



Can Family Tree Renewal and Ancestral Hall Repair Provide a New Identity for Today's Clan Society? ——The Case of Douzhuang Village in Huaibei City

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Abstract. Chinese people have always had a strong sentiment of searching for their roots, and the renewal of the Family Tree and the repair of the Ancestral Hall are manifestation of this sentiment. Family Tree and Ancestral Hall, both for individuals and groups, are important issues related to self-identification. This study takes Douzhuang Village in Shitai Town, Huaibei City, Anhui Province, as a field research site, and takes the village's Family Tree renewal in 1992 and Ancestral Hall repair in 2006 as a starting point. Based on the author's visits and interviews in Douzhuang Village during October 2022, the study attempts to use autoethnography and character interviews as methodologies to look into the issues of clan relations and identity therein. This paper concludes that the renewal of the Dou Family Tree and the construction of the Dou Ancestral Hall have different meanings for villagers of different identities, ages and genders, and that different people either find, or never have an identity in them. The situations vary. The study of this clan sample in Douzhuang village is of reference and empirical value for the realistic function of family trees and Ancestral Halls in the present day.

Keywords: village, clan society, Family Tree, Ancestral Hall, identity

1 Introduction

"Surname" ("Xing" in Chinese), originated in the primitive society of the matriarchal clan, and "family name" ("Shi" in Chinese) as a derivative of the surname, originated in the patriarchal clan. Surname culture, as a microcosm of national culture has been influential to this day, and it can be said that there is no nation without a family. The Family Tree is the historical file that records the origin of the family name, the development of the family, the migration of the population and the continuation of life. On the other hand, Chinese people have always attached importance to tracing their roots and identifying their ancestors, because it is about the common human existence questions. And the most notable physical structures in the countryside: the clan shrines and family temples, are important places to find the answer. Under the influence of land system reform and market economy development, and with the accelerated

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urbanization process, a large number of rural workers are moving to cities. Over the past 40 years, China has been in the process of changing from a rural China with little population movement to a migratory China with a large scale and high frequency of migration[1]. As the basic unit of Chinese society, the countryside is a society of acquaintances with little mobility based on local and blood ties[2]. Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, Family Trees and Ancestral Halls have been used as symbols of clan identity and family status. In today's migratory China, with the decline in rural population and the gradual decline of villages, does it still make sense to use a lot of human and material resources to renew Family Trees and build Ancestral Halls? Further, does such a collective act have the same or different content of such meaning for the different groups and villagers who still live in the countryside? In the author's opinion, the identity issue of rural villagers behind this is an important topic worth studying.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Development of Family Tree in China

The Family Tree is a special form of book that recorded the lineage of a family mainly by blood relationship and the deeds of important people in the form of a chart book[3]. The Family Tree was produced in the ancient period and perfected in the feudal era. In the period of Wei, Jin and North and South Dynasties, the state set up a genealogy bureau and genealogy officials, specializing in the compilation and maintenance of family trees. Wang described the development and inheritance of Family Tree in detail from the perspective of the types, contents and value of family tree, and believed that the development of genealogical materials had the value of cultural relics, historical materials, edification and root tracing[4].

2.2 The Evolution of the Function of Ancestral Hall

The Ancestral Hall is the place where the ancestors' gods and goddesses were enshrined, symbolizing the existence of the ancestors[5]. Therefore, the Ancestral Hall also became a place of worship for ancestors. It is generally believed that folk shrine building began during the Song Dynasty, flourished rapidly during the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty, and reached its peak during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty. After the establishment of New China, especially during the Cultural Revolution, many ancient Ancestral Halls were destroyed or put to other uses as typical representatives of the Four Olds (target of the Cultural Revolution). Since the 1980s, Ancestral Halls have become the most visible cultural landscape of clans, especially in rural areas and towns where the concept of clan is strong, not only have old ancestral halls been renovated and restored, but also a number of new ones have been built[6]. Tu and Ji reviewed the existing research literature from five aspects: concept, characteristics, functional role, empirical investigation, and development and protection of ancestral hall culture, and concluded that there was a relative lack of empirical research on ancestral hall culture, and the scope of research was narrow, mainly concentrated in the

Guangdong region[7]. In traditional Chinese culture, Family Tree and Ancestral Hall, once serving as important ties, played a role in strengthening the clan concept, maintaining the clan system, and consolidating clan management. However, after centuries of development, what is their relationship with the villagers today? Are they distant and relegated to the shelves, or are they talked about daily by everyone? From the current research results, the relevance of Family Tree and Ancestral Hall in contemporary rural clan society is still unclear, and this is something that we scholars should seek to prove and explore.

2.3 Connotations of Identity

Identity has two meanings: one is itself, ontology, status, which is the perception of who I am; the other is sameness, consistency, which is the perception of things that are identical and consistent with oneself[8]. The study of identity is thus also a study of the relationship between the individual and society, between the individual and the collective. Zhang et al. proposed that identity is the psychological process of integrating an individual's confirmation of self-identity, and perception of the group to which he or she belongs, and the accompanying emotional experiences, and behavioral patterns[9]. As an important concept in Western cultural studies, Tao classified identity into four categories: individual identity, collective identity, self-identity, and social identity, and suggested that in a self-contained tribal society, or a feudal patriarchal society where heaven and man are united, family name, blood, and gender together constitute a solid and unchanging identity mechanism[10]. Do Family Tree and Ancestral Hall still have the same meaning for the respected intellectuals, the illiterate elderly, the young people who work outside the village, the women who marry into the village, and the foreigners in the village, in the rural clan society? This issue is not only about individual identity, but also about the identity of the group, but at present, there is no relevant research in the academic field that focuses on this issue.

3 Methodology

3.1 Autoethnography

In order to explore the above questions, this paper employed both autoethnography and interview methodology as methodological approaches. Ethnography is a very typical qualitative research method, founded by cultural anthropologists in the early 20th century, which initially originated from the examination of heterogeneous cultures by cultural anthropologists. And autoethnography, as a new qualitative research method, refers to the attempt to express culture, discuss culture, and deepen the interpretation of culture using one's own personal experience and self-awareness[11]. In this paper, the author returned to the village where I was born and raised from September 29 to October 6, 2022: Douzhuang Village, Shitai Town, Huaibei City, Anhui Province, and chose it as the case site for field research to visit and interview. In the 2020 National Name Report, the Dou surname is ranked 249 with a population of about 457,000+. I am a villager born in Douzhuang Village with the surname of Dou, and my father and

grandparents have been living in the village for generations. I lived in the village until I was 10 years old, and after fourth grade, I followed my parents to move to the town of Shitai, and then went to school in the city of Huaibei. Although I have been away from my hometown for nearly twenty years, I still go back to my grandparents' house in the village for the Spring Festival every year until now. In this nearly week-long field research back in the village, the author was trying to draw my own thoughts and conclusions through my own participatory observation and first-hand experience as both an insider and an outsider. While visiting, the author recorded the process of searching for Family Tree and visiting Ancestral Halls, as well as the interviews conducted with villagers, with the help of a camera filming documentary, resulting in nearly 20 hours of video footage, which served as a source of data collection and collation.

3.2 Interview

The interview method is a type of social science research method that collects research information and data by means of a conversation between the researcher and the researched person and is widely used in qualitative research in the social sciences. Depending on the structure of the interview outline, interviews can be classified as structured, semi-structured, or unstructured interviews. Structured interviews, which emphasize uniform standards and the same norms for all interviews, where the interviewer asks questions strictly according to the interview questionnaire and all interviewees are asked to choose their responses from a limited number of given answers in the same order, with little room for free play. Unstructured interviews, which are not based on pre-designed questionnaires and fixed procedures, but only have a theme or scope of the interview around which the interviewer and the interviewee talk more freely, and semi-structured interviews, which are a kind of interview between structured and unstructured. Depending on the number of interviewees, the interviews can be further divided into focus group interviews and in-depth interviews. Focus group interviewing, which refers to one-to-many interviews, in which multiple people are interviewed simultaneously to understand the behavior and perspectives of group members. In-depth interviews are one-on-one interviews, the most important feature of which is to delve into the facts and explore the meaning behind the phenomenon. The main role of in-depth interviews is to obtain rich and vivid qualitative materials through in-depth and detailed interviews, and to generalize and draw certain conclusions from them through subjective and insightful analysis by the researcher[12]. This study used unstructured interviews and in-depth interviews, on the one hand, because the interviewees' identities, ages, and personal experiences varied in the actual field, and there was no fixed outline or sequence of interviews, and the interviews were mainly conducted flexibly around the theme of Family Tree renewal and construction of Ancestral Hall. On the other hand, in order to obtain deep material about each interviewee's thinking, feelings, perceptions and attitudes, this was only possible through one-on-one interviews. The length of the interview was usually kept around 30 minutes to 90 minutes. Of course, the interview method, as a qualitative research method, also has its own disadvantages, such as small sample size, unrepresentative, and contingent content, which are also

criticized by many scholars. Table 1 lists the basic information on age, education, and status of the 13 interviewees involved in this study.

Table 1. Basic information of interviewees

Nr	Name	Age	Gender	Education	Identity
1	Dou Gong A	83	male	no	farmer
2	Chang Shu C	83	female	grade 2	Married in Douzhuang village at 24, farmer
3	Dou Yuan D	54	male	high school	Former village cadre, now a township civil servant
4	Dou De E	73	male	specialized training school	Retired elementary school language teachers
5	Dou Da F	73	male	grade 5	Worked as a casual laborer in a mine, then a farmer
6	Xie Shu G	66	female	no	Married in Douzhuang village at 35, farmer
7	Dou Da H	87	male	no	farmer
8	Ge Jun I	78	female	no	Married in Douzhuang village at 18, farmer
9	Peng Shu J	73	male	middle school	work as laborer
10	Dou Gong K	61	male	no	farmer
11	Dou Yun L	32	male	high school	Worked in the mines. Regular workers.
12	Dou Yun M	11	female	grade 5	student
13	Dou Jun N	13	female	grade 6	student

Note: Full names are not used in the text and will not involve harming the privacy of the interviewees.

For these 13 interviewees, the interview questions were set up to focus on three aspects: 1) the ins and outs of participation in Family Tree, mainly Dou De E. 2) the ins and outs of participation in the construction of the Ancestral Hall, mainly Dou Yuan D. 3) the lives of the elderly, young people and teenagers still living in the village today, and the impact of Family Tree and the Ancestral Hall on their lives.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Family Tree and Ancestral Hall of Douzhuang Village

The main contents of the Dou Family Tree include the preface of the newly renewed Family Tree, the root test of the family name, the test of the clan hall number, the family motto of the Dou Clan, the biographies of the virtuous women and martyred women, the table of the generation of the clan row, and the detailed table of the lineage of each branch. During my visit to the village, I found that many villagers have kept this family tree in their homes. It can be said that in Douzhuang Village, this Dou Clan Family Tree still serves the function of maintaining clan ties. During the field visit, I was led by local elders and grandfather Dou Gong A to enter the Dou Ancestral Hall in person, and after paying respect to the ancestors, I had the opportunity to visit the interior of the Ancestral Hall in detail. Successive generations of ancestor statues, old and new monuments, the Dou family motto printed on the wall, as well as the complicated ranking, order, rituals and ceremonies during worship, all these are symbols of clan power and carriers of patriarchal law. It is in the space of the ancestral hall that the worship of the ancestors and the edification of the people are executed and accomplished. Usually, the door of the shrine is locked and closed to the public and the outside world. It must be said that the Ancestral Hall did serve to stabilize the clan organization and maintain

clan relations at the beginning and in the first few years after it was built. However, in today's Douzhuang Village, the Ancestral Hall has become a place less frequented and less visited. The author believes that the cause of this scenario is related to the clan organization and the elders' negligence in management and maintenance.

4.2 Analysis of Identity of Village Citizens

The author roughly divided the 13 interviewees into five categories, according to their different ages, identities, genders, and surnames. The first category, the two elders who presided over the Family Tree and Ancestral Hall repair back then, is represented by Dou De E and Dou Yuan D. The second group, ordinary villagers who did not actually participate in the process of Family Tree and Ancestral Hall repair, and their wives, are represented by Dou Gong K, Dou Da F, Dou Da H and their wives. The third category is the outsiders living in Douzhuang village, represented by Peng Shu J. The fourth category is the young people who work outside the village and still live in the village, represented by Dou Yun L. The fifth category, students who were born, raised and educated in the village, is represented by Dou Yu M and Dou Jun N. The following discussion will focus on the identity of each of these five groups.

4.2.1 Shishen Who Led the Family Tree and Ancestral Hall Construction.

Dou De E was a language teacher at Hong Fang Hope Primary School in Shitai Town, who is also the director of the Family Tree renewal committee in 1992. The following is from an interview with Dou De E.

“At that time, the Family Tree was renewed under the auspices of Dou Dawen, taking the old Family Tree of 1938 as the root, and going door to door to see how many people were under it, and then renewing it by gender. The initiator of building the shrine was Dou Yuan D, and I was on the committee, and I wrote the inscription on the wall. Three years after the construction, we used the leftover official money from fundraising to buy some cannons, chickens, fish, and wine to make offerings on every Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival.”

As the initiator of the construction of Ancestral Hall, the following is an interview with Dou Yuan D.

“At that time, it was headed by the big character generation, and we, the far character generation, were the main ones, and each house sent representatives to elect a family committee to work out a plan together, select a site, raise funds, and finally raise more than 23,000 yuan. After it was built, a ceremony was held in the village, and the villagers were invited over to celebrate, with nearly ninety tables of banquets and three days of opera.”

As the name of a social group, Shishen was most widely used in the Qing Dynasty, mainly referring to the intellectual groups in the field who enjoyed certain political and economic privileges, and played an important role in the stability and continuity of the traditional social order[13]. Dou De E, as a village teacher, and Dou Yuan D, as a village cadre, can both be considered the village's present-day Shishen. They are well-known figures in the village, whether it is a big or small matter, the villagers often look to them to witness or help with ideas. They feel obliged to repair the Family Tree and

build the Ancestral Hall, which is the top priority of the village. Whether it is renewal or repair, they do not get any financial benefit from it, but they are willing to take the initiative and consciously undertake to work hard to restore these antique relics left behind by their ancestors and pass them on, so that they can not only spread their fame in other villages, but also let their descendants have a reference. It is evident that they were conscious of their status as Shishen and actively defended that status with their actions. Social identity is composed of three basic processes: categorization, identification, and comparison. Categorization refers to people categorizing themselves into a community, identification refers to the belief that they share the common characteristics of members of that community, and comparison refers to evaluating the strengths and weaknesses, status and reputation of the community they identify with relative to other communities. Through these three journeys, people raise their stature and self-esteem[8]. As prestigious and influential Shishen in the Dou clan, there are very clear boundaries between the Dou and other surnames in their genealogy. Through the comparison with other family names, they consciously identify with their own family status and maintain the reputation of their own community. It can be said that their emotions and resulting behaviors toward the clan are directed toward identifying with and maintaining the existence and value of their own family name and their own ethnic group.

4.2.2 Elderly Men of Dou and Their Wives.

Through visits the author observed that most of the village are left with the elderly who are old and have difficulty moving. I found elderly villagers to ask about their memories of the Family Tree and Ancestral Hall building events back in the day. The following is from an interview with Dou Gong K.

"I have the Family Tree. It's been turned over so many times that it's rotten."

"With this Family Tree, the grandchildren further down the line can know who is in the same yard (room) with whom and who is close to whom."

"I donated money (to build the shrine), how can they build the shrine without donating money!"

"When it was built, I even went to dinner and went to listen to the opera. Many people come from outside the village to listen to the play."

"The shrine is just too small, only one room, they should build a courtyard, or build two floors."

Even though he was not personally involved in the Family Tree and Ancestral Hall building process in 1992 and 2006, Dou Gong K is very familiar with these important events in the family history and is willing to talk about and recall these old village stories. Whether or not involved in the actual compilation and construction process, the older generation of Dou men, most of them purchased the Dou genealogy in their homes to consult on the one hand, on the other hand, they passed on to future generations of children and grandchildren, these acts in itself is their identification with their own identity in the clan. Identity is a complex psychological structure, at the surface level it is the obvious behavior patterns of people, at the middle level it is the individual's perception of commonality with similar groups and awareness of self-identity, and at the deep level it is the emotional experience that comes with the identity[9]. The men of the Dou surname, represented by Dou Gong K, have a clear and complete genealogy in

their clan relationships, and are able to find their names in the Family Tree and know their positions, as well as the positions of the elders above and the juniors below them, so their sense of identity is stable. And going to the shrine, or simply seeing the establishment as they pass by, enables them to perceive and constantly confirm their identity from the outside. They have their own memories, their own emotions, and their own attitudes from individuals about the details of the events of Family Tree and Ancestral Hall building thirty or more than ten years ago, and they are also willing to tell and express them. These emotions and attitudes, these narratives and expressions are their participation in and reaffirmation of the construction of their own Dou clan identity. Compared to the Dou men in the village, who have been in the village since birth, passed down from ancestor to ancestor and generation to generation, and have not developed identity confusion, the identity of the women who marry into the village may be relatively complex.

“It was his elder brother who donated the land. The people in the east did not agree to build a shrine in the east, and his elder brother said, Let’s build a shrine in my land. People in the village said that after the Ancestral Hall was built on the west side of the village, the east side was safe, but the west side became unlucky, and many people of the west side died every year. Why do we pull the monument to the west, that is not wanted in the east? His older brother just wants to save face and thinks it’s a good thing.”

This is a segment of an interview with Dou Da F’s wife, Xie Shu G, about the incident of building the Ancestral Hall. Dou Da F’s brother, who was the main presenter of the construction of the Ancestral Hall, has passed away. He had donated a piece of his family’s field free of charge as the site of the Ancestral Hall. In this regard, Dou Da F’s wife, Xie Shu G, has been opposed to this big brother’s decision. Xie Shu G felt that it was bad feng shui for the Ancestral Hall to be built in the west of the village, bringing bad luck from the east of the village to the west, leading to an increase in the number of deaths in the west of the village, and she had resentment and fear of death in her heart. However, Xie Shu G was aware of her subordinate position in the Dou clan relationship and therefore did not present her views during the lifetime of her eldest brother. Here, after a woman marries into Douzhuang village, she usually does not return to the village where she was born but stays in Douzhuang village for the rest of her life, in her husband’s family with the surname Dou. Yet, as a woman in the village, first of all, the events of Family Tree and construction of Ancestral Halls in Douzhuang Village were all represented by male members of each house, who raised money and contributed their efforts, and women could not participate directly. Then, in the genealogical list, women are referred to by their surnames instead of their full names; finally, after the construction of the shrine is completed, women are only spectators, but are not allowed to celebrate at the table. The goal of identity is the unity of belonging to an organization in name and belonging to a psychological need[9]. Because they are not directly involved in the construction, are not needed, and are not heard, it is difficult for women to raise their self-esteem and gain feelings of being valued from such events as Family Tree and Ancestral Hall building. The essence of identity is belonging, and women can only find meaning in their existence by removing the fear of death in their marital and

family relationships, and they identify more with their husbands and families and their own cliques.

4.2.3 The Foreigners in Douzhuang Village.

Douzhuang village is a miscellaneous surname village with 80% population of Dou surname, in addition to other surnames such as Peng, Gao, Duan, etc. The second largest population is Peng. According to legend, at the earliest, the daughter of Dou Long married the man of Peng, and after that, this family of Peng lived in the village for generations. The following is from an interview with Peng Shu J.

"The Peng is a guest and is the son-in-law of the Dou family. They are relatives, at first."

"In the past, there were two wells in Douzhuang Village, one for Dou and one for Peng, and the Peng's well was next to the South River, where we used to go for water."

"Now there are still one or two hundred people in the village surnamed Peng."

"I know (about the Family Tree of the Dou). Our family also has the Peng Family Tree."

"I know (Dou's Ancestral Hall), but we don't go there."

Peng Shu J had heard about the renewal of the Family Tree of the Dou family and the construction of the Ancestral Hall in the village but was reluctant to mention too much about the specifics. As the foreigners in the village, the Peng belong to a demographic minority, in terms of clan relations, they do not have a common ancestor with the Dou, no blood relationship, but there are kinship relations. They know that their ancestors and the Dou are related by marriage, they also know about the incident of the Dou Family Tree repair and construction of the Ancestral Hall in the village. But because they are foreigners, they neither have to contribute money nor effort, that is, they are inconvenient to comment. Zhang et al. summarized what Weeks proposed, identity is what you have in common with some people and what distinguishes you from others, and what Jenkin proposed the process of identity is the pursuit of being similar to or different from others[9]. The Peng in Douzhuang village could not be integrated into the clan relations of Douzhuang village nor the clan relations of other Peng villages. If we talk about identification, they can only identify themselves more as foreigners of the village, or more with the Peng Family Tree and Peng Ancestral Hall. The situation is even more so for the Gao and Duan clans, whose populations constitute an even smaller minority, not only in terms of numbers, but also in terms of their status and identity in Douzhuang village, which is in an awkward position on the relative periphery.

4.2.4 Young People Coming Out of the Village.

The young people who go out of the village are those who were born in the village in the 90s, grew up and received education in the village in the 00s, worked in the city in the 10s, and are still drifting in the town. They usually do not live in the village except for the Chinese New Year and other festivals or wedding and funeral events in the village. Dou Yun L, 32, has just bought a house in town and is also in a relationship ready to get married.

"I know something (about Family Tree and construction of Ancestral Halls). I don't know exactly what happened. I was small at that time."

"What are you making these movies for? Are you a journalist?"

"Why are you asking these questions? What's the point?"

"Are you married yet? No, why aren't you married?"

During the interview, it was clear that Dou Yun L was not too concerned about the Family Tree and the construction of the Ancestral Hall in the village, but repeatedly asked the author about work and marriage. Why do Family Tree and Ancestral Hall lose their function of self-identification for young people who have gone out of their villages? Identity requires answering two questions: who I am and to which class I belong. If you ask the fathers of these young people, who were born in villages in the 60s and 70s and have never really left the countryside in their lives, they will say with certainty that they are rural people and belong to the peasantry. But for these young people who grew up in the countryside and work outside, they have experienced the struggle of making money in the city but not being able to stay, while not wanting to return to the countryside to work in agriculture. They do not have urban registration to enjoy the same benefits as city dwellers, nor do they have the skills and willingness to return to the land to work. They neither belong to the city people nor consider themselves to be the rural people. They are vague and uncertain about which class they belong to, and they are a wandering generation in both body and mind. Family Tree and Ancestral Halls make it possible to reach an identification only in the context of clan relations based on geography and blood. Yet in a career-based society, Family Tree and Ancestral Halls, as spiritually constructed objects, do not give them access to job opportunities, the chance to find a date, let alone recognition of their status. Wealth and status, houses and marriages are what give these wandering young people physical and identity confirmation, giving them a real sense of security.

4.2.5 Teenagers Living in the Village.

In addition to the elderly, middle-aged and young people, the village also has teenagers who were born and raised here and went to school in the town. The following conversation is from an interview with two students, Dou Yu M and Dou Jun N, who are two sisters.

"The word in the middle of my father's name is De."

"I don't know (what is my generation)."

"What's a Family Tree? The yard?"

"I don't know (there is a Dou Ancestral Hall in the village), we only know that there is a church hall in the village. My grandmother often brings me here for worship, and there are activities on June 1 Children's Day and Christmas Day, and they give candy to children on that day."

"I know there is a lodge on the west side of the Long River. I heard that it seems to be closed and fenced off, and everything inside was pulled away."

According to the two sisters Dou Yu M and Dou Jun N, their father is De generation according to the clan, so the two sisters are Yun generation. Since their parents did not give them both names with words according to their generation, and the elders in the family did not intentionally mention it to them, the two sisters knew almost nothing

about their own generation, as well as the Dou Family Tree. They knew that there was such a place in their village. However, because the Ancestral Hall was built before they were born, they did not experience or witness the process of building the Ancestral Hall due to their age, but only heard some vague words. Compared to the Dou Ancestral Hall, this Catholic church built near their courtyard seems to have a relatively greater impact on daily life. They would wish for their exams to go well during worship and prayer, but these acts were followed by the elders who participated in them. It is evident that Family Tree and Ancestral Halls are becoming less and less influential on the youth of the village, compared to the older generation. The two sisters are still in primary and secondary school and are in the growth stage of forming their self-awareness and awareness of the outside world. Whether the Dou Family Tree or the Dou Ancestral Hall, in the future, will have a new impact on their later life or lives is unknown, and this is the limitation of this study.

5 Conclusion

This Dou Family Tree and this Dou Ancestral Hall at the west end of the village have different meanings to villagers of different identities, ages and genders. Throughout the events of Family Tree renewal and Ancestral Hall repair, as well as in the aftermath of the events, different people either found, or never have an identity in it, in different circumstances. For the hosts and participants of Family Tree and Ancestral Hall building, this act is of course a reaffirmation of their status as elders and Shishen. For ordinary villagers, Family Tree and Ancestral Halls are also a visible and tangible identification. However, for the women who married into the village and the foreigners who have lived in the village for generations, the Dou Family Tree and the Dou Ancestral Hall never seem to touch their own identity search and confirmation. For young people working in the towns, they do not expect to find identity from such spiritual symbols, but rather value the addition of material objects like houses to their identity, while for younger teenagers, Family Tree and Ancestral Hall are already as distant as relics from the last century. The author lived in the village for more than ten days during October 2022, and the conclusions in this paper are drawn from visits and interviews conducted during this time period. Of course, with a longer residency and observation period, the research would certainly be more solid. I hope to return to the village sometime in the future to continue exploring this topic in depth.

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