

A Study on the Practical Pathways of Integrating Bronze Culture into Ideological and Political Education: A Case Study Based on Baoji's Bronze Culture

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Abstract: *As a significant component embodying the subjectivity of China's fine traditional culture, bronze culture possesses not only unique artistic value but also represents the crystallization of Chinese wisdom accumulated over millennia. In the context of ideological and political education (IPE) in higher education institutions in the new era, integrating bronze culture into IPE courses is not merely an act of inheriting and promoting traditional culture, but also an innovative expansion of both content and pedagogical approaches in IPE. Currently, cultivating students' correct value orientations constitutes the core task of IPE in fulfilling its fundamental mission of "moral and intellectual cultivation." The integration of bronze culture into university IPE represents a practical attempt to combine China's outstanding traditional culture with modern curricula. Addressing challenges such as the erosion of national cultural subjectivity by erroneous ideological trends, the impact of contemporary social issues on students' worldviews, and the transformative effects of digital information technologies on IPE, this study proposes concrete integration strategies—namely, developing mobile "Bronze Culture +" IPE classrooms, deeply excavating bronze cultural resources, and innovating teaching models. These measures aim to effectively incorporate Baoji's bronze culture into university IPE, gradually strengthen college students' cultural confidence, consolidate foundational values, unite hearts and minds, support the construction of a socialist cultural power, and ensure the continued development of Baoji's bronze heritage. University IPE must adopt a broad vision, strategic perspective, and profound wisdom by integrating bronze cultural resources into teaching practices. This approach not only advances the transmission of bronze culture but also guides students to enhance cultural confidence and deepen their sense of national belonging. By synthesizing theory with practice, classroom instruction with extracurricular activities, campus life with societal engagement, and historical awareness with present-day realities and future aspirations, educators can deliver a "great ideological and political course" that effectively bridges the "last mile" of IPE.*

Keywords: Bronze culture, Ideological and political education, Integration, Practical pathways.

1. Introduction

Bronze culture is vast, profound, brilliant, and globally renowned. Baoji—a city located at the western end of the Guanzhong Plain—has long served as a luminous pearl of ancient Chinese civilization. Its strategic geographical position has made it not only a transportation hub but also a critical node for cultural exchange. Historically situated on the western frontier of the Shang dynasty, Baoji witnessed the flourishing of Zhou ritual-music systems and Qin legalist governance, leaving behind a rich cultural legacy. Surrounded by numerous vassal states and aristocratic lineages, the region became a melting pot where diverse cultures converged and interacted, giving rise to a distinctive bronze culture.

2. The Relationship Between Bronze Culture and Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education

2.1 Baoji's Bronze Culture Represented by the He Zun Vessel

Although Baoji's bronze tradition constitutes but a small tributary within China's broader cultural river, it holds exceptional representative significance. As the cradle of Zhou and Qin civilizations, Baoji boasts abundant historical relics. Over two millennia, tens of thousands of bronze artifacts have been unearthed here. Renowned for the quantity, typological

diversity, and epigraphic importance of its bronzes, Baoji is celebrated worldwide as the "Hometown of Chinese Bronzes."

The He Zun, housed in the Baoji Bronze Ware Museum, is the museum's crown jewel. Its inner base bears a 122-character inscription, which includes the phrase: "Yu qi zhai zi Zhongguo, zi zhi yi min" ("I will dwell in this Central State and govern its people") [2]. This constitutes the earliest known written record of the term "Zhongguo" (China). In this inscription, the character for "zhong" (中, center) is pictographic, resembling a banner fluttering atop a pole; the character for "guo" (国, state/country) depicts armed defense of territorial boundaries. While "Zhongguo" originally denoted a geographic and political concept, it evolved over time into the name of the nation. For every Chinese person, the He Zun is profoundly significant because it reveals the etymological origin of our country's name. As tangible witnesses to history and vital carriers for reinforcing cultural confidence, bronze artifacts allow us to perceive the depth of China's civilizational rise and the spirit of its people—diligent, wise, self-reliant, and devoted to the nation.

2.2 The Intrinsic Connection Between Bronze Culture and Ideological and Political Education

During his inspection of the Baoji Bronze Ware Museum on September 10, 2024, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized:

“Chinese civilization spans five millennia. We must further excavate, deeply research, and interpret its connotations and spiritual essence, effectively communicate the great wisdom embedded within it, thereby fostering greater reverence and love among the people, enhancing pride in Chinese civilization, promoting patriotism, and ensuring the intergenerational transmission of China’s fine traditional culture.” [3]

Higher education institutions should actively engage in IPE to protect and transmit China’s ethnic cultural heritage, thereby highlighting the close relationship between bronze culture and IPE. The foundational mission of universities lies in moral and intellectual cultivation—imparting socialist ideology to students and conveying correct ethical principles and worldviews. These educational objectives fall squarely within the cultural domain, encompassing political and ethical dimensions of societal culture. Thus, IPE inherently possesses deep cultural connotations [4].

Bronze culture exerts a profound influence on contemporary college students’ values and behavioral patterns, offering them clear moral direction and exemplary models while underscoring its formative role in human development. Broadly speaking, all spiritual and cultural activities inevitably shape individuals’ thinking processes to some degree; hence, any such activity may function as a vehicle for ideological and political education [5]. Consequently, the “human-cultivating” function of bronze culture and the “person-nurturing” goal of IPE are mutually reinforcing. Integrating bronze culture into IPE should be grounded in cultural inheritance while responding to students’ contemporary realities, aiming to cultivate idealistic, responsible, resilient, and hardworking youth suited to the demands of the new era.

Integrating regional cultural characteristics—such as Baoji’s bronze heritage—into university curricula represents an innovative and meaningful pedagogical approach. For students in Baoji—the “Hometown of Bronzes”—this integration enriches course content and deepens their understanding of and identification with local culture. Bronze artifacts can be leveraged for integrity education and patriotism instruction. By connecting regional culture with disciplinary teaching, Baoji’s universities can utilize their exceptional bronze resources to diversify pedagogy, elevate students’ cultural literacy, and strengthen local cultural identity. Simultaneously, this approach contributes to the preservation and revitalization of regional heritage, achieving a win-win outcome for education and culture [6].

3. Rationale for Integrating Bronze Culture into Ideological and Political Education

3.1 Necessity

Erroneous Social Trends Undermining China’s Cultural Subjectivity

In the context of globalization and rapid digital advancement, Sino-Western cultural exchanges and clashes have intensified. Hostile Western forces seek to achieve “ideological colonization” through cultural infiltration and ideological

struggle, posing a serious threat to China’s ideological dominance and the rise of its cultural subjectivity. Since youth development directly determines the nation’s future, IPE in higher education bears the crucial mission of cultivating young people with firm Marxist convictions, deep patriotic sentiment, and strong cultural confidence. This requires IPE to remain faithful to Marxist theoretical principles while deeply integrating China’s fine traditional culture—thereby achieving dual objectives: enhancing theoretical literacy and strengthening national cultural identity. As a vital strand of traditional Chinese culture, bronze culture embodies millennia of Chinese wisdom and spiritual character. Deep engagement with it enables students to internalize traditional virtues, fortify patriotic consciousness, and nurture national sentiment—making it an effective tool for IPE to counteract erroneous ideological currents.

Impact of Contemporary Social Issues on Students’ Values

Rapid social transformation and economic development have subjected college students to unprecedented pressures, leading to value confusion or even distortion. Information overload, intense competition, and the prevalence of “fast-food culture” and fragmented online content have eroded students’ sense of agency, encouraging short-termism at the expense of long-term personal growth. Faced with employment pressures, some students adopt extreme coping mechanisms—either withdrawing from challenges or abandoning perseverance, resulting in a decline in the spirit of hard work. The phenomenon of “involution” further exacerbates feelings of helplessness and disillusionment. Integrating bronze culture into IPE can thus elevate students’ spiritual horizons and restore their resilience.

The “Overgeneralization” of Digital Technologies and Its Impact on IPE

The rise of short videos, live streaming, and user-generated content reflects growing individualism and technological empowerment. However, these platforms often promote fragmented, superficial, and hyper-entertaining content. Some creators prioritize clicks over substance, disseminating ideologically deviant or false information. Moreover, while AI offers convenience, excessive reliance risks diminishing human agency. Therefore, IPE must strengthen its “frontline consciousness,” uphold dominant socialist values, and thoughtfully accommodate diverse individual value orientations—especially among digitally immersed college students. Integrating fine traditional culture like bronze heritage with advanced technologies is essential for effective ideological guidance.

3.2 Feasibility

Strengthening Ideals and Convictions

Universities bear the responsibility of transmitting and promoting national culture. As General Secretary Xi Jinping noted, China’s millennia-old traditional culture is a treasure trove of wisdom, complemented by revolutionary and socialist advanced cultures forged under Party leadership — providing profound resources for IPE [7]. As the primary

arena for talent cultivation, higher education must fulfill its mission of moral education. Bronze culture—especially exemplified by the He Zun—offers rich historical narratives and cultural depth. Its integration into IPE not only diversifies content and methodology but also broadens students' intellectual horizons, enhances cultural identification, and fosters correct historical, cultural, and value orientations.

Reinforcing Cultural Confidence

“Cultural confidence stems from our cultural subjectivity” [8]. Cultural confidence is pivotal to national rejuvenation, cultural security, and the independence of the national spirit. From the 19th CPC National Congress's call to “strengthen cultural confidence” to the 20th Congress's emphasis on “advancing cultural confidence and self-strengthening,” China is steadily progressing toward cultural revival. As a precious historical legacy, bronze culture provides abundant teaching materials for IPE. Its integration not only expands learning perspectives but also bolsters students' cultural confidence and patriotic sentiment. IPE classrooms serve as platforms for national will and ethnic spirit—enabling students to grasp the cultural meanings behind bronzes while empowering them to narrate Chinese stories through innovative means, thereby asserting the strong subjectivity of Chinese traditional culture.

Enhancing Cultural Identification

China has been a unified multi-ethnic state since antiquity. Bronze culture exemplifies the convergence and mutual enrichment of diverse ethnic traditions. Inscriptions on ritual bronzes often commemorate ancestral merits and affirm loyalty to the central authority—practices that historically reinforced social cohesion and inter-ethnic unity. Universities, with their ethnically diverse student bodies, are uniquely positioned to promote ethnic solidarity. Introducing bronze culture into campuses and classrooms enriches pedagogy while fostering cross-ethnic cultural recognition. IPE instructors play a key role in guiding students to recognize the familial bonds among all ethnic groups. As the main force in cultural transmission, students can deepen their understanding of Chinese civilization through studying, researching, and disseminating bronze culture—thereby contributing to the construction of a Chinese national community.

4. Empirical Analysis: Survey Findings

4.1 Survey Overview

To assess the effectiveness of integrating bronze culture into IPE, a questionnaire was administered to students in Baoji.

Sample: 150 distributed, 139 valid responses (92.6% response rate).

Demographics: 50.36% male, 49.64% female; majors: 34.53% humanities, 28.06% engineering, 20.14% sciences, 17.27% arts.

The 15-item questionnaire (12 single-choice, 3 multiple-choice) examined students' background, attitudes toward bronze culture, levels of understanding, and preferred

learning channels.

4.2 Key Findings

Awareness of Bronze Culture

28.78% reported deep knowledge (e.g., symbolic meanings of patterns, functions of vessel types).

40.29% had moderate familiarity (e.g., could name and describe famous bronzes).

19.42% had limited knowledge; 11.51% knew almost nothing.

→ Indicates insufficient exposure among students.

Primary Learning Channels

67.63% learned via the internet.

64.75% through museum exhibitions.

→ Highlights the need for universities to leverage digital platforms and public cultural institutions (e.g., museums, education bases) to create immersive learning environments.

Current Integration in IPE

31.65% felt instructors used bronze culture accurately but restrictively (textbook-bound).

43.17% acknowledged teachers' ability to explain cultural contexts.

20.14% believed teaching methods lacked innovation in blending tradition with modern tools.

5.04% were indifferent.

→ Reveals room for improvement in pedagogical creativity and flexibility.

Perceived Link Between Cultural Confidence and IPE

66.91% agreed that integrating bronze culture strengthens cultural confidence and self-improvement.

A minority remained skeptical.

→ Confirms the strategic importance of fusing traditional culture with modern education to reshape students' cultural outlooks in the new era.

5. Practical Pathways for Integration

5.1 Championing Practice-Based Education: Creating Mobile “Bronze Culture +” IPE Classrooms

The concept of the “Great Ideological and Political Course” emphasizes linking classroom instruction with real-world practice to enhance relevance and effectiveness. As General Secretary Xi Jinping stated, IPE must be “profound, powerful, and warm” [9]. Given that traditional lectures alone cannot meet the holistic development needs of today's students, experiential learning is indispensable.

Since 2002, Baoji University of Arts and Sciences has partnered with the Baoji Bronze Ware Museum to establish a student practice base. Students volunteer during weekends, holidays, and vacations to provide guided tours — transforming theoretical knowledge into public service. Such experiences not only deepen cultural understanding but also instill a sense of social responsibility, aligning with IPE's goal

of nurturing well-rounded socialist builders and successors [11].

5.2 Deeply Mining Bronze Cultural Resources to Build New Frontiers in Moral Education

Baoji—home to national treasures like the He Zun, Da Ke Ding, Tong Futu, Qiang Pan, Lai Pan, Zhe Gong, Hu Gui, and Wei Ding—is rightly hailed the “Hometown of Bronzes.” These artifacts offer immense artistic, historical, and pedagogical value.

Baoji University of Arts and Sciences has long leveraged its regional advantage by offering “An Introduction to Zhou-Qin Ethical Culture” as a university-wide general education course, integrating traditional ethical teachings into teacher training [12]. Organized museum visits enable students to trace the evolution of ancient ethnic groups on the Loess Plateau and appreciate the ingenuity of Chinese ancestors — turning cultural heritage into living IPE material.

5.3 Innovating IPE Models to Foster a Multi-Dimensional Educational Ecosystem

The core of higher education in the new era remains “moral and intellectual cultivation.” To meet students’ evolving needs, IPE must innovate across dimensions: Blended Learning: Integrate online and offline instruction. Digital Platforms: Utilize official social media (WeChat, Weibo) to disseminate IPE content. Experiential Pedagogy: Employ museums and red cultural sites as “second” and “third classrooms.” Campus Activities: Promote bronze culture through clubs, volunteer programs, party-building alliances, and campus festivals. By breaking the confines of traditional classrooms and forging synergy among classroom teaching, social practice, student affairs, and digital outreach, universities can construct a “four-in-one” Great IPE framework [13].

6. Summary

Culture is the core driver of a nation’s development, shaping its spiritual character and providing enduring momentum. As Marx observed, “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas... the intellectual expression of the dominant material relations” [14]. Though intangible, cultural power profoundly shapes historical trajectories. Bronze culture—rich in historical depth and philosophical insight—offers invaluable resources for contemporary IPE. Its embodiment of perseverance, self-reliance, harmony between humanity and society, hierarchical order, unity of heaven and humanity, filial piety, and loyalty retains profound contemporary relevance. These values provide ethical guidelines and theoretical foundations for building a harmonious society. Under Marxist guidance, universities can systematically extract educational elements from bronze culture—such as the craftsman spirit of precision and dedication—and integrate them into IPE to foster students’ correct worldviews, moral character, social responsibility, patriotism, and national pride. Integrating bronze culture into IPE is a theoretically profound and practically challenging endeavor. While not achievable overnight, sustained scholarly attention and pedagogical innovation will ensure its

successful realization.

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