

The Practice and Expression of "Christ to the Countryside"

Based on the Field Investigation and Thinking of Wu Village in South Gannan

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Abstract—This paper, taking a village in Gannan of Jiangxi as a case, the process of the spread of Christianity in the rural areas as the breakthrough point, on the basis of the fieldwork data, through the Wu Village rural Christianity and the inner mechanism of the development and practice of logic, to reflect on the state, market, and village against the background of interaction; the contemporary Chinese rural Christian communication strategy has been deeply embedded into the real life world of farmers, rural society and the cultural structure, the political and economic structure and the farmer's deep psychological structure of the interaction. From the practical logic of "Christ goes to the countryside", it can be found that the existence and development of rural Christianity have certain positive functions for the harmony and stability of rural social order and the reconstruction and enrichment of rural social public life, but there are also some hidden social risks.

Keywords—*rural Christianity; folk traditions; clan villages; public cultural life; social risk*

I. INTRODUCTION

Every winter and summer vacation, when I go back to my hometown from my Alma mater in the city, I can always hear them talking about the rural Christian church in the village. Recalling the different attitudes of villagers towards rural Christianity at the beginning, the Christian church in the village has taken shape. In recent years, the country has launched a series of important measures to promote the construction of rural socialist spiritual civilization. This phenomenon aroused my keen interest: what is the internal mechanism and practical logic of the spread of rural Christianity in the specific social field of Wu Village? What are the characteristics of rural Christianity in the spreading process? How does it interweave, collide or compete with the original cultural tradition in the countryside? It is believed that these discussions will contribute to the reconstruction of public cultural life in rural society and the cultivation of farmers' public spirit. Around these problems, the author in Jiangxi Gannan village as a case, to a village person the identity of the participant observation, depth interview, review of nearly 10 years of the development of Jiangxi Wu Village rural Christian, and with Wu Village rural process as the breakthrough point, the spread of Christianity through detailed investigation analysis, combing

out in the village in a particular social field, in the country, under the background of market, the village three interactions, the inner mechanism of the rural rapid spread of Christianity and practice logic.

II. COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Ganzhou, the capital of southern Jiangxi, was called Song Cheng in ancient times and was the seat of Yangming academy. Wang Yangming, a master of the philosophy of the mind of Lu Wang, once served here as governor of southern Jiangxi province, promoting the philosophy of the mind. The hakka people in southern Jiangxi are deeply influenced by the Confucian thought of mind study. Here is the red homeland, the old revolutionary base, is the cradle of the republic and the starting point of the long march. This paper discusses this tradition under the influence of Wu Village. Wu Village is a typical hakka clan village, there are five groups, more than 1000 people, wu, xie, ding, zeng and other surnames, is a large natural village with a large population, many surnames living together. Wu Village surrounding villages, densely populated. But Wu Village from market town political and economic center is near, north from the county far. Due to the development of gold mines, county and township roads were built very early in the 21st century.

Thus it can be seen that, on the one hand, although Wu Village is not far from the political and economic center of the township, the most profound influence on Wu Village is the original Confucian ideology and the sense of clan as a hakka clan. They affect every aspect of people's life in Wu Village, and they are the link to maintain and integrate Wu Village. On the other hand, as it is located in the border area between Jiangxi and Guangdong and close to the coastal areas of Guangdong, the villagers from Wu Village flock to Guangdong in large Numbers with the tide of migrant workers brought by the reform and opening up. This mode of going out to work not only brings economic development to Wu Village, but also dissolves the original tradition of Wu Village. In recent years, there have been industrial transfer projects in Guangdong settling down here, and the villagers can no longer go far away from their hometowns. The discussion of this paper is conducted around such a specific village field under the interaction of the state, the market and the village.

III. "CHRIST GOES TO THE COUNTRYSIDE"

In the specific investigation and analysis of the practical logic and internal mechanism of Christ's going to the countryside, this paper sets it in a specific social field of Wu Village, and takes the interaction of the state, the market and the village as the background, to investigate and analyze the whole practice process of "Christ going to the countryside".

A. *Entering the Village: with the Help of the Original Kinship Network*

More than ten years ago, Christianity was a strange thing for Wu Village, many people at the beginning of scratching their heads, just to see the missionaries singing and dancing feel new, to see a lively, and no one put it together with religion. Later, our village teaching grandmother listened to the lyrics, said this is foreign religion, and is Christian. Villagers began to have vigilance, the family of men warned their wives and children are not allowed to see. Later, I learned that the first missionary leaders were the relatives of my grandfather (father of his daughter-in-law). At the beginning, they preached in the grandfather's home, and the first missionary objects were his daughter-in-law and relatives. As the master of the family, ah gong was naturally averse to religious belief. But the old woman is happy, often ask us these relatives to see to hear, later my several aunts are religious. It's just that the people who started out were all members of our branch, but with very different intentions. My aunt believed in religion because she thought it taught people to do good deeds, while my other grandmother and her children believed in religion because they hoped Jesus Christ could cure her terminally ill son, and another woman believed in religion because her only son was born disabled and wanted god's mercy. But in any case, the religious believers in the village, but attracted the contempt and disdain of the villagers.

Thus it can be seen that Christ went to the countryside with the help of the missionary's original kinship network, and relatives were the first choice for missionary. Through the transmission of kinship network, and thus continue to spread. As strangers in the village, missionaries are easy to arouse the villagers' vigilance, so they take relatives as the breakthrough point and turn into acquaintances to successfully enter the village. In the process of preaching, believers have different religious intentions, but the sick, disabled and other vulnerable groups are the most easy to break through. When the alien culture enters, Wu Village, as a typical hakka village, will naturally start its own defense mechanism and resist the alien culture of Christianity. This is evidenced by the villagers' disdain and disdain for religious believers. At the same time, there are differences within the family of believers about religious belief. Men generally represent the clan reason of the village and advocate sticking to the village tradition, so they naturally have aversion and resistance to foreign religions, while women are more sensitive and tend to be close to superstitions and religions. "From a feminist perspective, the spread of religion always seems to start at the edge of male-dominated village social structures." [1]

B. *Taking Root: Religious Self-adjustment and Social Public Participation*

Although Christianity into the village, but the village people strange vision of the church and believers caused a lot of pressure. Slowly there is doubt, withdrawal and division among believers. Especially when believers learn more and more about Christianity, many of them are against the original village clan traditions. For example, believers cannot worship ancestors, cannot eat the blood of livestock, cannot invite ashrams after death, and need to hold Christian funerals. In the face of these difficult teachings, believers slowly began to retreat. As doubts grow among believers, regular religious practice has become difficult. Only those who want something from Christianity are still holding out, hoping to exchange their piety for the mercy and help of Jesus Christ. One of them is my grandmother, who hopes to cure her son's terminal illness. Faced with the doubts of believers and the strong sense of clan tradition in villages, rural Christian churches are also adjusting their missionary strategies and seeking their own localization path.

It can be seen that Christ's going to the countryside is a process of self-adjustment and localization accompanied by cultural conflicts. "The reason why rural Christianity was not crushed by the original traditions of villages and squeezed out of villages is not unrelated to the localization strategy of rural Christianity" [2]. Christianity is based on the original social and political ecology of the village, and constantly adapt to this ecology to survive. It can remove the doubts of the original believers and consolidate their religious belief and the foundation of Christianity in the village by changing the connotation of some doctrines that contradict the village tradition. The missionary activities and religious life are transformed into villagers' public life style through the popular missionary mode, which fills the vacuum brought by the decline of public culture and increases the attraction to villagers. The propagation of the believers' feelings after practicing religion, especially the increasingly rich spiritual life, as well as the concomitant illness and improvement of physical condition caused by the good spiritual state are all attributed to the function of religion, thus generating the attraction to other villagers. However, the mutual aid organizations and the active and selfless participation in the village public life won the recognition in the unorganized rural society. Therefore, the reason why Christ can take root in the countryside is not only the result of self-localization of rural Christianity, but also the result of unintentionally adapting to the decline of public culture, decline of public life and lack of peasant organization in rural society in China.

C. *Low Tide: the Fragility of Faith and the Pragmatism of Peasants*

With the development of county economy, especially the industries in the coastal areas of Guangdong begin to move inland, the labor structure of rural migrant workers also begins to change. Migrant workers used to be young people who just graduated from the village. Now, with the development of county economy, farmers in their 40s and 50s who used to stay in the countryside to work and take care of their families are also flocking to the county to work.

Some of them like migratory birds go back and forth between urban and rural areas every morning and evening; Some practice part-time, busy farming at home to take care of children, leisure time to do some part-time jobs in the town; Still have flat abandon abandoned farming, rent to work in county seat. This phenomenon is gradually spreading in the rural areas of southern Jiangxi, especially not far from the county and township, the convenient transportation of Wu Village. In the past, people in Urunliu Village tended to be children and people over the age of 50. Now it is mostly people over the age of 60. This also makes the village more empty nest. Because the comparative income of farming is low, people often abandon farmers for work and abandon wasteland seriously. The majority of rural Christian believers are rural women over the age of 40 or 50, who are willing to work hard and have low labor costs, becoming the main recruitment target of the county. In order to relieve the burden of their families, they gradually abandoned their original Christian beliefs, stopped taking part in church activities in rural areas, and gradually became assimilated into urban civilization. They have been linked with their counterparts in the cities, where they work, what they do and what they do to earn money have become the main topics in their daily life. Sometimes, even when they were free at home, they stopped attending religious meetings in the countryside, as if Christianity had never been associated with her. In the process, the number of rural Christians has fallen sharply, even to the point where it is difficult to assemble and carry out activities.

Based on the above investigation, we can clearly see that farmers are rational pragmatists. When faced with economic interests and religious beliefs, they will resolutely choose economic rationality and give up religious beliefs. Religion may simply be a temporary substitute for the time peasants spend in leisure when public life is scarce. Their participation in religious activities may have abandoned the religious nature of the activities themselves and only sought a way to participate in public life through the platform of religion. For them, the so-called religious faith is extremely fragile. Perhaps only those who hope to save the true god of religion are paying their piety in exchange, while others are selectively practicing the teachings in their lives. Their understanding of religion, religious piety has never risen to the height of faith. Although the villagers are feeling some positive effects brought by the church to the village, they have never given up their vigilance to the church subconsciously. In particular, they fear that their religious activities are contrary to the will of the state, and that their religious integrity will never inspire them to confront the power of the state. In the face of state power, farmers have a natural sense of weakness.

D. Return Tide: Involvement Effect and Unintended Thrust of Policy

Over time, people began to learn that rural Christian churches were not Falun gong cults. The fears of the believers and the doubts of the villagers began to be gradually removed, and the rural house church assembly began to be gradually restored. With the gradual elimination

of national agricultural taxes and fees and the improvement of the economy of migrant workers in rural society, the old people who used to need to participate in agricultural production to subsidize their families have begun to stop working. This makes the rural elderly increasingly leisure, and the lack of public life and children away from home is increasing the loneliness of rural left-behind elderly. Especially the rural elderly women, because most are illiterate, cannot understand television, unlike the rural elderly can play chess and mahjong. But older women are also seeking their own public way of life. In rural areas, elderly women are the most likely to believe in ghosts and gods, so they choose to attend rural Christian churches. On the one hand, they can have group public life through Christian congregations. On the other hand, they can relax themselves by praying and singing hymns for themselves and their children. With the oral propaganda of the elderly religious women to the church, Christianity has become the main topic of the elderly women's daily life. This makes the elderly women who are not religious, but gradually marginalized in this group, and gradually forced into the process of religionization, and gradually become rural Christians.

As can be seen from the above, the change of rural social and political ecology naturally contributed to the development of rural Christianity. Because of the lack of public life in rural society, especially the lack of public life choices for elderly women, they need to make up for it in other ways. However, too much leisure time and children's going out have become the root of loneliness of the elderly women in the village. It is the combination of these factors that grafts the natural link between rural elderly women and rural Christianity. If the Christian goes to the countryside by virtue of the kinship network and the localization strategy of the Christian going to the countryside, then when the elderly women become the majority of the villagers and the rural Christianity develops to a certain extent, the involvement effect of the scale of the Christian group will be highlighted. It is human nature to be afraid of being marginalized and eager to integrate into group life. When the majority of the elderly women in the village become Christian believers, the elderly women who do not believe in religion are unconsciously involved in such a process of religionization and become believers of Christ. However, public policies such as cremation, which deviated from rural traditions and customs, inadvertently pushed rural elderly people to the temple of Jesus Christ.

E. Expansion: New Missionary Space and Cultivation of Future Believers

With the steady development of the structure and scale of Christian believers in rural villages, Christianity is also seeking new development space and missionary objects. Rural migrant workers who go home on holidays gradually enter the vision of missionaries. They can stabilize and expand the migrant workers believers through the holiday gathering activities, especially the Spring Festival of migrant workers believers. Missionaries integrate the original migrant workers by having dinner at the church when

migrant workers return home during the Spring Festival, distributing Christian Spring Festival couplets, calendars and other religious cultural products. The dissemination of these religious cultural products and the original believers of migrant workers have become the communication nodes and links for rural Christianity to further penetrate into the farmer groups and expand into a broader social field. The strength of these migrant workers believers is not just the so-called few believers, but a new group and a new communication space.

There is a power in society that foretells the future, and that is children. They are at a critical stage of education and gradual socialization. In this stage, what kind of atmosphere and what kind of education will produce a subtle effect and extremely profound influence? In the increasingly empty-nest rural areas, left-behind children have become a special group. Due to their parents' migrant work, they stay with their grandparents to take care of them. In addition to going to school, they often follow the elderly in their families and even participate in church activities together, subtly accepting the influence of Christianity. Many children I know draw pictures about the cross or god Jesus and other church themes. The songs that were humming were popular songs that had been changed from hymns; and some local churches even run religious kindergartens for winter and summer holidays. These phenomena or behaviors consciously or unconsciously cultivate reserve resources and follow-up forces for the sustainable development of rural Christianity and also change the next generation of socialism.

It can be seen that the practice process of Christ's going to the countryside is a process of constant self-adjustment and deepening in response to social and political changes. In the initial stage, it could not resist the attraction of economic benefits by religious belief; so many believers abandoned their religious belief and went out to work. When the local believers and scale in rural areas began to stabilize, Christianity began to take advantage of the holiday when migrant workers returned to their hometowns to organize dinner parties for migrant workers and implement the re-integration of migrant workers. This not only develops the new development group for the rural Christianity development, but also creates the new development space. However, rural left-behind children, a special group, unconsciously accept the influence of Christianity in the critical stage of education, and may become future Christian believers, changing the foundation of this country's future. All these indicate that the development of rural Christianity will break through the countryside and go to the city, and even the whole country; Will break through to the future.

IV. CONCLUSION

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, folk traditions, including ancestor worship, folk beliefs and other local knowledge, have never actually disappeared from the lives of peasants. Despite many political campaigns, they still remain in the consciousness and expression of the general public. In this expression, especially after 1978, as the national political power and ideological control increasingly fade out from the countryside, as a typical of the

hakka clan villages of the village, the villagers also publicly conducted a series of traditional folk practices, mainly black's ancestral temple renovation, wu's family tree of compiling and ubbelohde ancestral graves renovation and other activities. Qingming, the winter solstice of the whole ethnic activities have been continued to this day. Even in such a strong sense of clan tradition behind the village's public life is in constant decline. With the development of economy, most of the young and middle-aged people in Wu Village go out to work, and Wu Village becomes empty-nest day by day. There is no public cultural life here except for festivals. It is precisely the decline of the public cultural life in China's rural society that creates a huge vacuum in the public space for the opportunity for "Christ to go to the countryside".

Under the tide of social modernization, the political and social structure of rural China is also undergoing rapid social transformation. Gone are the days when the king's power ended at the county level, and any political and economic changes in the country would be echoed in rural China. No matter the Falun gong event, the implementation of cremation policy, the development of county economy, or the industrial transfer in the coastal area, all of these have exerted influences on the social and political ecology of Wu Village, and also affected the ups and downs of the development of rural Christianity in Wu Village. It can be seen that the development process of rural Christianity in Wu Village is an inevitable result of the interaction of the state, the market and the village. The mode of religious communication is also interacting deeply with the cultural structure, political and economic structure of rural society and the psychological structure of peasants. "It is precisely the weakness of rural public life and the tendency of" urban centralism "of the media that make it difficult or even impossible to meet the public cultural needs of peasants in the rural society washed away by the tide of market economy" [4]. It seems that the Christian church has become a platform for villagers to participate in public life, eliminate loneliness and gather to chat with others. The function of the church seems to be endowed with another meaning by farmers.

"With the deepening of social transformation, rural social order is being deconstructed and reorganized." [6] On the one hand, the development of Christianity in rural areas has changed the cultural structure and social structure of rural areas and provided a certain degree of possibility for the stability of rural social order. On the other hand, it also reflects that in the fierce promotion of China's modernization process, there are many problems in rural cultural construction, social system and policy, which bring hidden dangers and challenges to the rural order. Rural Christian church has a strong expansion and expansion, its development momentum is very strong. For its strong organizational nature, as well as the activity organization's financing, the fund source question also needs the thorough research. Although local governments do not express their attitude towards rural Christianity, they still need to pay attention to the influence of rural left-behind children on rural Christianity. Relevant departments should strengthen

the supervision of rural Christianity to avoid the expansion and development of rural Christianity into a potential social risk.

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