

Study on the Custom of Ancestor Worship in the Traditional Hakka Culture in Ninghua

An Investigation of a Non-material Cultural Heritage*

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Abstract—"In the North is Dahuaishu, and Shibi Village is in the South". Some scholars researched and pointed out that Shibi Village in Ninghua County of Fujian Province was the final settlement place of immigrants. After a long period of development, it gave birth to the distinctive Hakka customs which has played an important role in the formation of the Hakka culture. The ancestor worship custom of Ninghua Hakka came from the Central Plains. The ancestor worship of the Central Plains originated from the ancestor worship culture. People express gratitude and reverence by worship of ancestors. They pray for their children and a good harvest, and hope that it can bring them happiness and get rid of calamities. It has formed a unique folk custom culture. Starting from the analysis of the reasons for Hakka ancestor worship, this paper analyzes the cultural connotations of ancestor worship in Ninghua, demonstrates the inheritance significance of Hakka ancestor worship, and explains its humanistic value and future development trend.

Keywords—Hakka; Ninghua; the culture of ancestor worship

I. INTRODUCTION

"In the North is Dahuaishu, and Shibi Village is in the South". It's an ancient saying spread out in our country. It has implied the important position of Dahuaishu in the north of the Yellow River and Shibi Village in the south of Yangtze River in the immigrant history. After research some scholars pointed out: "Shanxi Hongdong County was just a short transfer station of immigration. They didn't formed different clans after immigration. Shibi Village in Fujian Ninghua County was the final settlement place of immigrants. After a long period of development, it gave birth to the distinctive Hakka clans which have played an important role for the formation of the Hakka people."¹

According to incomplete statistics, people of 203 surnames have settled down and rested on Shibi Village. Then they moved to the country. People of 152 surnames moved to the

world. Taiwan people of 97 surnames have relations with Shibi. There are 2 millions of Hakka people in Hongkong, and most of them are descendants of Hakka ancestors in Shibi. Therefore, Shibi was not only the gather place for Hakka ancestors to migrate southward, but also the central area of Hakka people's early development. It was the sowing and spreading center of early Hakka people and the communication center of early Hakka culture. The Hakka culture of Shibi Village has a profound influence on the entire Hakka area and Hakka people. Therefore, Ninghua is called "place of Hakka ancestor" at home and abroad, and is given the title of "Hakka cradle", "Hakka transfer station", "Hakka pilgrimage center" and so on.

The ancestor worship custom of Ninghua Hakka came from the Central Plains, and the ancestor worship of the Central Plains originated from the ancestor worship culture. When human society evolved and don't believe that their ancestors are animal spirits or plant spirits, blood dependency became a kind of instinct in people's hearts. Ancestor worship takes the place of totem worship. In Ninghua, since the Western Jin Dynasty, some Han people had migrated to the south and still followed the ancient worship culture. But in ancient Chinese society, ancestor worship is a symbol of power and social status. The states of each dynasty implemented to "make a difference between official and common people". "The temple for ancestor worship was not allowed to be established without approval from above". Common people were only allowed to worship ancestors in their houses. It can be seen that the prevailing activity was worship in house. After the south migration trends in the late Tang Dynasty and the late North Song Dynasty, the Hakka ancestors brought abundant and diverse ancestor worship customs. After the formation of Hakka clans, the integration and intensification of Hakka people have brought many unique elements of Hakka which has become an important part of Hakka culture. Early in the Spring and Autumn period, Zuo Gong · the Second Year of Wengong: "ancestor worship is a big national event." Sacrificial ritual is treated as a national event by the Confucian classics. At that time the thinker Confucius put forward "the careful handling of parent funeral and the pious worship of distant ancestors" which has been regarded as a standard for the people in ancestor worship. It requires people to "carefully handle parent funeral and piously

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¹ Cui Can. Integration and Unification of Ninghua Shibi and Hakka Dialects – the formation time of Hakka clans. Zhang Enting, Editor in Chief. Academic Symposium on Ninghua Shibi and Hakka, Chinese Overseas Press of China, 1998 Edition, Page 7.

worship distant ancestors". It drove the wind of ancestor worship. In the immigration, Hakka people deeply experienced their feelings and difficulties of their ancestors in survival. So the custom of ancestor worship is greatly respected by Hakka people. They express their gratitude and reverence by ancestor worship. They pray for their children and good harvests, and hope to bring happiness and get rid of calamities which have formed a unique folk custom culture. Starting from the analysis of the reasons for Hakka ancestor worship, this paper analyzes the cultural connotations of ancestor worship in Ninghua, demonstrates the inheritance significance of Hakka ancestor worship, and explains its humanistic value and future development trend.

II. THE RISE OF HAKKA ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN NINGHUA

A. *The Well-Established Tradition of Central Plains and Strongly-Flavored Clan Consciousness Promoted the Spread of Hakka Ancestor Worship Custom*

"Paradise" resources of Shibi attracted a large number of Hakka ancestors. The immigration history of Hakka ancestors has established Hakka culture in Shibi Village. The unique Hakka culture is owned to their special experience of their ancestors and their ideas. Ancestor worship based on blood relation is closely associated by ancestor worship activities and real life and clan idea. It follows the ancient ritual of the Central Plains and remains the "reverence for ancestors". It has injected many clan ideas because of survival. The strongly-flavored clan consciousness, in turn, strengthened the custom of ancestor worship. It can be said that the ancestor worship activities are the concentrated expression of the clan culture and the banner of the unity and struggle of the ethnic groups.

1) *Clan consciousness*: Hakka ancestors, because of severe social unrest, had migrated over and over and survived in the strange social environment and harsh natural environment for a long time. They were a tiny clan but often attacked by foreign powers. For life instinct a power promoted them to seek to protect themselves and the seeking process demonstrated the style of the power. The power was the collective strength bigger than individual power. It sources from a group who come from a clan of same ancestor. When people of a clan invaded by foreign power, they would defended together because they were a collective of same blood. So, they could have a place of themselves in the foreign land. The strong blood relationship idea and clan consciousness promoted them to build temples and family trees and produced other expression patterns of clan culture. Even clans of same surnames and different branches can be sorted into a same distant ancestor reaching an effect of "from same family five hundred years ago". For example, people of Zhang Clan immigrated in Shibi in different periods and from different places, and they are of different branches. Early was the Tang Dynasty of Zhaozong Emperor. Late was the second year of Jingyan in the South Song Dynasty. The lasting time is more than 380 years. They respectively were from Shaanxi, Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Zhejiang. They are not of a same branch. Later in order to strengthen the power they established

relationship with the name of intimate clan. General Family Tree of Zhang wrote in 1948 were sorted under Distant Ancestor Junzheng. They all treated Junzheng as their ancestor. They held ancestor worship activities and held a banner of Zhang Flag to form a joint force and fight against the external enemies.

2) *Living together with same ancestor*: Hakka ancestors in Ninghua had endured great hardships in pioneer work. They should reclaim land and plant food, but also avoid invasion. The identity of sharing the same progenitor helped them form a strong force. In order to create the greatest effect on clan force, they used the living style of living together with same mother ancestor. It united them under the flag of same ancestor. They began to exploit the nature. They believed if people were of one heart, they could find gold from the yellow earth. They directly named the place of one's clan under their surname, such as, Zhangjiadi, Lijiaping, Liucun and Guankeng. According to Ninghua Chronicles in Ming Dynasty of Chongzhen Emperor, there were 261 villages in the whole county. Among them, 133 villages were named under their clans' surnames, which account for more than half. In fact, villages named under surnames are far more than those. For the reason of seeking good luck, some villages were named by other ways. These villages had formed a blood kingdom. They lived together and shared weal and woe. They commemorate their ancestors in the name of villages and show the prosperity of their clans with ancestor worship activities. Fenghu Zaji also discusses the role of living where one's clan lives. In order to share thick and thin together and avoid being scattered, they shall live together. Since they have same local language, they must be closely associated. Though they are from different places and different periods, but they are of one heart². Therefore, the clan culture under specific conditions is also a major feature of the local social Hakka culture.

3) *The construction of ancestral temple*: The enthusiasm of the Hakka people in building the ancestral hall in Ninghua comes from the needs of ancestor worship, as well as showing the clan power. The temple is used to consecrate ancestral tablets and hold worship ceremonies. It is also a place for business discussion of clan and law enforcement. It is built on declaration of clan. Its scale is a sign of clan strength. When a clan opened base in a place, to build a decent ancestral temple has become the common aspiration of clan people. Even temporarily they were unable to build the ancestral temple, they also would build an "ancestral hall" to make the transition. After having ancestral temple, they would build their own branch temple along with the population boom. They also kept their ancestral hall, forming an ancestral temple system of clear hierarchy. "They have both branch temple and clan temple. In their house they have ancestral worship halls. Ancestral hall is smaller than branch temple, so

² Huang Yuzhao, Editor in Chief. Where Does Hakka Come From, Guangdong Economic Press, 1998 Edition, Page 161.

it is relatively a small clan"³. So, people with large population under same surname often have more than one temple. Shibi Village has two temple of Zhang Ancestor. Ninghua Xixiang has more than 10 temples of Zhang Ancestor. Caofang Huangfang Village has four temples of Huang Ancestor. Ninghua has 238 temples of ancestor with surnames, scattering in 16 counties. Among them, ancient temples are Cao Temple in south of Caofang, Zhang Temple in west of Shibi Town, Liu Temple in Huitu County, Yigong Temple in the north of Helong County, Wu Luojun Temple and Luo Temple in Chengguan (Yuzhang Academy).

Ancestral hall of Ninghua Hakka is actually ancestral temple. In function, the ancestral hall is as same as the ancestral temple. They are all used to consecrate ancestral tablets. But in ancient time, common people were not allowed to build temple. They could only worship ancestors in their house. In order to avoid surpassing the rite, they called it ancestral hall. After the funeral, they should lead the soul of dead relative to "the ancestral hall". The clan of less population shouldn't build another temple; even common people were allowed to worship their ancestor in the temple. In the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhu Xi created the Rite System of Temple. In the 15th year of Jiajing Emperor of Ming Dynasty, common people were allowed to build temples and worship their ancestors outside. Then magnificent temples were worthy of the name to prevail. So, Ninghua's "ancestral hall" is longer than "ancestral temple" in the history. They are of large number, and equivalent to branch temple.

Ancestral temple in Ninghua contains architectural forms and architectural styles since the Tang and Song Dynasties. They are splendid and majestic. The majority is palace architecture with cornice and wrapped ridge. They are of caved beam and pillars, stoned walls and red doors, with strong style of ancient Central Plains. The temple generally has hall and corridors. Hall is used to set main altar and worship ancestor. On the main altar arrange tablets of ancestors of each generation. The men stand on the east and the women on the west. They are clearly arranged. In the corridor often set Chinese opera stage, and also used for transition. In the middle there are courtyard and winding corridor. On the right side are kitchen and storeroom. Before the door is grass land which is surrounded by walls. Above the gate generally sets inscribed board of "× Ancestor Temple" or "× Ancestral Hall". On both sides of ancestor resting room we can see antithetical couplets. They often show the source of the surname and related stories. Family genealogy and hall name are enshrined in the resting room. Each hall has certain offerings. Some are heritage of fathers. Some are donated by decedents, specifically for ceremonial use. A large hall can hold 100 tables for banquet. It can hold people of the clan to have a dinner in Qingming Festival. In each Qingming Festival, they hold ancestor worship ceremony. They invited Chinese opera team to perform in the hall. They thought it could entertain both their past ancestors and themselves. It is a grand ceremony for their whole family clan.

4) Repairing genealogy

Genealogy is file of family lineage. It records branch and generation, clan rules, celebrities and events, property management, temples and burial map, name list of whole clan, marriage and child-bearing and so on. It clearly shows relation of the whole family. Ninghua Hakka considered the glory and legacy of ancestors. Give each house one box of them and collect them with exquisite red-paint wood box and enshrine them in ancestor hall. Consecrate them like their ancestors. If anyone wants to look for genealogy, he/she shall burn incenses. They shall take this matter seriously. In Origin of Hakka, Luo Xianglin said: "Hakka treasures genealogy. The saying of worshipping ancestor and honoring ancestor to pass down family style to later generation" is based on the genealogy"⁴. So, the first important thing for them is to write genealogy. Even if there are only dozens of households, they also write genealogy. In peaceful year, each clan wrote and completed their genealogy every thirty or fifty years to order to keep the sequence of family lineage and generations. It was a great event for the whole clan. Some clans repair genealogy in their temple. They would select a good day and hold ceremony to start and end this matter, as well as, deliver genealogy. They drum, kill chickens, play opera and have dinner to celebrate this day. People of the clan get together happily to show the glory of ancestor and prosperity of the clan. Genealogy is bounded by blood relationship. The whole clan is closely associated by their ancestors.

5) Clan rules and laws

"The function of Hakka clan is generally divided into two parts. First is internal function. It is to maintain the survival and development of the clan, to ensure its stability and orderliness. Second is the external function. It is to ensure connection and exchange with outside world as a whole clan"⁵. The clan is a blood group. It likes a cell that makes up a society. It needs to maintain its life and function. Just like other social organizations, it must have organizational leadership, rules and regulations, and financial support. First of all, the person who is of noble character and high esteem and higher seniority is elected as the head of the clan. Authorities of each generation consist of leadership, responsible for family matters. Secondly, formulate specific rules, constraints and norms of behavior. Often there are backward feudal codes of ethnic. But more the rule is to guide people to do good, having a positive effect. Thirdly, set up economic entities, such as, "ancestral compensation" for worship and repair, study rent for scholarship aid, public welfare granary for natural calamities and man-made misfortunes. They also organize reciprocity societies. For example, organize filial son society to help carry coffin and stock society to help the person who needs money urgently. In this way, it ensure the normal functioning of the clan, people of the clan can live orderly and pursue mutual development. So, they gratitude their ancestor and stimulate feeling to reward their clan. By holding ancestor worship activity, they make themselves feel existence and shield of

³ (Ming) Wang Daokun. *Tai Han Ji*, A series of Sikuquanshu of Qilu Book Society.

⁴ Liu Shanqun, Editor in Chief. *Hakka and Ninghua Shibi*, Overseas Chinese Press of China, 2000, Page 185.

⁵ Kong Yongsong and Li Xiaoping. *Hakka Clan Society*, Fujian Education Press, 1995.

their ancestors. It promotes the prosperity of ancestor worship custom.

B. Rites of Family, Written by Zhu Xi, And Extensive Social Recognition Has Had A Profound Influence on Ancestor Worship Custom of Hakka

The early Southern Song Dynasty is the formation period of the Hakka clans. Philosopher Zhu Xi was giving lecture in north Fujian. His reputation and influence were beyond imagination. Ninghua was ever affiliated to Jianzhou, in north Fujian, so there were many exchanges in history. When Hakka ancestors from south Jiangxi migrated to Ninghua Shibi, a lot of immigrants edified by philosophy of Zhu Xi also entered into Ninghua from north of Fujian. Seen from genealogy, more than half of ancestors of people in Ninghua came from counties in north Fujian. "Three Teachers of Nanjian" and some other clans had deep origin with Ninghua. Originator Yang Shi's family migrated to Jiangle County from Shibi Village. His fourth grandchild moved back to Ninghua. Meritorious Statesman of Ninghua Luo Lingji was migrated from Shaxian County. He is of same ancestor with Neo-Confucianism Luo Congyan. Li Xinpu, Son of Li Dongzhi, teacher of Zhu Xi, also migrated to Ninghua from Nanping. Xiao Chunlei's Hakka, the Birth and Awakening of an Ethnic Group, combed the relationships of them. It says: "Neo-Confucianism has deeply imprinted the immigration movement. Hakka people have strong attitude of Central Plains and orthodoxy idea. Their traditions, including ancestor worship, living where one's clan lives, abiding by rite, stressing both education and production, sticking to loyalty and filial piety, are all from this". He also found "genealogies of many Hakka clans have prefaces wrote by Zhu Xi"⁶. It can be seen that Zhu Xi and his philosophy have a deep influence on society of Ningxia Hakka.

Zhu Xi was a Neo-Confucian who treasured ancestor worship mostly. His Rites of Family regulated people's daily home etiquette. It deems family rituals are own business. But, it shall inherit tradition and follow local customs. It should be simple and easy to obey, not confined to old rules. Therefore, it was popular and respected by people. It have had a profound influence on the Chinese society in the last six and seven hundred years. He advocated following local customs. "No matter you are common people or official, everyone can build a hall to worship ancestor"⁷. People shouldn't be confined to "laws of emperors before. Only emperor and official can build temples..."⁸ To worship ancestor originally is a folk belief. Ancestral temple is a place to worship ancestor. But rite systems of past generation associated temple with ancestor worship in order to distinguish identity. "Ancient emperors, imperial relative and officials are allowed to have temple. But common people are only allowed to build it in their own house.

Without approval they aren't allowed to build temple"⁹. "It is rule of state to distinguish official and common people"¹⁰. It can be seen that only imperial person and officials were able to build temple and hold ancestor worship activities. Folk ancestor worship activities were only constraint in their house. The contribution of Zhu Xi is that he questioned law of deceased emperor. He thought ancestor worship belonged to all people. First he broke the ancestral identity restrictions. "Zhu Ziyang deemed common people could build ancestral hall. But it cannot be called as temple. It can be only named ancestral hall and people can worship ancestor in it"¹¹. He adopted a flexible approach. He changed the name of temple into hall. Though the names are different, but their functions are same. And it didn't violate the past rule. This ambiguous "edge ball" has not been rebounded. The society identified with it and the government was tacitly consequent to. So, his concepts gradually influenced people. Rites of Family was regarded as system for common people and official. A wind of building ancestral hall sprung up quietly. In Ninghua Hakka society flood with clan consciousness, many clans began to go into action. Some built hall for first ancestor. Some built branch hall. According to the survey, families of 65 surnames preserved 238 ancestral halls among families of 160 surnames in Ninghua. Most of them were built in Southern Song Dynasty. They provide places to consecrate ancestor tablets and hold ancestor worship ceremony. Rites of Family also provide worship procedure. It makes the folk worship activities have rules to follow. Ancestral hall became the most solemn place for formal worship activities. It has a far-reaching influence on ancestor worship custom.

C. The Adjustment of Imperial Rite System and the Emergence of Evolution Effect Promoted the Development of the Hakka Ancestor Worship

Ancient China is patriarchal clan society which is centered by family and distinguishes between intimacy and distance according to blood relationship. Ancestor worship activities are popular, and given an important position and role. Zuo Zhuan said: "the greatest things for a country are ancestor worship and military activities". Rites of Zhou wrote: "on the left side builds imperial ancestral temple. On the right side builds temple for gods. They all face north". Analects of Confucius says: "if we all carefully attend to the funeral rites of parents, the people will be simple and honest". Emperors pray souls of their ancestors for a peaceful country and a stable society by complicated ancestor worship activities, and show their power. According records of Book of Songs, Rites of Zhou, Book of Rites and other literatures, they held four-seasons worship activities respectively in January, April, July and October (according to traditional Chinese calendar) in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties. Di and Qia (Yin), higher than four-seasons worship activities in standards, were two main ancestral worship ceremonies held by the imperial court. They

⁶ Xiao Chunlei. Hakka, the Birth and Awakening of an Ethnic Group, Chinese Geography, September 2010, Page 8.

⁷ Rites of Family. Quoted from Zheng De's Bi Genealogy, Cangming Transcript from Shanghai Library, Volume 15.

⁸ (Song) Sima Guang. Family Temple Tablet of Wenlu Gong. (Song) Lv Zuqian, Songwen Jian, Vol. 67, Sikuquanshu from Wenyuan Pavilion, II.

⁹ (Ming) Yan Song. Pan's Ancestral Records. Qianshan Hall Collection", Sikuquanshu from Qilu Book Society, Volume 33.

¹⁰ (Tang) Li Yanshou. Southern Dynasties - Biography of Wang Qiu, Zhonghua Book Company, 1975.

¹¹ (Ming) Li Weizhen. Hall Record of Wang Zhonglie. Li Weizhen. Dabishan Fangji, Sikuquanshu from Qilu Book Society, Volume 56.

are regarded as rites of Zhou, and gradually became main ancestral worship forms for emperors after Qin and Han Dynasties. Although there were some changes and modifications according to the principles of the times, it generally follows the old system. It regulates grades of ancestral worship ceremonies for different social classes. Zheng De's *Bi Genealogy* recorded: "according the law of past emperors, only imperial families and officials can build ancestral temple. In building palace, emperors shall first build ancestral hall and then his living house. To Qin Dynasty, Emperor Ying despised the rites. Only emperor himself could build ancestral temple. To the Han Dynasty, celebrities and officials builds ancestral hall to worship ancestor, while common people worship ancestors in their own houses"¹². Till the prevailing of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism in the Southern Song Dynasty, people started to follow this tradition and local custom. Rites of Family were produced, and it advocates that "both imperial officials and common people can build ancestral worship halls". The social effect gradually changed. Finally the content of Rites of Family was listed in *Daming Jili*. It is a breakthrough in rite.¹³ It has great influence on the gradual relaxation of ancestral identity restriction.

In the third year of Hongwu Emperor of Ming Dynasty (1370), *Daming Jili* was finished. It regulated the ancestral worship rites. It clearly stated to "follow the ancestral worship rites of Zhu Xi". It regulates to worship Gao, Zeng, Zu and Mi of four generations with official sacrifice, and respectively hold them in February, May, August and November. Common people were not allowed to have temple. They consecrated their dead parents and grandparents and gave the rite of worship, which is just like that of imperial official. In the 17th Hongwu year, the government adjusted the ritual system of ancestor worship. It changes from worship ancestor of two generations into three generations. In the 31st Hongwu year, Jiaomin Bangwen was delivered. It stressed "taking care of parents when they are alive and consecrating them when they are dead". It is filial piety. It also attached the ritual procedure to worship ancestors of four generations. Jiaomin Bangwen regulated in the folk, the ritual procedure is the canned format to worship ancestors of four generations, not limited to scope of application. It was regarded as the imperial court allowing common people to worship ancestors of four generations. With the wide spread of practical ritual procedure, the official ancestor worship system became reality. In the 15th Jiajing year, "call up all people in the country to worship ancestors"¹⁴, which caused great repercussions in the community. The original violations of ancestral worship rite became legal and reasonable. As a result, in the Wanli year of Jiajing Emperor, all clans built ancestral halls to worship ancestor. This craze lasted until the late Ming Dynasty, so that ancestral halls are everywhere and the wind of ancestor worship are more popular. Chang Jianhua made a careful investigation of ancestral

worship rites of the Ming Dynasty. He deems "the official ancestral worship rite system didn't change, while ancestral worship rite changes of other dynasties have played a big role. For example, in the 17th Hongwu year, the government changed from worship ancestor of two generations into three generations. In the 15th Jiajing year, official and common people were allowed to worship ancestors in the temple and official could build temple for their ancestors. The flavor-extending command of "Yi Da Li" resulted in the reforms on family temple and ancestor worship system in the 15th Jiajing year. Especially, common people were allowed to worship ancestors in the temple, which provides opportunities for the popularity of ancestral hall objectively and strengthening the popularization of the ancestral hall"¹⁵.

Ninghua Hakka people have an extremely strong psychology of Central Plains and orthodoxy concept. They strictly follow Zhu Xi's Rites of Family and imperial ritual systems. With the wide spread of Rites of Family and gradual loosen ritual system of Ming Dynasty, ancestral worship also became popular and ordinary in Ninghua. According to statistics, most of ancestral halls in Ninghua built in the Southern Song Dynasty. It was just the period Zhu Xi advocated to build ancestral hall. In later Ming and Qing Dynasties, some are rebuilt or modified. It was also increasing in number. Until now there are 238 ancestral halls in the county. Great surnames generally have more than one. Ancestral worships of diverse surnames were moved to halls, and became regular. It seemed to be more solemn, sacred and authoritative. People's enthusiasm on worship becomes higher and higher. In the Qingming Festival of each year, ancestral halls will become very uproar. People get together and hold ancestor worship ceremonies in the hall. The atmosphere is solemn, and people can appreciate. At noon, they will have a Qingming dinner and watch opera team's performance in the corridor. They eat as they watch performance. Both remote ancestors and close ancestors have ancestral compensation as expenditure. Give one ancestor one or a few days, and arrange them orderly. To worship remote ancestor, the decedents often are large in number. It will limits participation persons. Perhaps only the head of a family or men or people under ages are allowed to participate. Or only educated persons are allowed, and other people can only watch opera performance. So, it becomes an honor to worship ancestor in the hall. Shibi people encourage their children to study hard. They often tell their children that read well, and then you can go to the hall to have a Qingming dinner in the future. To worship ancestor in the hall becomes a festival sharing by both man and god.

III. THE CULTURAL CONNOTATION OF THE CUSTOM OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN NINGHUA

A. *The Blend of Ancestor Worship and the Worship of Gods*

The folk custom and belief originated from people's psychology to seek good fortune and get rid of misfortune. In order to flee from wars, Hakka ancestors moved southwards to seek a shelter. They experienced hardships. Facing natural calamities and man-made misfortunes, they signed difficulties

¹² Zheng De. *Bi Genealogy*, Cangming Transcript of Shanghai Library, Volume 15.

¹³ Chang Jianhua. *Clan Chronicles*, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1998.

¹⁴ (Ming) Xu Zhongxi. *Continuation on Unofficial History of Xianzong Temple I*, Taipei Weiwen Book Company, banned book series, first collection of the Qing Dynasty.

¹⁵ Chang Jianhua. *Ancestral Worship System and Evolution of Clan Temple in the Ming Dynasty*, Nankai Journal, Issue 3, 2001, Page 66.

and helplessness in life. They were eager to get protection of supernatural power, so they worshiped every god in each temple. They piously worship the gods that would bless them, and sincerely believe in "there is a god in the heaven". They were afraid of ghosts that may cause trouble, so they sacrifice them and worship them, and timely drive them. They fear them and keep a distance. Gradually they formed a large and complicated god worship system to worship gods and ghosts.

About ghosts, in Yi · Xici II, Zheng Xuan noted: "ghosts with lofty quality are gods, while wandering souls are ghosts". Gods with lofty quality are benevolent, so they are respected by people. Ghosts are divided into hero and spirits. Hero refers to elites of each generation who died and became ghosts. Because of their lofty qualities, they are respected by people as gods, like Confucius, Guan Yu and Yue Fei. Spirits refer to bad ghosts bring people disasters. It includes bad-luck ghost. The wandering souls are evil, so they cannot become immortal. But people also sacrifice offerings to them because of fear. They fear these ghosts hurt them and get them in trouble, so they often invite special person to drive them through religious ceremony. They also paste Shentu and build god statue to shield their house. People think that the position and power of the spirit are higher than the ghost. Ghosts with lofty quality can be promoted to be gods. So, there is saying to encourage people to do good deeds and accumulate merits to become immortal after death.

Ninghua people's ancestor worship ancestors out of admiration. They thought their ancestor wandered from place to place, did pioneering work hardly and strived to be strong. Though their achievements and influence cannot be compared with those of the historical elites, their spiritual essence brings benefits for future generations. With same spiritual essence, they are worshiped as gods. In Li Shixiong's Ninghua Chronicles, earth god of Ninghua was enshrined in the earth god hall on the left side of original county yamen. According to Wu Genealogy, the god is ancestor of Wu family (Wu LuoJun) who opened Huanglian Town. "Wu LuoJun, native of Huanglian, was young and brave. He led people build walls to protect people, so invaders daren't come again. The places far and near submit to him. He organized people to cut limber and rafted to the state of Wu. He collected people to pave territory. In the third Zhenguan year, he reported to the government and said that the soil of Huanglian was rich and fertile and we can pay land tax. The imperial court rewarded him and gave him a title to let him open up wasteland and devote to the court". Wu LuoJun paved territory and built town. He made a crucial contribution, so people consecrated him as earth god. According to Yi Genealogy, Yi He, native of Ninghua Helong, was a county sage. The descendants built Yigong Temple to memory him. The ancestral halls of ordinary people compare favorably with gods temple. They enshrine their ancestors in the main hall and integrated tablets of gods and ancestors into one. They treat their dead ancestor as god. They lift ancestor worship to a position same as the heaven, emperor and teachers. It reflects Ninghua Hakka blend ancestor worship into god worship.

B. The Blend of Ancestor Worship Spirit and Consanguinity

The Hakka ancestors fled from the Central Plains, and after the formation of the clan system, many new generations moved to the places for development. A large number of Hakka people spread overseas. As a clan of long-term migration, they like a badly frightened person, and don't know where to settle down. Passively and helplessly they migrate over and over. Some families moved wholly. Some left eldest son for the aged, and other sons moved other places. They had no relatives in these places. The loneliness in their survival was extraordinary. They strongly desired to warmness of relatives. Once Hakka wandering out find people of same ancestor and from same village, they treat them as relatives. If they have trouble, they will help with all strength. So, they organize Townee Society and Clansman Society which are collective power for mutual help by the aid of consanguinity. It can also help them express homesickness. Due the special experience of ancestors, they produced the unique Hakka culture featured by clan culture. Ancestor worship and consanguineous ideas are important connotations of the Hakka culture. With the spread of the Hakka culture, it deeply roots in the minds of Hakka descents.

The Hakka people have a proverb: "would rather selling land ancestors handed down than forgetting the words of ancestors". So it is not strange for them to sell their land when they start to move to other place. The lessons of ancestor are unforgettable. Huang Qiaoshan of Song Dynasty asked his friend to write the poem of "each one shall build ancestral hall" at parting. It says: "ride horse to move to other place. It is important to set guides and principles. Live in other place just like in hometown. With the passing of time, the alien land becomes hometown. Remember the words of ancestors in heart, and burn incense to ancestors at both morn and dawn. Hope the heaven to protect us and our children prosperous"¹⁶. It had been widely spread. It was treated as clan poem by many clans. Some of them recited it as folk songs. "Remember the words of ancestors in heart, and burn incense to ancestors at both morn and dawn" become their lifelong motto, as well as the cornerstone of them to worship ancestor. No matter where they live or how many generations they pass, they seriously passed down their ancestral idea. It is no more serious than their parents, though they may be not nurtured by the culture of living their clan lives. After the reform and opening up, they can seek their roots. They travel miles to worship ancestor regardless of hardships. The building of public Hakka ancestral temple enables Hakka decedents to find their roots. They feel grateful and fulfill their wish, and return back. In ancestor worship activity, you can see the disabled, the aged and children. In 2004, an old man aged 88 came from Mauritius. And Mr. Wu sat on a wheelchair and came from Malaysia. They found the tablets of their ancestors. They wore a yellow jacket with the words of "all Hakka around the world are of a family", and participated in the ceremony. At the time, they felt a happiness of belongingness and a sense of coming back home. It is an eager for ancestral land and a feeling to memory ancestor. They were relieved to find their roots and happy to get together. It represents an external emotion of Hakka. They express admiration for ancestors and feel

¹⁶ Guangdong Hepo, Huang Genealogy, 1992.

nostalgia. The fusion of ancestor worship spirit and consanguinity is harvest of Hakka to seek roots and the feature of the ancestor worship ceremony.

C. The blend of the customs of the Central Plains and the indigenous culture

The custom of ancestor worship has always been, only limited to the ritual system of each dynasty. Emperor and imperial official were allowed to build ancestral temple. There were official ritual procedures. Common people were only allowed to worship their ancestors in their house. Though they appreciate them much, their rite is simple. They rest the tablets of their ancestors in the shrine of main hall. On the board of god writes “天地君亲师之神位”. In this sentence, “亲” refers to an array of ancestors, more than one. If sons build another house, they will set the tablet of “天地君亲师” in the shrine of main hall. The original shrine of main hall becomes ancestral hall. If other seniors pass away, they will lead their souls to the ancestral hall for rest. It is said to set this memorial tablet in the main hall is the indigenous culture. But there is no textual research. To the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhu Xi advocated that “both imperial officials and common people were allowed to build ancestral halls”¹⁷. The ritual system of ancestral hall gradually influences the folks, because the government didn’t forbid them. In the Ming Dynasty, Rites of Family became public system for both official and common people. Ninghua is no exception. They built ancestral halls and promote their tablets of ancestors to a higher place. The ancestral worship ceremony of upper classes also was used by folk ancestral worship activities. Daming Jili adopted regulations of memorial rite in Rites of Family. It has time and date, fasting, furnishings, preparing offerings, actions, consulting god, lowering spirits, offering up offerings, playing music, giving offering to the dead, closing door and opening door, receiving sacrificial meat, seeing god off, Na Zhu, Che and Jun. There are 17 items.¹⁸ The ritual procedure of Shibi Ancestor Worship Ceremony is formed according to the local ancestral ritual. There are 15 items, including preparing offerings, burning candle, setting up case, burning incense, keening down, recommending food, storing food, playing music, receiving god, offering wine, burning funeral oration, Na Zhu, Che and Nei. Contrast them, and we can see it follows the sequence of ancient ritual. The sacrificial rite in Rites of Family is regarded as a connecting link between the preceding and the following. It largely reflects the basic pattern from Kaiyuan Rites of Tang Dynasty to Daqing Huidian of Qing Dynasty. The salvo team, elder team, ancient music team, martial music, dragon-dancing team, flower team, garland team, waist drum team and colorful flag team are all folk customs and characteristics of Hakka. During the festival, they eat Leicha, drink wine and other feature snacks. They have exhibitions of their family tree, painting and calligraphy. In the Hungry Ghost Festival, they deliver river lamp to memory their ancestor. In the Dragon Boat Festival, they hang kudzu vine. In the Mid Autumn Festival, they offer a sacrifice to the shoulder pole god.

¹⁷ Zheng De. Bi Genealogy, Cangming Transcript of Shanghai Library, Gongshi Record, Volume 15.

¹⁸ (Ming) Xu Yikui. Daming Jili, Sikuquanshu from Yingyin Wenjuan Pavilion.

Thousands of households enshrine and worship the tablet of “天地君亲师”. The tablets, gong and drum used in folk ancestral worship are typical Hakka culture. They, more or less, take in elements of local culture. This is a precious crystallization producing in long-term integration of native people and Hakka in the history. It makes us memory their tracks and feel their generous mind, and experience the blend of the customs of the Central Plains and the indigenous culture.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INHERITANCE OF THE ANCESTOR WORSHIP

A. To Encourage the Younger Generation to Learn Characters from Ancestors and Keep Folk Custom Simple and Honest

In traditional Chinese culture, the significance of ancestor worship is very important. Limited by ritual system, people were unable to put up pageantry. Confucius, thinker of the Spring and Autumn Period, said: “carefully attend to the funeral rites of parents, and keep folk custom simple and honest”.¹⁹ It requires take the filial duty in the funeral rite. It means sons shall take care of parents when they are alive and offer sacrifice to them when they died. The standard distinguishing filial piety and impiety is having no male heir. That is to say sons also have the responsibility to reproduce offspring in filial piety. From this perspective, reproduction of offspring is not only continuation of descent life but also the continuation of moral quality. Ancestor worship can touch the memory of future generations and encourage the younger generation to learn characters of ancestors. It is in line with moral standard of filial sons. What’s more, it can carry forward excellent Hakka tradition and character style. The virtues of traditional thrift and simplicity and honoring teacher are included in, which has a strong normative and restrict action. Objectively it helps to improve the moral level of rural society and purify social atmosphere in a certain extent. Keep custom simple and honest and society harmonious.

B. To Stimulate the Patriotism of the Hakka at Home and Abroad, and to Strengthen the National Cohesion

When one drinks water, one must not forget where it comes from. Seeking one’s root is human nature. Innocent children will ask their parents “where am I coming from?” It seems quite naïve. Actually everyone is looking for the “root”. In order to seek the root, one being scattered in childhood may spend a life to seek his/her parents. Black Americans return to Africa to seek their root. This is the motive power of “root” and “origin”. Hakka people emphasize to worship ancestor, reward clan and pass down family tradition”. It makes their children gratitude for the source of benefit, review the ethnic history and inspire the ethnic spirit. At what time and under what circumstances they cherish this root. Since 1995, tens of thousands of overseas Hakka people come to Ninghua to participate in Hakka ancestor worship of public ancestral hall or clan ancestor worship, including both the aged and children. Yao Meiliang, Justice of the Peace from Malaysia, has made a significant contribution to the construction of Hakka Ancestral

¹⁹ Analects of Confucius ·Xue’er

Hall. He invested to build the "Hakka road" of 500 meters (concrete road). His brother Gentry Yao Senliang has organized team to participate in ancestor worship ceremony for thirteen consecutive sessions. He proposed to build surname clan in Shibi. The ancestor worship ceremony inspired the belief in seeking roots and the enthusiasm of patriotism and love of countryside, and promoted the prosperity and development of the Hakkas ancestral land. Worship activities can promote mutual understanding and exchanges between the Hakka people at home and abroad, and enhance the cohesion and centripetal force of all the children of the Yellow Emperor. It jointly makes more contribution for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, promoting cultural, economic and social development, and improving the image and status of the Chinese nation in the world.

C. To Promote Cultural Identity between the Two Sides of the Taiwan Straits and to Promote the Peaceful Reunification of the Motherland

In Research Significance of Hakka Ancestral Land in Ninghua Shibi, Chen Guoqiang, professor of Xiamen University, pointed out: "Taiwan Hakka and non-Hakka Minnan people are mostly from Ninghua Shibi". "According to the preliminary statistics, among about three million Hakka people in Taiwan, about two million of them are descendents of Ninghua Hakka"²⁰. Why we say "they are from" and "descendents of" is because most of Taiwan Hakka are from eastern Guangdong, most of Hakka of eastern Guangdong are from Ninghua Shibi. In the Guangxu Emperor of Qing Dynasty, Jiaying Chronicles wrote: "Guangdong is the neighborhood of Fujian, so the exchange and communication are frequent. And it is most often in Ninghua, because many people seek their ancestors in Ninghua Shibi".²¹ Therefore, there is space-time distance between Taiwan Hakka and Ninghua Shibi Hakka. Their clothing, food, dwelling, folk customs and other cultures are similar and closely related, which can be approved by literature and genealogies. After reform and opening up, many Hakka they have migrated to Taiwan before 1949 came back to participate in ancestor worship ceremony. In recent years, more and more teams from Taiwan came and participated in the ancestor worship ceremony of public Hakka Ancestral Hall. It has deepened kinship of Hakka between motherland and Taiwan, and enhanced communication and unity of clans. It will promote the identity of "root" and culture. "Blood and flesh are attached, as well as human relationship".²² We are all children of the Yellow Emperor. We look forward to the peaceful reunification of the mother country. The ancestor worship activities of Shibi Hakka contribute to the early realization of this goal.

D. To Carry Forward the Hakka Culture, to Exhilarate the Spirit of the Hakka, and to Accelerate the Prosperity and Development of the Ancestor Land

Public Hakka Ancestral Hall is the general temple of Hakka people around the world. It is a place to seek ancestor, reward clan and memory ancestors. It is a symbol of Hakka culture and an education base of Hakka tradition. The ceremony of ancestor worship is a declaration of Hakka spirit. It is also a manifestation of the unity and cooperation of Hakka. Ninghua Hakka ancestors had formed a unique culture in language, character, habitat, diet, dress, customs, and clans and so on. They created excellent Hakka spirits in entrepreneurship, tough and resolute characters, unity and progress, simplicity and courtesy, respecting teacher and seniors, and returning to own clan. They are spiritual wealth Hakka people are proud of. They are historical monuments of Hakka. Hakka people from the world gather in Shibi. They hold ancestor worship activities to seek their past and memory their ancestor about hard times and unity and progress history. They feel their rough life and hard business to stimulate the traditional consciousness of not forgetting their root and ancestors. It help educate the later generations to never forget where they come from, understand Hakka culture, pass down and carry forward Hakka spirit. Then promotes the unity and cooperation of Hakka people around the world to develop Hakka career and strive for future, and earnestly accelerate the prosperity and the construction of ancestral land to win glory for the Hakka people.

V. CONCLUSION

The historical ceremonies of ancestor worship were prevalent in urban and rural areas in Ninghua. From family ancestor worship to clan ancestor worship, the masses of the people are fond of ancestor worship beside tomb and in hall. Especially ancestor worship in hall with grand ceremony has become symbol of unity of Hakka of same ancestor and mutual glory. To cater the desire and need of Hakka at home and abroad to worship ancestor, since 1987, Ninghua Shibi initiated to build public ancestral hall. It was established until 1995. On the main alter rests tablets of Hakka grandfathers and ancestors of 152 surnames. Hakka has their general temple and pilgrimage center. The government holds an ancestor worship ceremony for Shibi Hakka ancestor every year. Hakka people from Taiwan, Southeast Asia and other places around the world, and their descendants hold the worship ceremony with traditional worship rite. In the new situation, the paper goes through the Hakka ancestral custom, discusses its culture connotation and profound significance to guide people to pass down and develop Hakka worship custom with practical action. It is an important topic for us.

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