even more efficient role in the design and organization of the ritual. In the previous section, I have shown that the director of moral education is a bridge between theory and practice. But here, more precisely, they are a bridge between the expert and the teachers at the school. Various schools have different cultures and the ritual specialist cannot prepare a unique program based on each school. This cultural distinctiveness reveals to some extent the diversity of school rituals. When Professor K suggests a ritual design, Director M will think further about the feasibility based on the cultural characteristics of his school. When the school makes a request, the ritual expert will join in when necessary and work together to further complete the ritual organization. Thus, the ritual expert is a supportive person in some ways, while the school management team is the central leader.

“For the ritual organization, we ask the experts to guide the procedures and normative contents of the ritual. Then, based on their advice, we have to combine it with our idea, because they aren’t very familiar to us. The expert could give some specific advice, but we will

consider whether it is what we want. If I don't know anything, then I may rely entirely on experts. If I have special ideas, it will be a combination of experts' ideas and mine. More importantly, whether I have a clear understanding and plan is a key point. If someone is completely confused, then relying on experts is a wise decision.” (Director M)

Professor K told me that, in general, he is not involved in the design of each school's specific ritual. He believes that “it is not realistic to help the school design all the rituals”, but he could offer suggestions for the work of the school, which includes both positive comments and practical suggestions for improvement. At the same time, the expert involved in the ritual guidance in the school also hopes that, this guidance can lead to a friendly partnership that will feed into his theoretical collaboration, for example, implementing his theories in the elementary school, although this is not “necessary.” This two-way goal of “seeking theoretical guidance” and “seeking a practical approach in elementary schools” has led to a two-way cycle between theory and practice, which has become an institutionalized process.

“If the school had a good foundation before and I have some ideas, this forms a total cooperative relationship. It was not just guiding someone and let them must follow my guidance and my theoretical system.” (Professor K)

It is evident that, in fact, ritual experts do not have a fixed role in the design and implementation of rituals in Chinese schools. With the suggestion of ritual experts, the design, implementation, and performance of rituals can be more “rational” and “standardized,” following historical and cultural traditions, while conforming to Chinese educational policies and making rituals more integrated into the Chinese educational system. The addition of “ritual experts” to the ritual design team has helped to energize Chinese teachers in the design and performance of rituals.

5.1.3 Principal: ritual decision makers under the principal's accountability system

Usually, after Director M has completed the initial design of the ritual and after

discussion with the experts, the program is presented at the grade-level ritual preparation meeting. The headmaster will make a final check. I describe a scene below.

It has been chosen that the grade-level ritual preparation meeting will take place in the conference room. In the meeting room, the heads of each grade are seated around the oval table, staring at their laptops, making final adjustments and preparations. At this point, Director M and several other deputy headmasters enter the room one by one, habitually taking out their notebooks and pens, sitting quietly in their seats, looking in the direction of the entrance, and waiting for the headmaster. Finally, the headmaster chooses the seat opposite the teachers, the one nearest to the projector, and sits down. The teachers from each grade start to present their ritual designs in turn, and the headmaster keeps taking notes while giving teachers timely comments and ideas about some confusing points related to ritual design. When the teachers are worried about the financial difficulties they might encounter in organizing the ritual, the headmaster expresses to them,

“You should have an idea of what you will need for the ritual in advance. What if each child needs to use it then how much will it cost for the whole grade, you have to work it out in advance and report it to me. If we have enough money, then you can do it. If not, let’s see if we can use a cheaper substitution. Some people don’t organize the ritual because they think it’s more expensive. But my view is that what students harvest from rituals they cannot get from the exam”.

Everyone is listening and suggesting possible plans one by one.

This scene describes the process of how the school management team discusses and establishes the final ritual design plan. Through the discussion of the ritual design, Director M is ultimately able to identify which of his plans can be put into practice straight away and which need further discussion about the implementation. During the preparation, the role of the principal is present not only in the design part but also throughout the organization stage. The headmaster’s active endorsement and facilitation can not only give the whole team confidence and further motivation to

organize but also shape a relatively flexible and free design environment for everyone to maximize the possibility of retaining innovative ideas of rituals. After the preparatory meeting, everyone has clearer ideas about their areas of responsibility and the deadline for each task thus laying the foundation for the next step.

The headmaster plays an important role in the overall design and organization of the ritual. In China, primary and secondary schools are organized under the Principal's Accountability System proposed by the "Central Committee of the Communist Party of China" which issued the "Opinions on the Establishment of a principle accountability system under in Primary and Secondary Schools."¹ This system gives the headmaster of each school "decision-making power", which includes "strengthening the moral education of students... organizing and carrying out school cultural activities." In terms of Chinese educational policies related to rituals, China has incorporated rituals into its national policy, promulgating the policy of "Guidelines for Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools" in 2017. This policy provides detailed and unified regulations on the content, functions and objectives of rituals and requires them to be practiced in all ordinary primary and secondary schools all over China. However, for each headmaster, it is still a "fuzzy" area in the policy as to what proportion of a ritual should be present in all moral activities. How each school implements the ritual in the wider context under the policy relies on each headmaster's view of rituals. Here, each headmaster has the freedom to make decisions. In this regard, Director M said that, to a certain extent, the headmaster is a key factor in whether and to what extent the ritual can be organized. The headmaster's approval is a booster for the organization of rituals in the school.

"If principals attach importance to rituals, it is easy to promote. If the principal does not attach importance to rituals or the parents do not approve, it will be very difficult to organize. In some schools, some parents may think that if you are engaged in so many rituals then you will not have enough time to study. For students, there is no doubt that they still have to concentrate more on their test scores.

¹Translation of 中共中央《关于建立中小学校党组织领导的校长负责制的意见(试行)》(26.01.2022)

So, of course, such schools are not willing to engage in more rituals.”
(Director M)

Many factors influence the headmaster’s decision apart from the theoretical soundness of the design such as financial support. Director M told me that he, as the main person in charge of the ritual, does not have any authority to decide on the allocation of funds for each part of the ritual but must discuss it with the headmaster. Therefore, whenever a ritual is held, there is a certain amount of time spent discussing the “funding” and repeated coordination. The readers might be confused as to where the money for the ritual comes from. Why is it necessary to coordinate the “funding” over and over again? In fact, according to Director M, every ritual has to go through a series of basic processes regarding funding: firstly, a company must be found that can undertake all aspects; secondly, the fees must be negotiated and the contract must be signed; thirdly, the venue for the ritual must be booked and the props and staging discussed; fourthly, the official expenditure of funds must be tallied after the ritual.

In the interview, Director M explained that under the financial system of the Beijing Education Committee and the Education Commissions of the District, each school is given a certain amount of money to carry out activities each year, depending on the number of students. If a school wants to organize more activities or activities that cost a lot of money, they need to apply to the Education Commission for a budget a year in advance. If this is approved by the government, then the following year more money will be given for the organization of the activity. Due to the system, the total amount of money is relatively fixed and how it is spent depends on the school. If there are many activities, then the amount of money belonging to each activity is slightly less, or different forms of further reduction can be considered.

With the requirements of this financial system, Director M said the school is not yet allowed to look for multiple companies. For example, venue decoration usually requires contacting a design company, costumes and props require contacting a rental company, and so on. Currently, this kind of cooperation with multiple companies is not allowed. The school needs to find a suitable company that has both rental services

and advertising design so that the “Qingming Sacrificial Ritual” can be dealt with as a whole project. Under this financial system, there are many different companies currently working with this elementary school.

Once a company is identified, Director M arranges for the signing of the contract. After the contract is signed, Director M then works with the company’s staff to negotiate and decide the details of the content, quantity, and placement of the props needed for the ritual. It may seem that the principal is not concerned about this process; however, the principal’s authority is crucial when the school must pay the company. If the principal is not satisfied with the price, the principal will change the price again and lower the cost to “save” some money until the director is ready to pay the final amount of money. This operation demonstrates to some extent the principal’s autonomy.

5.2 Ritual preparation and rehearsal during break time

After the ritual preparation meeting, each class began the specific organization of the ritual. At this time, Director M recommended the class dean of grade 5 Mrs. J to me and let me follow Mrs. J's class to observe the details of the ritual organization. At this moment, Director M was also busy with daily work. After saying goodbye to Director M, I went to Mrs. J's office, where she had already sent messages to all the class teachers, helping me to ask about the concrete arrangements of each class. According to Mrs. J, all the classes were going through their ritual preparations with a very similar process as requested in the preparation meeting. The classes can make some independent adjustments during the concrete process.

5.2.1 The classroom as the main venue for rehearsals

Preparing ritual props is an important factor influencing the ritual effect and the ritual emotions of the participants. There are some props that Director M arranged directly with the company, such as the decoration of the ritual scene. However, there is another part that needs to be prepared by the students themselves. For example, when

they are at the ritual site, the students need to wear small white flowers on their chests. In my observation, I found that in schools, generally, the teacher chose to teach the students about ritual knowledge in the class, both theoretical and practical knowledge. I describe a scene below.

It's the fourth lesson in the morning and the students have just returned from P.E. class. Their sweaty faces still glow with the joy of playing soccer. At this time, Ms. Wei entered the class with a roll of paper, looking around the whole classroom, instructing the students to get their materials ready for the next course. The bell rang, and some students just hurried in the door, wiping their sweat, while others in the class were talking excitedly. Ms. Wei raised her voice and said, "Who's talking? Please keep quiet!" Then she said to the class, "today, we are going to learn how to participate in a civilized mourning ritual and how to make small white flowers (i.e., white chrysanthemums made of paper) to be worn by each of you in the ritual." At this moment, the students were finally seated. Meanwhile, the teacher began to distribute rolls of paper to everyone, and said, "Each person has three pieces of paper, and every six people share a reel. After receiving a reel, please use the scissors you brought to cut a 10cm long paper from the reel," while Ms. Wei raised her two hands in the air about 10cm, moving around from left to right so that every student in the classroom could see. After making sure that all the students had their materials ready, Ms. Wei went to the platform and used the projector to demonstrate the entire process of making a small white flower. At this moment, the students started talking again. The teacher had to raise the volume to maintain class order for a while. When the students quieted down, Ms. Wei began to demonstrate step by step. By the middle of the demonstration, the students seemed impatient to get down to making their flowers. After a few minutes, the classroom started to become noisy again and some students were leaving their seats to show others around them once they were done, while others seemed to have trouble making, turning their heads to communicate with their desk mates. The teacher maintained order and helped each student to solve their problem, expressing recognition and praise toward those students who had hand-made their flowers successfully.



(Figure 5.1)

By participating in the ritual preparation, students learned the reason why they have to make the small white flowers in class. In ancient China, people used chrysanthemums as a flower of “emotional sustenance,” expressing the Chinese meaning of missing. Meanwhile, in the eyes of the Chinese, white symbolizes seriousness which conveys an atmosphere of tranquility and peace; so, white flowers are used to show respect for the dead. Wearing white flowers to participate in the tomb-sweeping ritual can express emotions of solemnity and seriousness. To some extent, the preparation of the props needed for these rituals can help students develop a practical knowledge of the festival. The process of knowledge acquisition is usually passed from one generation to the next. Students gradually develop a serious ritual emotion as they continue to make and experience these rituals. Each different form of ritual preparation further accumulates students’ expectations for the final ritual performance.

5.2.2 Rehearsal time squeezed out of break time

In addition to the preparation of props for the ritual, repeated rehearsals are essential to ensure the success of the performance. This emphasis on rehearsal can ensure that the various procedural aspects of the ritual are rigorously organized. In repeated

rehearsals, students can also increase their anticipation of the ritual.

Student interview:

C: Our class was singing a specific historical song. We had learned this song before, so it was all about rehearsing it over and over to make sure we made no mistakes. The teacher told us that we had a new task of singing a historical song in the final ritual performance. Then, we went home and practiced by ourselves, and finally, we practiced together.

Q: How long did you practice at home and when did you practice?

C: We practiced at home by ourselves, and it didn't particularly take up too much time. I chose to listen to the song during dinner time because I had a full schedule of study in the evening.

D: That was similar to me. I had homework and other study tasks in the evening. At that moment, I had a small speaker at home, so I could listen to it anytime.

As I described in Chapter 4, like German students, Chinese students' school time is also divided by a very standardized schedule. Therefore, when can students rehearse? In my observation, students rehearse during all breaks, including break time between classes and after lunch. Students can be found in offices, hallways, and stairway corners. Whether the teachers were there or not, the students would find an open space after class and either rehearse their own program alone or take on the role of leader and were responsible for organizing several students to rehearse together. I watched quietly as they rehearsed over and over again and it never seemed that they were satisfied with the results. However, when I randomly asked them if they were satisfied with their rehearsals, they all said, "better than last time, but I should be able to do better next time." The students were willing to do everything to achieve their best performance for the final time. After the students were well-rehearsed in the hallway, they would go to the office and rehearse again under the guidance of their head teacher. Sometimes, the bell would ring for the first class of the afternoon before

the students had finished rehearsing and the students would still choose to finish all their rehearsals in the office at that moment before returning to class. As in the scene above, some teachers will prepare a separate lesson for the ritual, while others will allow students who perform the ritual to return after the rehearsal.

5.3 Ritual performance and ending

5.3.1 Ritual space

Choosing the right ritual setting is an essential factor for a good performance. An appropriate ritual space can facilitate the emotional flow of ritual participants to a certain extent. Below, I describe the atmosphere of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual.

In 2021, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual was held in a martyrs' cemetery, 10 kilometers away from the school. Inside the gate is a wide canal lined with pine and cypress trees standing quietly on both sides. At the end of the canal, a 6m high and 1.5m wide monument to the martyrs of the revolution, which is made of marble, stands in the middle. For this Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, two conference boards were placed on both sides of the revolutionary martyrs' monument. A red carpet was laid on each step leading to the monument, with flowers all around. On one side, there was a stereo used to play background music during the ceremony. A big flower basket with a written elegy to be dedicated to the martyrs was also placed well.



(Figure 5.2)

In the scene above, we can see the setting where the ritual was held and the stage purposely built for the ritual. Preparing the right scene for the ritual can enhance the sanctity and strengthen the educational influence of the ritual. In addition to the natural scenes that already exist in the martyrs' cemetery itself, for example, the monument, the other scenes described above are all in the exhibition stage specially built for this memorial ceremony. The red carpet in front of the monument, the microphone stand placed in the middle of the monument, and the publicity boards were specially made for this stage. On the board, you can also see a logo saying "100" which has a special meaning. This ritual was held in 2021, which was the year of the 100th anniversary of the founding of The Communist Party of China. The Chinese government claimed that each social activity held should use that logo so this is widely advertised. At the same time, the flower basket with elegiac couplets created a quiet and solemn atmosphere throughout the ritual space.

5.3.2 Ritual performance and ending

Although there are educational policies, laws, and regulations that instruct the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual (Chapter 6), not all elementary schools follow a consistent process in practice. This section introduces what I observed step-by-step.



(Figure 5.3)

Students are wearing their school uniforms with yellow hats, lining up in order. Before starting, the administrator is telling students some do's and don'ts to follow.



(Figure 5.4)

(1) Welcome the flag of Chinese Young Pioneers (CYP)

CYP is a kind of national organization, founded in 1949 and led by the Communist Party of China, mainly for Chinese children aged 6 to 14 years, mostly primary and secondary school students. Every student is wearing a red scarf, which is a symbol of Chinese Young Pioneers (CYP), standing for the blood of the heroes and martyrs. Some students are wearing the badge which has three or two lines which is also a logo in CYP. In every school, all the members of CYP are divided into various level groups. In each group, there are several students as group leaders. This logo is a symbol of the “student leaders”. Members of the Chinese Young Pioneers (CYP) must welcome the Pioneer flag before each event they participate in. Just as in the Olympic Games, the Olympic flag is welcomed by everyone on site. A welcome song is played while the Pioneers raise their hands above their heads. This is an established set of hand gestures for the Pioneers, which means that “the people’s benefit is higher than everything.”



(Figure 5.5)

(2) Poem recitation “in memory of the revolutionary martyrs”

After the start, there is about half an hour for the students’ performance. Now, some students tell stories of the heroes and martyrs by reciting the poem. The poem tells the story of the soldiers who fought at the forefront of revolutionary independence in the recent 100 years, calling on everyone to remember the contribution these martyrs made to the independence and liberation of China.



(Figure 5.6)

(3) Historical drama

A historical drama was performed by the students. They dressed up like soldiers, performing a true historical story that took place during the war for the independence of the nation. Their heads and clothes were decorated with some red, symbolizing blood, simulating the true fighting and intense battle scenes of war in the past. This scene shows them at the moment before they die from the struggle against the war.

(4) Singing a revolutionary song

Students sang a traditional song from the revolutionary period. The song was specifically learned by the class for the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, so everyone could sing it. The music was also specifically chosen for the ritual.



(Figure 5.7)

(5) Presenting the flower basket

Following the music for the memorial ritual, student representatives present a flower basket to deceased national heroes. This is the same ritual as national Martyrs' Day on September 30th. All the pioneers raise their hands above their heads. The principal is responsible for sorting out the elegiac couplets. The principal is required by law to sort out the upper couplet first and then the lower couplet.



(Figure 5.8)

(6) Bowing three times

All the students bow facing towards the monument three times.



(Figure 5.9)

(7) Visiting the tombs

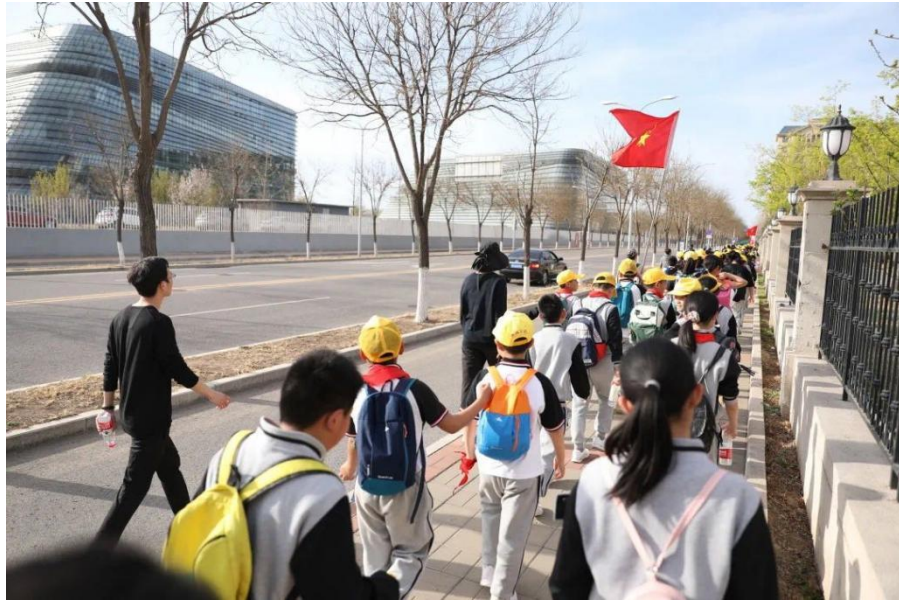
The ritual does not have a clear ending. Teachers let all the students visit the tombstones of the heroes and martyrs one by one. They read every sentence written on the tombstones, raising their hands and bowing to them.



(Figure 5.10)

(8) Visiting the memorial hall

At last, they visit the Martyrs' exhibition hall, reading the historical deeds and looking carefully at the genuine objects used in the past.



(Figure 5.11)

The ritual ended with the students walking back to school, lining up with the CYP flag. Director M said that it was arranged for the students to walk back because they hoped that this activity would encourage students to reflect on the story of the 12.500 km long march in the past during the revolutionary period.

5.4 Memorial ritual and patriotic education

To explain and understand the Qingming Sacrificial Rituals, I analyze and discuss the Qingming Sacrificial Rituals more clearly from the theoretical perspective of anthropology, especially the relationship between ritual and education.

5.4.1 Ritual symbol

The concept of the symbol is central to Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms. Cassirer's philosophy can be understood as a basic formula "man - use symbol - create culture" (Cassirer, 1944). In his theory, Cassirer defines man as a "symbolic

animal.” According to Cassirer, all cultural forms are symbolic forms and man should be positioned as a symbolic animal (Cassirer, 1944). In fact, in Cassirer’s eyes, the cultural world in which man lives is the actualization and concretization of symbolic activity. Geertz believes that rituals belong to a symbolic system in culture. For the cultural sociologist Elfriede Weber, the so-called “culture” contains the structure of values of normative principles and ideas which is a unique historical existence and structure of meaning (Zhao, 2017). It can be understood that, in fact, the purpose of education—an ideal educational system containing many normative principles and values—is for teachers to create a cultural world for their students. Meanwhile, the educational function of the ritual process is just the process of gradually realizing and concretizing such normative principles and values in real educational situations through the form of rituals and with the symbols in rituals, finally completing the process of socialization of individuals. According to the French semiotician, Roland Barthes, in the case of non-verbal systems, the “associative total” between the signifier and the signified constitutes the symbol (Hawkes, 2018). Saussure, the founder of French semiotics, saw symbols as a combination of signifier and signified. The signifier is the “sound-image”, the perceptible part of the symbol. The signified is the “concept”, the thing indicated by the signifier. The symbols in the ritual field, although different in their signifier meaning, maintain the same signified meaning (Zhao, 2017). Symbols are the smallest units of rituals that retain the unique properties of ritual acts, which are the basic units of the unique structure of the ritual context, and the way people deal with social and natural realities. Turner stated that ritual symbolic components are capable of being classified as structural components that act as means to achieve the explicit or implicit purpose of a particular ritual (Turner, 1967).

In the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, people can also find the presence of numerous symbols. The objective historical heritage such as martyrs’ cemeteries, martyrs’ monuments, and graves of martyrs with the background of martyrs’ sacrifice is chosen for the ritual site so that the real historical scene is preserved to the greatest

extent. The national flag, the flag of the young pioneers, and other symbols with typical political meaning in the ritual site create and strengthen the symbolic, sacred, and normative nature of the ritual. There are clear requirements in Chinese law for the arrangement of memorial rituals. In terms of ritual content, from recitations and songs to historical drama, when words, sounds, images, and body come together, they constitute a unique ritual space, which takes all the participants back to the period before the foundation of the People's Republic of China, repeatedly awakening everyone's historical memory. Thus, the historical events are brought into the daily lives of the students in a realistic way. For the students, who do not live in that period, this could help them build a bridge between symbols and real historical memories so that the educational purpose of "forming a collective identity" does not appear as an abstract idea but as visual and concrete content. The educational approach through symbolic interaction is much more visual and impressive than relying solely on textual and oral expression. As a medium, the way that discourse empowers children with the ability to grasp things by reflecting on the external world seems abstract and slow (Wu, 2003). When I interviewed students, they expressed that such ritual symbols contributed to the formation of their ritual emotions.

"I think it was at the martyrs' cemetery that the emotion of sadness arose. If the ritual was held at school, it would just follow the ritual process without enough emotion. I don't think any other ritual was as profound as this one. When I read the graves of the martyrs, I saw a tombstone with the word 'leader'. I was particularly shocked because I thought that a leader is a person that needs key protection, but he still died." (Student interview)

However, the main purpose of the ritual is not merely to motivate the ritual emotions of the ritual participants. Students' knowledge of the development of Chinese history is gradually and repeatedly deepened through ritual participation. The country's mainstream values can also be transmitted. Shaping the identity of the nation of the new generation is the core value and meaning of commemorative rituals. This has been repeatedly mentioned in education policy. Chapter 6 continues to elaborate specifically on the educational purposes of the policy.

5.4.2 Body, gesture, and mimesis

In rituals, body and gesture play key roles. Gestures, expressions, and body movements in the ritual express specific meanings. For example, the gesture of students raising their hands above their heads expresses the political concept of “the people benefit more than everything.” After laying the flower basket, students bow three times to the monument as a group. During the ritual, no body shaking or talking is allowed. Different actions, gestures, and even expressions are clearly described in the memorial ritual, especially when they are not allowed. This must also be rehearsed repeatedly before the ritual. Nevertheless, teachers are still worried that some uncontrollable accidents may undermine the effectiveness of the ritual. However, in fact, the students participated in the ritual quietly due to the serious atmosphere brought about by the ritual scenes.

“When they got there, I found they were really different. During the rituals held in the school setting, when students were asked to stand neatly in the ranks, some students couldn’t bear not to talk to other students for 10 minutes. This Qingming Sacrificial Ritual was held at the Martyrs’ Cemetery, none of the students talked to others, it was really quiet .” (Teacher Y)

The Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is held at a specific time each year, as scheduled. In the ritual, students enter a complex process of mimesis through the repetitive performance of their bodies. Under this mechanism, each time students repeat the activity, they are constantly receiving this external knowledge containing symbols to shape their internal world. They use the mechanism of mimesis to transform the external world into their internal world to reshape and reconstruct their cognition. Eventually, this will become part of their cognition, achieving the “educational goals”. For example, in the historical drama, the students wore the costumes of real soldiers in a revolutionary time and depicted the scenes of soldiers’ injuries in the anti-Japanese war on their faces to make the performance more realistic. They wielded guns, spears and hand grenades, recreating the fighting scenes of those Chinese soldiers who were not afraid to sacrifice to defend their country during the

revolutionary war. By experiencing life at that time, they entered into the ritual space, a realistic imaginary world, where their words, movements, eyes, and so on, with the combination of background music and narration, bring them new feelings. At this point, they are no longer themselves, it is as if they are the fallen soldiers of that time. As they have read the relevant historical texts, when they perform similar gestures and wear similar clothes to the soldiers, at this time, they gain a new understanding and generate new emotions. According to the historical anthropologist Christoph Wulf,

“If someone perceives a gesture, they understand it by imitating it, thus grasping the symbolic-sensual content of the way it is expressed and represented through movements of the body. Although understanding the different aspects of what a gesture signifies is important, what it expresses and means for the body can only be grasped through mimetic processes. It is through re-creating a gesture mimetically that it is possible to understand it because it has become part of the body.” (Wulf, 2010, p. 152)

Only through performance, can performers and others in the scene experience shared emotions and gain new awareness. They also become deeply aware of their role as part of the collective, forming a more real sense of belonging, strengthening and maintaining their “collective identity” as “Chinese” and their “national identity” in defense of the country, further enhancing the collective cohesion. The anthropological theory of mimesis also proves that there are contents that can only be understood and become real practical knowledge for students to master when they perform mimesis, thus achieving the purpose of education.

Chapter Summary:

In this chapter, how the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is considered an educational ritual activity is described. This chapter focuses on the process of designing, organizing, and performing. In China, the design and performance of the ritual revolve around the role of the director of moral education (Director M). Throughout the process, Director M is a central person who considers the ritual program from a

variety of perspectives, including ritual theory, the school's culture, funding, and other factors, while consulting with ritual experts about the theory and the principal about the practical feasibility. The ritual practice model, centered on the moral director, links the ritual experts from the university with the school's ritual practice.

In the specific ritual performance, the body, gesture, mimesis, and symbol implicitly convey educational goals. The mechanism of mimesis causes the gradual realization of such educational goals to occur. However, such educational goals are not arbitrarily arranged, but written in specific policies. For example, physical movements using gestures are embedded with specific meanings and norms. The political interpretation behind the rituals is further explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 The educational logic of school ritual in China: policy and practice

In Chapter 5, I present vivid scenes of the design, organization, and performance of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual in Chinese schools. I clarify the basic process of ritual organization in Chinese schools and, in particular, present many details from design to end in-depth and comprehensively. This leads to another question, namely the logic of the practice. As the documentary method approach emphasizes, it is difficult to fully understand the specific formative process of practice, that is, the transition from what happens to how it happens, but this kind of implicit knowledge can be reconstructed through description, language, and narration.

To reconstruct the implicit knowledge behind the formation of rituals, a description of the ritual process is the first step so that the practice of rituals can be initially constructed. As can be seen in Chapter 5, there are several different people involved in the design, organization and performance of the rituals, that is, ritual experts, school administrators (directors and principals), teachers, students, and so on. Chapter 5 shows how the different roles are performed throughout the ritual process, but what are the logical relationship and internal model of ritual and education?

6.1 The policy logic of school rituals in China: a vehicle for moral education

Durkheim is regarded as a pioneer in providing a basis for ritual study. According to Durkheim, rituals have a function as collective rituals and they are bound to stimulate, maintain, or reshape certain psychological states in the group (Durkheim, 1995). In the analysis of Ndembu initiation rituals, Turner points out that the main purpose of the initiation ritual is to repeatedly teach value standards to boys, emphasizing that every ritual has its own teleology and clear goals (Turner, 1967, p. 32). For the Chinese school ritual, why does it exist? What do Chinese educators want rituals to inspire?

In the view of historical anthropology, any kind of ritual must be analyzed in its historical context and cultural background. In a way, rituals in the Chinese schooling system are extremely different from those in any other field. After the development of

pedagogy and the localization of Chinese education, school rituals, as part of Chinese school education, have permeated every corner of Chinese school life. In China, as early as the 1949 foundation, ritual practices developed in schools across China, like the Chinese flag-raising ritual (Gu, et al., 2017, p. 29) and the Chinese modern Eighteen-Year-Old Oath ritual (Zhang, 2010). When you enter a primary or secondary school in China, it is easy to identify a large number of ritual activities. All of these different rituals are education-oriented, sharing the educational function which meets the needs of Chinese society with other educational elements. This aligns with Gu et al. (2017) who says “for Chinese schools, the ceremony plays a significant role in education.”

“There are two main functions of rituals, from the growth and development of human beings to the construction of collectivity. Rituals about individuals refer to some rituals from birth to death. Ritual is a cohesive force in the formation and consolidation of society and its development. We have to take into account its educational function, especially the educational function of ritual. The educational function of ritual can also be considered as individual and collective at the primary and secondary school level, but it cannot be a new thing. Therefore, I hope to divide the function of rituals into moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education...changing from the function of ritual to the educational function of ritual in primary and secondary schools to make it possible for localization so that Chinese teachers can understand it easily. Maybe this way of classification was unreasonable worldwide because we human beings are comprehensive and complete.” (Professor K)

Chinese school rituals are educational. Schools are specialized institutions for cultivating students. In contrast to families, schools plan and organize educational activities with a systematic design and arrangement in terms of educational purposes. This characteristic is reflected in Chinese educational policies (Li & Xue, 2021).

In China, especially in mainland China, the design and implementation of educational content are entirely the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (Li, 2021). Although more detailed policies are clarified in each province, these must be

based on compliance with the policies of the Ministry of Education. As part of the Chinese schooling system, school rituals, like other schooling activities, follow promulgated educational policies and fulfill specific educational purposes. The purpose of education is the desired goal of educational activities. It is not only the core of education but also the basis, evaluated standard, starting point, and destination of activities and has a strict guiding and regulating function.

In China, the purpose of education is usually stated in a unified way by the educational policy issued by the state. The purpose of education, as the general goal and direction of education, defines the direction in which students should be cultivated. To be more specific, the content, form, approach, and methods consider the purpose of education as the highest criterion. With the understanding of the purpose of education, educational activities that take the educational purpose as their starting point and destination, simultaneously, according to the effectiveness of the educational activities will ultimately be evaluated through the achievement of the educational purpose. In the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, although the educational purpose is implicit and abstract, it can be reinforced by specific ritual contents, such as the explicit use of body and language.

In China, education aims have also changed with historical development. Although the aims of education have not been expressed in exactly the same way in different periods, these are generally similar, that is, all of them have a distinct political orientation. School education in China has always had to emphasize the need to cultivate a future generation in line with the direction of socialist development. The Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, as amended in 2006, stipulates that:

“Compulsory education must follow the national education policy, implementing literacy education, improving the quality of education, to enable children and adolescents of school age to improve their moral, intellectual and physical qualities, so that they can develop comprehensively in terms of morality, intelligence, and physical fitness. This will lay the foundation for cultivating ideal,

moral, educated and disciplined constructors and successors of socialism.”

In the Chinese modern education system (Li & Xue, 2021), five key educational directions exist, including Moral education, Intellectual education, Physical education (or Sports education), Aesthetic education, and Labor education. “Ritual education” is categorized as Moral education.

What is Moral education? In short, it is education that cultivates students’ morality. However, in terms of connotation or at the specific operational level, moral education in China includes value education, ideological education, political education, legal education, and so on (Gao et al., 2021). In elementary schools, the content of moral education includes three levels. The first is the education of basic moral behavior, such as educating students about good qualities such as fairness, integrity, honesty, bravery and so on. The second is the education of civic moral and political characters, mainly including collectivism, patriotism, other political knowledge and so on. Collectivism education is the most crucial educational content of socialist moral quality, developing students’ habits in a collective context so that they can shape a sense of collectivism. With a large number of students in Chinese schools, most educational activities are carried out together in schools, grades, and classes, and the sense of collectivism is an important quality that Chinese students must develop. Patriotic education is that which cultivates students’ strong feelings for the motherland, mainly to inspire children and youth to love and support the socialist system. The third is the higher-level education of world views, life views, ideals, and so on (Huang, 2007). Intellectual education, in general, refers to purposefully educating students about systematic cultural and scientific knowledge and skills, aiming to raise the intellectual level of the educational target through certain environments and means. Physical education is the education that promotes students to develop physical strength, enhance physical fitness and promote physical and mental development through sports (Xie & Li, 2021). Aesthetic education refers to the cultivation of the student’s ability to recognize beauty, love beauty and create beauty,

as well as the mastery of aesthetic knowledge and the cultivation of aesthetic ability, which is an indispensable component of comprehensive education (Gu, 2012). Labor education enables students to establish a positive view and attitude toward labor, developing labor habits (Gu, 2012). When I asked the ritual expert if there is a unique policy on rituals, the ritual expert explained that, in China, rituals belong to the category of moral education. Until now, China does not have a specific policy for the ritual itself, but China does have many educational policies in which some special points on rituals are emphasized.

“From the policy point of view, each policy will not be required for a certain activity, it is only for a field of education, aesthetic education, moral education, physical education, labor education, etc. In this field, some points would be stressed out. Now rituals are stressed in the field of moral education, we feel very excited, which shows that the significance of ritual education has been emphasized in the Ministry of Education of China. Under this circumstance, it has been more confident and gratifying for us to do research (Professor K).”

Moral education has always been the initial focus of school education in China. The Chinese government has set up the role of “moral education director” in each school to be responsible for the communication, coordination and management of moral education work in each school. In 2012, the report of the 18th Party Congress pointed out that moral education should be the fundamental task of education, which is a further deepening of the 17th Party Congress’ philosophy of “insisting on putting moral education as the first task in education.” At the same time, the state emphasizes that the way that each school implements the fundamental task of moral education should actively cultivate and practice socialist core values and strengthen moral education in primary and secondary schools. Thus, this further promotes the development of patriotism, collectivism and socialism education in depth. In June 2012, the Ministry of Education promulgated the “12th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education.” In the “Strengthening and Improving Moral Education” item, it is further emphasized that

“With the construction of the core socialist values system as the core, education on ideals, beliefs, patriotism, civic morality, and basic literacy education should be integrated throughout the whole process of education and teaching.”

In 2017, the Ministry of Education issued the “Guidelines for Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools,”¹ which clarifies detailed regulations on the whole educational objectives and educational content, clearly stipulating that the implementation of specific educational content should be carried out in several specific dimensions to accomplish the prescribed educational objectives, specifically including curriculum (national curriculum, local curriculum, school-based curriculum) (Cui & Lei, 2020), culture (campus environment, such as architecture, landscape design, class construction, school culture construction, etc.), activities (traditional festivals, memorials, entrance and graduation ceremonies, initiation ritual, flag-raising ritual, etc.), educational practices (traditional culture education, revolutionary tradition education, legal and safety education, science education, environmental protection education, etc.), management (class system, class teacher work, etc.), and family-school cooperation (family education, social education, etc.). The promulgation of the “Guidelines for Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools” ensures the concrete implementation of relevant policies in many aspects such as objectives, contents and cases. Among them, the overall goal of moral education in primary and secondary schools is expressed as

“to cultivate students’ love for the party, country, and citizens and enhance national consciousness and sense of social responsibility. To educate students to understand, identify with, and support the national political system as well as the excellent Chinese traditional, revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture to enhance confidence in the road, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, guiding students to understand and grasp the connotation and requirements of the core socialist values...”

This requires schools to strengthen education in modern Chinese history and

¹ Translation of 《中小学德育工作指南》

revolutionary culture, guiding students to understand the history of the Chinese revolution and the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. By understanding the glorious deeds of exemplary figures, they should know that modern China comes from the blood and lives of countless martyrs. Students should learn the excellent qualities of revolutionary martyrs, shape collective consciousness as well as admire these national heroes and revolutionary forefathers. Further, the excellent traditional culture developed by the Chinese nation in the development of civilization for more than 5,000 years has accumulated the deepest spiritual qualities and value pursuits of the Chinese people. China requires students to be able to enhance education in the national spirit with patriotism as the core and the spirit of the times and reform and innovation as central. Strengthening education in the excellent traditional Chinese culture and advanced cultures such as revolutionary culture and socialism are also included.

In terms of rituals, in the Chinese education system, especially the moral education system, “rituals” are attributed to the theme of active moral education and are also covered in thematic educational practices, mainly divided into festival rituals, political rituals (commemorative ceremony, flag-raising ritual, etc.), and individual transition rituals (entrance ceremony, graduation ceremony, initiation ritual). Now, I look specifically at the interpretation of the relevant policies in the Manual on Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools.

6.1.1 Festivals and memorial days

6.1.1.1 Traditional festivals and cultural education

China has many traditional festivals, such as Spring Festival (January 1st–January 7th in the lunar calendar), Lantern Festival (January 15th in the lunar calendar), Qingming Festival (April 4th or 5th), Dragon Boat Festival (May 5th in the lunar calendar), and Mid-Autumn Festival (August 15th in the lunar calendar). There are also many modern festivals, such as Tree Planting Day (March 12th), Labor Day (May 1st), Children’s Day (June 1st), Teachers’ Day (September 10th), and National Day

(October 1st). The policy, “Opinions on the implementation of the project of inheritance and development of excellent Chinese traditional culture,”¹ emphasizes the need to carry out in-depth “our festival” theme activities, and the implementation of the revitalization of traditional Chinese festivals enrich the cultural connotations of Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Qingming Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Chongyang Festival, and other traditional festivals, forming new festival customs. The policy emphasizes the importance of the cultural and educational functions of these festivals, which can enhance students’ understanding of traditional culture and deepen their identification with national culture. The Qingming Festival is a traditional Chinese festival of tomb sweeping and it enables students to understand Qingming cultural customs. It is necessary to organize students to sweep the graves of martyrs and carry out activities such as paying civilized tribute to martyrs (pp. 91 – 92). On National Day, students should further deepen their understanding of socialism with Chinese characteristics and enhance national consciousness, forming a firm national concept (p. 95).

6.1.1.2 Memorial day and revolutionary spirit education

In 2010, the policy, the “National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Planning Outline (2010–2020)” put forward a strengthening revolutionary tradition of education for young people, also called “Ideological Education” (Xue & Li, 2019). Subsequently, China has established many commemorative days, such as the Victory Day of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression designated by the National People’s Congress (September 3rd), Martyrs’ Day (September 30th), the National Public Memorial Day for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre (December 13th). According to the Education Law of the People’s Republic of China (revised on April 29th, 2021),

“Education shall inherit and carry forward the excellent Chinese traditional culture, revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture as well as absorb all the best achievements of

¹ Translation of 《关于实施中华优秀传统文化传承与发展工程的意见》

human civilization development.”

Subsequently, China has issued a series of institutional documents such as the “Guidelines for Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools”¹, “Guidelines for Integration of Revolutionary Tradition into the Curriculum and Textbook of Primary and Secondary Schools”², “Implementation Guidelines for the Cultivation of citizen’s ethics in modern society”³ and so on. In 2017, the “Guidelines for Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools” emphasized that revolutionary tradition is a valuable spiritual wealth created by the blood and lives of countless patriots and revolutionary martyrs of the Communist Party of China Education on revolutionary traditions exerts an important role in promoting young people to inherit the spirit of revolutionary martyrs, cultivating their patriotic feelings and strengthening their will and belief (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 144). To implement President Xi Jinping’s instruction on further strengthening revolutionary tradition education, in January 2021, the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China further promulgated the “Guidelines for Integration of Revolutionary Tradition into the Curriculum and Textbook of Primary and Secondary Schools” to fully integrate revolutionary tradition education into primary and secondary school education. Thus, the revolutionary tradition of education was made holistic and serial and the long-term effect was realized. The guide emphasizes the need to conduct relevant rituals on specific festivals to commemorate major events, great personalities and martyrs. In terms of how the rituals are organized, the policy emphasizes that the educational resources embedded in various commemorative days should be explored in depth and students should be further educated on patriotism, collectivism, and socialism by making use of festival and commemorative days such as the Qingming Festival and National Day. Students can choose to go to martyrs’ cemeteries and sweep martyrs’ graves, remembering national heroes and revolutionary martyrs. They also can organize poem

¹ Translation of 《中小学德育工作指南》

² Translation of 《革命传统进中小学课程教材指南》

³ Translation of 《新时代公民道德建设实施纲要》

recitations and so on; thus, students shape their love for the Communist Party of China (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 98).

In July 2013, China officially promulgated the “Opinions on Further Strengthening the work on Commemoration of Martyrs”¹ while, on March 31st 2014, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China promulgated “the Measures for the Public Sacrifice of Martyrs.” On April 27th 2018, the Law of the Protection of Heroic Martyrs was promulgated.

Article 17 The administrative departments of education should focus on young students and incorporate propaganda and education on the deeds and spirit of heroic martyrs into the national education system. Education administrative departments and schools at all levels should include heroic martyrs’ deeds and spirits in the educational content and organize commemorative educational activities to strengthen patriotism, collectivism, and socialism education for students.

Table 6.1

On March 16th 2021, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs issued the “Martyrs’ Public Sacrifice Measures” and “Heroic Martyrs’ Public Sacrifice Measures (Draft for Comments)” on the objects, time, venue, and ritual procedures for martyrs’ memorial rituals. The documents require that, during the Qingming Festival, National Day, and other festivals and commemorative days, one should make full use of martyr’s memorial facilities to organize memorial activities.

Article 2: Martyr’s public sacrificial ritual is the national remembrance of those martyrs sacrificed for national independence, people’s liberation, national prosperity, and people’s happiness.

Article 3: In the Qingming Festival, National Day, or important commemorative days, the public sacrifice of martyrs should be held.

Article 5: Martyr’s public sacrificial ritual should be held at the memorial site.

Article 8: Those participating in the public sacrifice of martyrs shall dress appropriately and in dignified clothing. Participants can wear the Medal of Honor.

¹ Translation of 《关于进一步加强烈士纪念工作的意见》

Article 10: There is no podium in the martyr's public sacrificial ritual. All the participants should stand facing the martyr's monument seriously.

Article 11: Martyr's public sacrificial ritual shall generally be conducted in accordance with:

- (1) The host gives a bow towards the martyr's monument, announcing the start of the ritual.
- (2) The honor guard performs in place.
- (3) Singing the National Anthem of the People's Republic of China.
- (4) Reading the funeral oration.
- (5) Young pioneers sing the song of CYP.
- (6) Presenting wreaths or flower baskets to the martyrs.
- (7) Arranging ribbons or elegiac couplets.
- (8) Bow three times to the martyrs' monument.
- (9) Participants in the memorial visit the martyr's monument (tower, etc.).

Article 14 baskets or wreaths are laid by the party, government, military, people's community, and the masses.

Table 6.2

6.1.2 Flag-raising ritual

To tighten the system of raising and lowering the national flag in primary and secondary schools and enable students to receive patriotic education through the flag-raising and lowering ritual, on August 24th 1990, the National Education Commission promulgated "Notice on Practicing to Tighten System of Raising and Lowering the National Flag in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Implementation of the National Flag Law of the People's Republic of China."¹ It stipulates that the flag-raising ritual shall be held early in the morning every Monday, major festivals, and memorial days. Primary and secondary schools should carefully organize flag-raising rituals, including singing the national anthem, raising the flag, saluting the flag, and swearing under the flag, guiding students to enhance national awareness and strengthen national identity (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 105). On October 17th

¹ Translation of 《关于实行中华人民共和国国旗法中严格中小学升降国旗制度的通知》

2020, the National Flag Law of the People's Republic of China was promulgated. It was already implemented from January 1st 2021.

Article 10: Schools should hoist the national flag daily, except for winter and summer vacations and rest days

Article 13: It should be hoisted in the morning and lowered in the evening in case of bad weather.

Article 14 (2): When holding the flag-raising ritual, the national anthem should be sung. In the process of raising the national flag, the people present should stand at attention facing the national flag and salute the flag with eyes or follow some requirements without any detriment to the dignity of the national flag.

Article 14 (4): The school holds a flag-raising ritual once a week, except for holidays.

Article 18: The national flag should be raised and lowered slowly on an upright flagpole. When raising, the flag must be raised to the top of the pole; when lowering, the flag should not be allowed to fall to the ground.

Article 21: The national flag should be an important element of patriotic education. Primary and secondary schools should educate students to understand the history and spiritual connotation of the national flag and comply with the norms of the basic knowledge and flag-raising ritual.

Table 6.3

In general, the flag-raising ritual in a school includes:

Moderator announces: The flag-raising ritual now begins

- (1) Welcoming the flag.
- (2) Raising the national flag with the national anthem.
- (3) Singing the national anthem.
- (4) Address under the national flag.

6.1.3 Entrance ceremony

The entrance ceremony is the beginning of a student's life in the school through which they should form a good sense of school identity. It is recommended that this ritual contains the following main parts in the ceremony (Ministry of Education, 2017,

p. 113):

- (1) Announcement of the beginning of the ritual.
- (2) Raising the national flag and singing the national anthem.
- (3) Address by the principal.
- (4) Speech by the representative of the new students.
- (5) Making wishes .
- (6) Oath-taking by the new students.
- (7) Announcement of the ending of the ritual.

6.1.4 Graduation ceremony

The graduation ceremony is then held at the end of a student's school life. Through the graduation ceremony, students' memories of school life are stimulated. A sense of mission and honor is enhanced. Their emotion and feeling about school are strengthened. It is suggested that the following main ritual procedures are included (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 113):

- (1) Announcing the beginning of the ritual.
- (2) Raising the national flag and singing the national anthem.
- (3) Address by the principal.
- (4) Awarding the graduation certificates to students.
- (5) Expressing thanks to parents (bowing, offering gifts, hugging, thanking).
- (6) Speech by the representative of graduating students.
- (7) Sending blessings and best wishes from current students.
- (8) Summary by the leaders.
- (9) Announcement of the ending of the ritual.

6.1.5 Eighteen-year-old oath ceremony

The Eighteen-year-old Oath Ceremony can help students build a sense of adulthood and prepare them for being adults which is important for developing a sense of responsibility and participation in family and society, making them qualified citizens.

The procedures of the Eighteen-year-old Oath Ceremony are suggested to include the following main parts (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 113):

- (1) Announcing the beginning of the ritual.
- (2) Raising the national flag and singing the national anthem.
- (3) Oath-taking in front of the national flag.
- (4) Encouragement by the principal.
- (5) Expressing wishes by teachers.
- (6) Expressing wishes of becoming adults by students
- (7) Awarding adult souvenirs

In summary, in the Chinese educational system, school rituals are categorized under the dimension of “moral education”. From the above classification of different rituals in Chinese documents and the corresponding educational goals, it is clear that school rituals are not allowed to be designed arbitrarily but are regulated by policies.

The national policies related to school rituals in recent years are shown in the table below:

Time	Title of the Policy	Ritual education (part of the contents)
30.03.2004	Implementation Guidelines for the Promotion and Cultivation of National Spirit Education in Primary and Middle School	The whole society should combine the entrance ceremony, Teacher’s Day, National Day, and so on with a focus on traditional Chinese virtues and revolutionary traditions to organize propaganda and education activities.
27.04.2006	Circular of the Ministry of	Fully utilize traditional festivals to design and

	Education on Strengthening the Construction of School Culture in Primary and Middle Schools	carry out a variety of activities. Taking advantage of the opening ceremony, graduation ceremony, initiation rituals, and so on to carry out theme educational activities. Insist on flag-raising ritual every Monday.
24.07.2007	Implementation Guidelines of Legal Education in Primary and Middle School	Fully utilize various carriers such as festivals and memorial days to promote vivid legal education activity. Through well-designed rituals, promote legal education, helping students to understand the relationship between their socialized development and lives, cultivating emotions of love and respect for the law, enhancing the ability to obey and use the law.
28.09.2007	Declaration of Further Strengthening and Improving the Ideological and Ethical Construction of Juveniles	Traditional national holidays, national memorial days, opening ceremonies, and initiation rituals contain valuable resources for ideological and ethics education. We should seize the opportunity to integrate resources to organize collective ethics themes in educational activities. Necessary rituals and ceremonies should be held to guide children and teenagers to carry forward the national spirit and promote patriotic feelings, improving ethics qualities.
01.04.2014	Opinions on Fostering and Practicing Core Socialist Values to Further Strengthen Ethics Education in Primary and Middle School	Flag-raising rituals, traditional national holidays, national memorial days should be fully utilized to spread mainstream values.
25.01.2017	Opinions on the Implementation of the Project on the Inheritance and Development of Excellent Chinese Traditional Culture	Organize “our festival” activity deeply and revitalize traditional Chinese festivals, enriching the Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, QingMing Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-autumn Festival, and so on, forming new festival customs. Make full use of major historical events and memorial activities of Chinese historical celebrities and every patriotism education base as well as historical sites to cultivate patriotic spirit.

		<p>Strengthen national etiquette education to improve awareness of ritual, a sense of solemnity and honor in major national festivals and events and establish a good image of an ancient civilized country and a state of etiquette.</p>
17.08.2017	The Guidelines for Ethics Education for Primary and Middle Schools	<p>Make use of Chinese traditional festivals such as the Spring Festival and Lantern Festival to introduce the historical origins, spiritual connotations, and cultural customs of festivals, enhancing the experience and culture of festivals for students.</p> <p>Utilize modern festivals such as Labor Day, Youth Day, Teacher’s Day, and National Day to cultivate education activities about patriotism, unity, loving labor, respecting teachers, and protecting the environment.</p> <p>Hold ceremonies with special significance and value such as the entrance ceremony, graduation ritual, and initiation ceremony.</p>
27.10.2019	Implementation Guidelines for the Cultivation of Citizen’s Ethics in Modern Society	<p>Make use of the educational function (socialization) of etiquette and rituals. Etiquette and ritual are the forms of ethics and the carriers of ethical practice. Take full advantage of traditional festivals, national festivals, and memorial days to organize activities to enrich ethical experience and emotion. Formulate social etiquette and rituals inheriting Chinese tradition and adapting to modern society.</p>
12.11.2019	Implementation Guidelines for the Patriotism Education in Modern Society	<p>Exploit the resources of patriotism education contained in major historical memorial days and events. Seize the National Day as an important ritual moment, organize activities about “My country and I” with traditional rituals and folk culture activities, leading students to understand Chinese culture and experience patriotism and collectivism</p>
21.04.2022	Curriculum Standards of Morality and Law in Compulsory Education and Curriculum	<p>On the National Day of Sacrifice, Martyrs’ Day, and so on, watch videos and visit memorial halls to learn about the great spirit of heroes and</p>

	Program in Compulsory Education	martyrs.
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(Table 6.4)

6.2 Ritual in educational practice

6.2.1 Ritual practice as a choice rather than a necessity

Although at the political level, the importance of rituals for students has been emphasized and the concrete rituals have been suggested accordingly, in practice, ritual is not as reflected as policy. Overall, ritual is an “option” rather than a “necessity” for most schools. There are a variety of reasons for this; however, from my research, the following factors are of particular concern.

First, the drudgery of daily work diminished teachers’ ritual enthusiasm. As described in Chapter 4, the daily life of elementary school teachers is tedious and busy in terms of both the duration and the intensity of work. From my observation, in fact, their work as class teachers in China begins at 7:20 a.m. and lasts until about 5:30 p.m., not including the time spent preparing lessons and communicating with parents after teachers return home. Besides, teachers’ work is very complicated. There are three main types. First, there is teaching such as teaching classes and marking assignments. Second, classroom management, which is usually complicated and full of uncertainty. For example, teachers must tell students to prepare necessities for the next class, reminding them to drink water, going to the toilet after class, dealing with conflicts between classmates. Further, teachers must prepare for various competitions such as teaching skills competitions; attending various teacher training courses; writing various notes and reflections; helping students rehearse for various competitions, festivals, and rituals; and so on. Third, there are a variety of temporary tasks in schools such as meetings. These different types of work run through the class teacher’s day. In such a context, they are not free and autonomous but are bound to the framework of an established institutional model. In such a limited space, teachers are working in a “passive order.” As one teacher said during the interview, “I often

have to prioritize the work, and I have to consider what is urgent as well as significant first.” The result of this sequencing is that things like rituals, which require careful preparation, are not ranked first by teachers. At the same time, the temporary tasks such as the rituals not only shatter the teachers’ own “sequencing” but also force them to insert these tasks among those scheduled tasks. As a result, the ritual are often postponed. As one teacher pointed out, “the daily work is too tiring and tedious, not to mention the rituals.” Therefore, the lack of enthusiasm for rituals among some teachers is not a subjective emotion of individual teachers but a natural situation under the institutional framework.

The second is the pressure from society. In fact, in China, the daily work of elementary school teachers is often evaluated and criticized by various stakeholders, especially parents,

“With the accumulated competition for entering university in real society and the blurring of the boundaries of power and responsibility between school, family, and society, various stakeholders in society, especially parents, certain public figures, the news media and so on, are becoming increasingly involved in primary education. There may even be certain unreasonable interventions (Xie & Li, 2021, p. 212).”

Director M expressed the same anxiety,

“Some parents feel that if you hold these activities, the curriculum will will be disrupted But for the student, they are still score-oriented, then the school certainly doesn’t want to organize activities.” (Director M)

Director M’s interview illustrates the problem of school-family cooperation in China today. In some countries, the requirements for home-school cooperation and the rights of parents are even protected by law (Hayes, 2010), but in China, there are occasions when parents seem to be able to interfere arbitrarily with the activities of the school. In addition, “competition for better higher education” is an important factor. Educational equality has always been a serious problem in China (Xue & Li, 2021). The existence of “college entrance exams” (Gao kao 高考) has led some

parents to classify rituals as “non-score related,” and then interfere with some of the school’s autonomy in the organization of rituals. This “unreasonable interference” makes schools reluctant or even afraid to do professional things.

Third, due to the nature of rituals, teachers are unable to examine the educational function of the ritual clearly and promptly. This ambiguity in examining the explicit function directly led teachers to choose what can easily be evaluated in their busy schedules first, leaving rituals behind. Director M expresses,

“after all, he ended up with a lot of lesson plans, student work, including academic standards, and the principal also had to take on these things, and when he took them on, he probably couldn’t finish them, and he thought, ‘Oh, it’s because the rituals take up too much time, so he might think it’s better to have less rituals, but actually, after some rituals are done, he felt that it was okay to engage in some ceremonial activities. (Director M)”

From the above, we can see that, in fact, from an educational policy perspective, the state wants rituals to be a necessary element in schools and the necessity of rituals is explained at the legal institutional level. However, at the level of educational practice, the reasonable atmosphere has not shaped that rituals are “forced” to be delayed or eliminated due to a variety of factors, such as complicated tasks, external social pressure, and so on. The relationship between ritual and education still needs more consideration in terms of how necessary rituals can be added to the educational system and school culture when needed and how to prevent rituals from becoming a constraint and a task for schools and teachers.

6.2.2 Two teachers’ cases in ritual practice

In the previous section, I explored the intricate relationship between ritual policy and ritual practice. This also demonstrated the current situation in which rituals are coextensive with other educational elements in a complex educational field. What are teachers doing specifically in this context? In this section, I examine two teachers’ practices that deal with the relationship between ritual and education.

6.2.2.1 “I no longer need to emphasize again”

Mrs. J, a 36-year-old Chinese teacher, lives in Beijing, not far from the school. She is married and has two children. She has changed jobs twice till now. At the time of the interview, she had worked in this new school for 5 years.

At the start of the interview, there was a dialogue between us about her attitude toward rituals during her busy daily work. The conversation was as follows:

“The previous school I worked in was relatively more focused on teaching rather than so many educational activities. When I first came to work here, the pace of working was so fast that I felt quite broke.”

Mrs. J begins by comparing her current situation with her previous school (which focused relatively more on teaching rather than educational activities) and describes how she was not satisfied with her new school when she first changed jobs, especially the pace of working. Due to the difference in school culture, she had to adapt to the pace of work at the new school. However, she also felt shocked during the adaptation. She inadvertently expressed to me the initial difficulties she had in adjusting to the new school life, using the word “broke” to express her helplessness and collapse.

Next, she gives specific reasons for this helplessness. She implies that she is unable to balance teaching and the rituals which are not at all in the same system. It was clear from the interview that she prefers doing both things at the same time. As a Chinese teacher, she hopes that she can teach the courses well. However, she does not let the ritual take up time that she should have been spending in Chinese class. In her view, these two parts are quite different,

“But, coincidentally, it was the year I came to the elementary school, I then received a class activity to sing the national anthem. You know, it is an important part of the flag-raising ritual. It (the ritual) was not at the same pace as my daily teaching, so I had to make a balance to decide whether I should teach Chinese or organize this kind of ritual activity, which meant the rehearsal of the ritual in my Chinese class.”

I also interviewed Director M for a response to this issue. Director M says that the teachers have communicated these problems to him before. So, Director M knows about the teachers' confusion. However, Director M thinks that this is mainly the teacher's problem and that she could have organized the ritual without completing it during the Chinese class but at other times such as class meetings. Director M claims that it is mainly the result of the teacher's own inability to coordinate and balance. It is clear from Chapter 5 that teachers have experienced a complex process in preparing for rituals. However, as noted in the previous sub-section, although the national policy is relatively clear about the content, it does not mention exactly when and how to do it. The actual practice of each school depends on the culture of the school to decide whether to "choose" to organize the ritual.

In such a context, how would Mrs. J manage the relationship between ritual and teaching in her practice and what would she encounter? Here, I share an example given by Mrs. J.

It is the same example as singing the national anthem. Two years later, when the students in this class were about to graduate from primary school, she organized a graduation picture book activity where they had to choose the most moving moments of their life in this school. Many of her students chose singing the national anthem. For Mrs. J, the ritual was just an official task. She saw it as a normal event, "this kind of flag-raising ritual is a very common thing for them." Therefore, in her mind, she did not associate the flag-raising ritual and singing of the national anthem with the graduation booklet. She described exactly what the students did and said, as follows:

"many students of my class chose singing the national anthem ritual. Through this ritual, they got a deeper understanding of the national anthem. At that time, they also got information about the occasions when the national anthem was sung, and then they felt the rapid development of our country. Besides, there was even a child who spoke about the "zero breakthrough" (the first time a Chinese player took part in the Olympics games) and the spirit of women's volleyball (five times Olympic gold medal) which means that they could really feel the wealth and strength of our country."

Mrs. J was very surprised by the number of children that chose the ordinary ritual. This result is different from Mrs. J's prediction. She explains that she feels that there are many other things much more worthy of being dubbed impressive than this one. On the contrary, it is the singing of the national anthem that impressed most of the students, which changed her attitude towards the ritual the first time. She explains:

“it seemed to form a motivating and facilitating effect on their growth. So, I gradually accepted or approved of this kind of ritual education. It needed to be balanced with daily teaching. I shouldn't separate them and I paid much more attention to it .”

However, when I ask further about what made her change her attitude, she mentions that after this ritual, the students take it very seriously when they participate in the daily flag-raising ceremony again. She further shows a comparison of the former and the latter situation at this point. In the past, students would sing without opening their mouths (pretending to sing), however, after the anthem singing ritual, they open their mouths and sing the anthem loudly without any prompting or supervision. Mrs. J realizes that the students' behavior after the ritual is what she hopes to achieve through educational management. What they achieved through the ritual is what she wishes for or even more effective than her repeated management and persuasion — from behavior to awareness. What surprised her is that the “educational effect” achieved by rituals on a practical level is unlike the official policy level. The implicit educational function of this ritual is “very surprising,” she says.

“Surprisingly, after this particular ritual performance, everyone attached great importance to any flag-raising ritual. For example, in the past they couldn't open their mouths to sing the national anthem loudly, however, they won't do that anymore now. They feel that it is a matter of pride now. I no longer need to emphasize again to tell him that such wrong behavior is impolite. These prompting words are no longer needed now. Everyone can behave very well spontaneously. I think it is their inner identity that leads to the change in their behavior, which is probably more powerful than me. Their growth seems to be stimulated and facilitated by rituals, so I

gradually accepted or approved of this kind of ritual education. For me, I think I need to balance it with my teaching. Both ritual and teaching should be taken seriously.”

From Mrs. J’s explanation, it seems difficult to understand why only the “National Anthem Ceremony” can lead to a different effect. In a sense, is singing the anthem ritual just like she said, “just as ordinary as the daily flag-raising ceremony?” In my opinion, the “ritual” was not ordinary. Perhaps Mrs. J overlooked some details. So, I asked some further questions, “was there anything, in particular, you did during the ritual? Or was it just the ritual itself that made the students’ behavior changed ?”

Mrs. J recalled many details of the process that lead to the performance of the ritual, including the “students involved in the design and organization of the ritual”, “the shift of the teacher’s role from being a manager and supervisor to a collaborator and participant” and “the teacher as an object of imitation for the students” which are influential in the changes of students’ and teachers’ attitudes during the final performance. Mrs. J explains in detail:

“I think it was my collaboration with students because we had been preparing for a long time. For example, collecting information together, designing the concrete ritual process of the final performance, and the rehearsal of the singing of the national anthem, all of which needed training. I also put my heart and soul into this ritual preparation. I thought it was a mutual influence between my students and me, which means, the fact that I had tried my best to do this also made them feel that what they were experiencing was very meaningful.”

Nowadays, there is a lack of attention paid to the practical path of ritual practice, both in official documents and in educational practices in China. In the above example, we can see that it is Mrs. J who works together with her students to do the extra work that makes the ritual so successful. Not only do her students benefit from the ritual and feel the power of the ritual but she also gains her own identity from it.

Below, I present the second case. This teacher faced the same difficulties as the first. Both are aware of the conflict between daily teaching and ritual. However, this

teacher is not as anxious and devastated by the rituals as Mrs. J. She is more experienced, but one of the rituals performed also changed her perspective.

6.2.2.2 “What students got from this ritual was different from teaching and classroom management”

Mrs. Y is a 40-year-old Chinese teacher. She is also a head teacher. Her students have always felt disunited and had poor harmonious teacher-student relationships. She has been managing this class for five years. In contrast to Mrs. J, she participates in teacher training courses as a head teacher.

I still chose a topic about ritual attitudes to start the interview. What both teachers have in common is that initially Mrs. Y also saw ritual as “really conflicting” compared to other work. However, the difference in her attitude toward rituals compared to Mrs. J’s is that Mrs. Y claims that ritual has a unique educational function. She never rejected organizing them and does not feel anxious about it. She sees the value of rituals as “unique”. She explains:

“I think rituals are important. However, in the beginning, I didn’t want to do rituals because they conflicted with other works, but I thought that, on the one hand, they had a great influence on students and, on the other hand, what students get from this ritual, which has the characteristic of spirit, is different from teaching and classroom management.”

Why does Mrs. Y’s initial attitude towards ritual differ from Mrs. J’s? This can be explained by her as an individual rather than a professional teacher. She tells me that she has always enjoyed a life full of rituals. She also brings this ritual spirit into her own family, friends, students and so on. Mrs. Y believes that she is an individual who loves ritual and brings this attitude to her teaching career.

“I was quite a person who wishes my life to be full of a sense of ritual. I quite looked forward to little surprises in life. The children also look forward to life and to the kind of unforgettable memories that the class teacher and the class brings to them. Then, I thought it would be a good idea for them to have a birthday ritual that they could say they would remember when they were older.”

In this context, I am curious about the situation of the students in Mrs. Y's class. I have no idea what such a teacher means to the students. Mrs. Y shared with me an example of a birthday ritual. Through interviews, I reconstructed this birthday ritual. In contrast to Mrs. J, who treated ritual like a task to complete, Mrs. Y organized the ritual simply because of a sudden idea ("the idea came to me in a flash of inspiration").

Once she had the idea for the ritual, Mrs. Y did not consider the ritual design in the same way as Director M. On the contrary, Mrs. Y tells me that she does not know what the final ritual performance would look like. This is similar but not identical to Mrs. J. while Mrs. J's ritual is a political ritual, which is partly restricted in terms of policy, Mrs. Y's birthday ritual can be organized freely in terms of form and content. In contrast to Director M, who has a well-thought-out ritual design, Mrs. Y claims that she initially told the students about the idea without even thinking about whether the ritual could be done. She explains,

"When I told the students about my idea at first, it was really just an initial idea. Initially, it was just something I thought I would try to do, not thinking that it had to be done. We thought we would see how far we could get. If it didn't work out, we would just have a simple little ritual."

In this paragraph, unlike Director M and Mrs. J, Mrs. Y does not have a strict political framework from the beginning of the ritual design, nor does she have a sense of pressure in terms of requirements despite the fact that it might conflict with her daily work. There is no sense of constraint or pressure. In the absence of an official policy, Mrs. Y has no specific idea of how she wants the ritual to be done or achieved. Mrs. Y tells the story of the design and organization process:

"The children's anticipation of this ritual had an impact on me during the whole process and then inspired me to look forward to it. It was a particularly busy time for me. I had daily courses and open courses at the same time. However, I still insisted that I had to take time out for the preparation as well, even if I had to stay up late. I must get my part done because I felt that because my students were

preparing so well, if I didn't have a program here or a summary for these five years, then it was the teacher who organized rituals perfunctorily. I also guessed that my students may be looking forward to seeing the teacher's preparation. It was their feeling of attention and anticipation that inspired my expectation and attention as well. On that day, the class was decorated with various balloons. We prepared a diverse program. Also, a song and DIY T-shirt specialized for our class were made. I think they could feel that we were five years old as a whole class when they experienced this ritual."

From this text, we can see that in the specific design and organization of the rituals, both Mrs. Y and Mrs. J involve the students in the whole process of ritual design, organization, and performance. The difference is that the birthday ritual is completely free and the students are the main decision-makers and performers in the process. Mrs. Y points out that in her rituals, she divides the work between teachers and students, with the teachers not being involved in the students' parts, giving the students maximum decision-making power about how the performance will be. Mrs. Y stresses that she has to prepare for the rituals seriously because of the students' expectations and the seriousness of their design and preparation, even though she must also continue her other working tasks. What happened in the end? She explains as such:

"the students in my class used to cause some conflicts and disunity in the past. Nevertheless, I found that after this ritual, they had a stronger sense of identity with the teacher. In the past, when I criticized them, they were still a bit defiant and aggressive. Now, maybe it was my fault, they would express that it was their fault, being more polite and respectful to teachers, because they felt that they had built a better relationship with me. In terms of class cohesion, the relationship between students was more friendly and united. If anyone was in trouble, everyone would be more willing to help."

From conflict and disunity among the students in the class to a more cohesive class and from rigidity to harmony in the teacher-student relationship, these positive changes among all the students have convinced teachers of the power and positive

educational function of rituals. Thus, teachers' attitudes towards ritual have been transformed. In the following section, I provide a comparative analysis and make concrete explanations from different perspectives.

6.3 The educational logic of Chinese rituals: comparing and reconstructing the logic of policy and practice

Overall, the documentary method requires both the teacher's subjective intentions can be seen from the narrative and their objective intentions can be presented. Finally, the text should also show the mechanisms behind particular actions and words and how they occur. In the previous two sections, Chinese educational policies and practices related to rituals have already been introduced. Two specific cases are shown as examples. The political dimension of the first section can explain the mechanisms by which ritual acts and ritual discourses are formed and the policy logic that exists. In fact, in China, school rituals are mainly products of policies and institutions which are governed by various educational policies. Considering the practical dimension, on the one hand, the ethnographic data and theory are used to clarify the context and issues surrounding the work of Chinese primary school teachers so that the readers can grasp the overall ritual practice model at a macro level, understanding the external objective context in which teachers' ritual behavior occurs. On the other hand, two teacher interviews are chosen to further analyze teachers' specific ritual attitudes and the process of their formation and change. The documentary method emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the experience of the cases at the individual level (Nohl, 2010), therefore the specific contexts and developmental processes of the different cases receive more attention. In the narratives, the words of the two teachers have been clearly described so that the subjective and explicit attitudes of the teachers and the subjective intentions of the ritual behavior can be expressed as accurately as possible.

In this study, I hope to research the educational logic of ritual, which includes both the political and practical logic, especially the concrete operational perspective. After completing the sequential analysis of the teacher interviews to develop certain

interpretations, a reflexive interpretation follows, providing a certain reconstruction of the explicit and tacit knowledge of the interviewees involved (Nohl, 2010). Finally, a comparative analysis is used to see how different interviewees perceive and deal with ritual practices specifically, that is, their attitudes and their choices. Two teachers are at the core, and data from others such as experts, directors, and students are compared to reconstruct the results.

6.3.1 Rituals as implicit knowledge

From the description of the ritual process in Chapter 5 and the introduction of the first section of this chapter, it is clear that, in China, the practice of school rituals is guided by the official educational policy of the Ministry of Education. The implicit premise behind the education policy is that “rituals have an explicit educational function.” Here, this educational function is very clearly directed. Therefore, different rituals are used to achieve different educational goals. This is also the prevailing theoretical viewpoint in Chinese studies of ritual education. In such a political and theoretical logic, schools would design the corresponding ritual closely around the educational aims set out in the educational policy and evaluate rituals around the goals. Although there is not a detailed policy on the evaluation of rituals in China, both director M and Professor K consider that a ritual that achieves the educational function written in the policy can be thought of as a good ritual,

“ritual education, or ritual with an educational function, is invaluable. This is because it has been qualified that its main purpose is to achieve educational goals. A good ritual achieves the educational goal of the ritual, and a bad ritual does not achieve or violates the educational goal. In the evaluation, the goal has already been set first, so it is possible to know whether the ritual has accomplished the goal or not.” (Director M)

However, in real educational practice, the specific acquisition process of the educational goals in these policies does not develop in the direction expected by the policymakers and may even sometimes develop in a contradictory direction. This is

because ritual knowledge is not something that students can grasp and acquire through language. For example, students are aware from the beginning that they need to open their mouths to sing the national anthem loudly during the flag-raising ritual, but it is clear that this explicit knowledge, which is based on language, is not easily understood by students and needs to be passively reiterated by teachers through emphasis and supervision. At the same time, this passive acceptance is more of a behavioral performance but is not accepted and recognized by the students on a cognitive level. There are two types of human knowledge; the knowledge that can be described through various texts is called explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is often used to convey external normative contents such as laws, policies, and institutions. In the case of ritual knowledge, many scholars have pointed out that ritual knowledge is implicit knowledge.

Implicit knowledge is often acquired through unique personal experiences, body-based practices, body language, and so on. If rituals are used to convey the explicit knowledge of these policies, it is difficult for students to understand and accept the implicit form of knowledge that exists in rituals thoroughly. On the one hand, teachers are forced to act under the compulsion of educational policy and management, on the other hand, teachers do not see the positive feedback that corresponds to this “explicit knowledge” education, resulting in distrust of the “ritual” itself and internal feelings of powerlessness and anxiety. For this reason, educational practitioners such as educational administrators need to be aware of the implicit nature of rituals, changing the situation to try and find connections and correspondences between rituals and the evaluating system of explicit knowledge.

However, do the students gain nothing from the rituals? From student interviews, some students learn a wealth of content from the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual:

“I had a deep impression moment when we had to use paper to make fake white flowers and give flowers to the martyrs at the cemetery. The fact that they sacrificed themselves for the foundation of our country moved me. I thought they are particularly selfless. Some of them died at 20 years old. In the future, I will

study hard and won't do some bad things that will disturb the class"
(Student interview A)

"I was more impressed with the part where we walked back to school after the ritual. That was a total of 10 kilometers and actually all of my classmates were very tired. When we were particularly tired, we played poetry games together while walking, and gradually we didn't feel tired anymore... At that moment, I was thinking how hard it was for those soldiers to walk 12,500 km on the Long March and how incredible their experiences were now. I thought to myself, 'How did they get here?' It was because they had faith in their hearts. So, at that time, I also had a belief in my heart that I must not be scared of difficulties and I must insist on walking..." (Student interview B)

For some students, they did not acquire the educational objectives for which the ritual was designed. This is an important feature of implicit knowledge. In Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge*, it is suggested that the process of acquiring implicit knowledge is individual in nature and difficult to be influenced by the outside world (Polanyi, 1992). For example, as described in Mrs. J's interview, during the daily flag-raising ritual, students are expected to acquire a sense of patriotism by singing the national anthem loudly, but some students are reluctant to act accordingly because they do not understand the corresponding behavior cognitively. This behavior is difficult to change through repeated supervision and external emphasis by teachers. Then, for those students, is implicit knowledge impossible to acquire? Polanyi points out that implicit knowledge is universal, but it requires the active participation of the individual in the process of acquisition. Wulf's theory of mimesis suggests that this process of cultural acquisition requires the individual to assimilate knowledge from the external world into the internal, forming a new internal world through progressive and repetitive reinvention.

"At the Mid-Autumn Festival ritual last year, I performed on stage for the first time. I was so nervous that I almost forgot the words but I just thought of something similar on the spot. After the ritual, my class teacher told my English teacher that I forgot the words, but I still completed it very well. I thought that ritual was very crucial for me; it made me stop having stage fright. I think it

was an influential ritual for my whole life. After that time, I learned that if I didn't do something right, I could find another way to do it, instead of just giving up.” (Student interview C)

Based on the nature of implicit knowledge and the repetitive nature of imitative behavior, the joint participation of teachers and students allowed each student's individuality to be revealed, allowing space for implicit knowledge to be produced.

6.3.2 The implementation path of the educational function of rituals: perspective of implicit knowledge

Under the political logic of education policy, the state expects rituals to achieve certain specific educational functions. This is a valid approach that has been theoretically justified by Chinese researchers. However, in educational practice, what students gain in rituals does not necessarily correspond to the ritual design. In Mrs. Y's birthday rituals, there is no strict educational goal designed at the beginning, but instead, students harvest many “positive” influences. This is a phenomenon that Jackson discusses in *Life in classrooms*, where he points out that teachers have no control over what their students learn from them (Jackson, 2009). Moreover, Jackson says that what students learn in the hidden curriculum, is not always consistent with the official curriculum and in some cases even contradictory. This unexpected finding in the study forces me to rethink the process of realizing the educational function of rituals, especially the part of the ritual design that has been repeatedly emphasized by many Chinese ritual experts and the ritual evaluation after the ritual.

In Chapter 5, I mainly show the various aspects of the design, organization, and performance of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual. We can see that Director M undertakes the main task of designing and organizing the ritual, while teachers and students are only involved in the rehearsal and performance. In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi emphasizes that the formation and production of tacit knowledge are actually based on a dynamic process in which knowledge is not merely elaborated and transmitted as various static objects. In the case of the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, it

is difficult for students to fully engage in this dynamic process as a procedure is designed that will be rehearsed repeatedly by students to receive the designed knowledge. On the one hand, according to theory, many experts constantly emphasize the need to highlight the subjectivity of students in the ritual design, organization, and performance, rather than audiences. However, in practice, the design of collective rituals by Director M is still characterized by adult perspectives rather than a real student perspective. In the case of classroom rituals, Mrs. Y and Mrs. J divide the work with the students from the beginning of the ritual design, without interfering with the students' independent parts. Thus, the role of the teacher changes from supervisor and manager to participant and collaborator. As a result, both teachers found that lasting behavioral changes occurred in the students after the ritual. In fact, this joint design, organization, and performance by teachers and students sufficiently offer time and space for the dynamic process to take place, providing a good context for the production of implicit knowledge. In the interviews, students express their views on the two different types of rituals, that is, they are not satisfied with the type of rituals where the teacher is in charge of the design and organization. They wanted to be able to express the views of the majority of students through a vote on the design of the ritual content and the choice of the ritual form. However, in the current state of educational practice in China, there is still a distance between the process of designing and organizing rituals in the political context and the rituals that students expect to be designed based on student participation, creating an inverse tension between the two parts. This inadvertently widens the distance between the original intention of the ritual design and the educational goal and further increases the difficulty of ritual education.

Excerpts of the interviews are shown here to demonstrate the students' feelings about current ritual practice:

“I think in our class, we could have a public poll before the ritual design and then ask the students to decide what they want to do and let them vote. More votes mean that more students want to participate. This could be the basis of ritual design. Due to the fact

that this ritual would be designed according to students' ideas, they would definitely be enthusiastic and participate more. But I think this could be a little bit difficult for the school to achieve, so they could make a more comprehensive consideration. If the ritual could be designed with more consideration for students, the ritual performance would be better. Now, for most of the rituals, in fact, our participation is actually not high and mostly depends on the decision of teachers. Our opinion was limited to some suggestions only.” (Student interview B)

“Before every festival, our teacher will let us write a handwritten newspaper. Generally speaking, this kind of writing was mandatory. Then, the teacher would select five writings and give them to the headmasters and then those chosen would also be presented in the corridor so we could appreciate them. In fact, I would like our school to organize this kind of activity in another form, because for me, including my classmates, if we did the same every year, we may lose a little bit of fun. For example, in my first, second, and third grades, I felt particularly curious to participate in everything. But now, I am already in fifth grade, I can imagine how this thing will be done, so in fact, our interest is not as high as at the beginning.” (Student interview D)

Whether it is a specific ritual design accomplished by Director M under the guidance of the policy or, like Mrs. Y, a ritual organized to satisfy her own thoughts about rituals, there is no doubt that, as an educational activity, the ritual is organized to achieve some educational goal. For Director M, in contrast, this educational goal is explicit and clear. For Mrs. J and Mrs. Y, the difference between the new changes in the students after the ritual and the preset educational goal made them rethink the educational function of the ritual. From the perspective of implicit knowledge theory, the teachers' new discoveries stemmed from the fact that some of the ritual's implicit educational goals are neglected.

The acquisition of educational values by using the specific educational functions of rituals is one of the functions of rituals. However, for both ritual experts and educational administrators, ritual knowledge is not really accepted by students in terms of practical logic if it is only focused on specific educational objectives and

measured concretely with specific evaluation indicators, standardizing and fixing ritual knowledge. Organizing rituals with less explicit objectives, freeing educational administrators from the heavy context of designing and organizing rituals, and allowing students to participate to a greater extent, may provide much space for the realization of implicit educational functions. Certainly, this is not to say that a single ritual will necessarily lead to cognitive and behavioral changes. Definitely, the acquisition of implicit knowledge is a long-term process and the occurrence of implicit knowledge is also accidental and situational in nature.

Chapter Summary:

In this chapter, I focus on the logic of policy and practice in Chinese school rituals. Beginning with educational policy, I describe the close relationship between different categories of rituals and educational policy in China in detail. By interpreting the policies, I present a basic framework of Chinese school rituals under a policy context. The basic introduction to the content and processes of the different rituals can serve as a logical starting point and a key foundation for an understanding of other school rituals in China. Certainly, the content in this article is mostly derived from policy and legal texts, which seem somewhat primitive and exemplary. In concrete practice, rituals can take on a variety of forms according to the cultures of different schools and based on national policy. Furthermore, I discuss the logic of ritual practice, particularly the comparison between the explicit and implicit educational functions of rituals in schools, with a specific focus on two cases of teachers' ritual practice to illustrate the complexity of the paths through which the educational functions of ritual are realized.

Historical anthropology emphasizes the importance of analyzing rituals with their broader historical, social, and cultural contexts. The ethnographic approach was chosen to provide the reader with as much empirical data as possible, such as video material, interviews and official policy, to present as rich a picture of the ritual as

possible. However, it is particularly important to emphasize that this research presents an example of Chinese ritual and Chinese education. From an educational perspective, this school is a classic example and case to show the development of Chinese basic education because each school has to follow national and regional policies. From a ritual perspective, the basic organized ritual procedure can be seen as the basic procedure for organizing school activities. However, as a political center, Beijing attaches more importance to the Qingming Festival than other provinces. As I did not travel to other provinces and cities for research, I cannot confirm if the whole procedure of the Qingming festival is the same as in other places. Although there are relatively clear recommendations in terms of national policy, there are likely local differences.

Chapter 7 Review and outlook

In Chapter 7, I give a review and summary of my dissertation. While writing Chapter 7, it is the Qingming Festival in 2022 again. Now, we are still unable to visit the graves in person due to Covid-19, so social media has become the place for most people to express their feelings. The prayers for the Qingming Festival 2022 can be read from social media anywhere for the martyrs who died in service of our country; the doctors, police officers, and community workers who died from Covid-19 and those who died after working hard days and nights to protect the people. Among all the messages, I noticed this one from a university professor:

“After dinner, I was talking to my child about my memories in primary school, when the school facilities were rudimentary... The schools were also small... There were no extra-curricular activities and no endless homework... What impressed me was that we participated in various activities almost during every term, including singing and dance competitions, various performances and shows, and the Qingming festival, where we swept the tombs to pay tribute to the martyrs... The most unforgettable thing is that most of these activities were participated in by all students...”

As can be seen from this professor’s message, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual did have a profound effect on some students. Thirty years on, when reminiscing about his childhood, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual became one of the most memorable things. Although he is just one Chinese person, we still can see that rituals have a lasting impact on students.

7.1 Ritual as an important component of modern Chinese school policy and education system

In this study, I point out that policy is an inevitable framework for the analysis of school rituals in China. Furthermore, the policy dimension should also be an essential analytical lens for anthropological ritual studies. This has rarely been mentioned in previous anthropological studies.

In China, ritual and policy, as well as institutions, are inextricably linked. No

matter how much theory is explored and researched, theory cannot directly determine the direction of education in China; but, policy and institutions are the navigators of Chinese school education. As elements of the Chinese schooling system, school rituals are also governed by policy and institutions. The relationship between rituals and education is clear at the policy level, that is, considering rituals as an approach to practicing education. The goal of ritual is the goal of education and the content and symbols of ritual are both referential symbols that contain clear educational content. Rituals have always been conducted in an orderly, planned and organized manner, following the framework of the entire Chinese educational system. A variety of types of rituals are scheduled for a fixed time throughout the year. Further, various rituals actually convey different values. Today, rituals are widely practiced and used in the Chinese school system as a classical way or means of education.

For anthropological studies, this view can be traced back to the theoretical studies of rituals by Durkheim, Turner, and others. At the same time, Christoph Wulf also emphasized the need to focus on the positive functions of ritual in his study of Berlin rituals, which lasted twelve years. Although the Berlin Ritual Study was carried out in schools in Berlin, Germany, some of the ideas in this study are worth considering from an international perspective. In the current study, at least, I present the readers with one case in China. Even though, as discussed in Chapter 6, there are still some distances between policy and practice, there is no doubt that, in China, rituals are still one of the most useful means of practicing specific educational goals in China. Whether schools are actually willing to perform rituals or not and regardless of the development of ritual theory, many rituals have become widely disseminated and practiced as an institution and a requirement.

Viewing rituals as a means of education is a logical starting point for examining rituals in Chinese schools. In this study, we address the problem of previous studies of educational rituals, which have mostly shown fragments of ritual performances and neglected the preparation process. I trace the description of rituals back to the design and preparation period of rituals, dividing them into different stages: the design of

rituals, the preparation and rehearsal of rituals, and the performance and end of rituals. With the ritual practice development, the people involved in the process such as ritual experts are highlighted, and the factors influencing the preparation of the ritual are emphasized one by one. From the descriptions of the different stages, the readers can see that, in practice, the organization of rituals in specific ritual practices in Chinese schools is influenced by a combination of different people and elements. For example, the design of the ritual has to be balanced between limited rehearsal time and reasonable educational goals; the implementation of the ritual has to be balanced between theory and financial systems, and so on. The practice of the ritual depends, to a large extent, on the headmaster and also on the ability of teachers and pupils to work well together within the limited time available.

In recent years, there has been more discussion of how school rituals can store culture. In Chinese school rituals, festival rituals are the vehicles for preserving culture and passing it on. Chinese rituals have undergone development in China for thousands of years. Among different ages, rituals have undergone many evolutions in terms of content, procedures, and folk culture. What I have described in this article is just one of the Chinese sacrificial rituals carried out in one school in Beijing. Every Qingming Festival, a variety of rituals are held in government, museums, schools, civic institutions, and other places. Students learn about the culture of the Qingming Festival and participate collectively in the Qingming Sacrificial Rituals in schools, the basic educational institution for the country, which has been followed by generations of Chinese people. Because of school rituals, the traditional Chinese ritual culture has been better passed on from generation to generation.

As time progressed, the reverence for the martyrs who defended the motherland and the gratitude and appreciation for the changes that have brought prosperity to China today is reinforced and remembered as we participate in the rituals. The culture of Qingming Sacrificial Rituals, which has been passed down over thousands of years, has been preserved and passed on from generation to generation in school education. Nowadays, although times are evolving, the Qingming Sacrificial Rituals have also

made changes reflecting the new era. However, no matter how much the content and procedures change, the culture of the rituals remains the same. This social ethic centered on filial piety, the view of life and philosophy centered on intergenerational life transitions, and the tradition of pursuing one's ancestors with prudence and remembering the ancestors is the spiritual belief of every Chinese person. Schooling is the most direct way for any country to pass on its culture. In the case of the Chinese Qingming Sacrificial Rituals, it can be seen that the school rituals, which carry the country's rich cultural and philosophical values, play an active educational role as they are repeated again and again.

7.2 Rethinking the empirical study of school rituals from a historical anthropology perspective

This study is dedicated to the study of rituals in China from a historical anthropology perspective. Historical anthropology emphasizes double historicity, namely the historicity of the research perspective and research methods as well as the historicity of the research object. From the perspective of historical anthropology, school rituals need to be analyzed not only from the perspective of contemporary educational sites and contemporary society but also by tracing rituals back to the entire historical stage of development, constructing a link between history, culture, contemporary social phenomena, and contemporary education. In the first chapter, I focused on the development of the Qingming Festival in different periods of historical development. From the traditional rituals of "Ji Li" to the modern Qingming Sacrificial Rituals of today, the Qingming Sacrificial Rituals reflect the philosophical and cultural developments and changes that have taken place in ancient China over thousands of years, shaping views on life, philosophy, values, and spiritual pursuits that have remained constant for thousands of years. Today, in the ritual descriptions of modern Qingming Sacrificial Rituals, people can also feel modern China and imagine future China through Qingming Sacrificial Rituals. From a historical anthropology perspective, the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual is a microcosm of China's historical and cultural development, linking tradition with modernity and evolving into a part of the

modern schooling system. Generations of Chinese students have come together to pay tribute to the martyrs and honor their ancestors in the Qingming Sacrificial Ritual, reflecting not only the emphasis that contemporary China places on its own culture and history but also showing another side of China's development in a newer form two decades later due to the lagging nature of the educational influence.

In terms of specific research methods, I have adopted an ethnographic methodology. Although ethnography is a classic methodological approach in anthropology, it was not until around the 1960s that ethnography was applied to research in the field of education. For ritual studies, there is no set framework for research and analysis, which is also due to the characteristic of rituals. What I present in my research does not follow a fixed framework but is more derived from what happened in my fieldwork. This is in line with the ethnographic tradition that is always open to the outside world. It is worthwhile to emphasize again that the school I researched was a school located in Beijing. This is not representative of educational practice all over China. As I have said, there is still a great distance between policy and practice. Although an increasing number of schools are becoming aware of the need to focus on rituals, the practical difficulties that arise from many objective factors do not allow these practices to be implemented.

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