

THE SOCIAL MEANING OF FOLK BELIEF AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ITS SACRED RELATIONSHIP--A STUDY OF THE BELIEF RELATIONSHIP BASED ON “XIADI ANCIENT VILLAGE” IN THE EASTERN GUANGDONG

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Abstract: Xiadi located in the eastern Guangdong province is a simplex clan ancient village with a history of over 700 years. There are four Huang's ancestral halls, one Xuan Tian Ancient Temple (folk belief), one Buddhist Lodge and other places of worship in this village. The present situation of multiple beliefs in this village and the simplex clan relationship provide a great example for discussing the social meaning of folk beliefs and its construction of sacred relations. Distinguished from the emphasis of Max Weber, C.K. Yang and other scholars on the institution of Chinese religious belief, such as its faith-based organizations and meaning system, this paper will exam the social meaing of folk belief, which seems to be full of worldly and utilitarian colors but also involves the fundamental problem of its sanctity, with the understanding of Durkheim's religious belief and the concept of Li Xianping's "Relationship-Belief" model.

Keywords: Folk belief; Xuan Tian God; Social meaning; Sacred relationship

1 INTRODUCTION

On the study of Chinese folk belief and its local social relations, there are many classical discussions such as “Diffused and Institutional religion” in Sociology of Religion [1], and different perspectives on “North China Model” and “South China Model” [2] by Chinese anthropologist. From macroscopic to microscopic, these studies have different methods and emphasis on the rituals, organization and other contents of Chinese folk belief on the basis of rich experience observation and unique explanatory understanding. However, in the discussion of belief relationship or social relations, they seem to have a similar conclusion by the case observation of different regions. In the old days, the collective ritual to the Gods [3], which hold in Yanzhou Island, eastern Guangdong Huizhou, was able to integrate several villages around the temple into a collective of faith. Nowadays, the rapid change of social order, which happens in Qingheng village, Hebei Jinjing, is promoting the reconstruction of those collective rituals [4].

It is obvious that the rituals of chinese folk belief are facing rapid changes both in north and south China, and it is easy to associate it with the changes of social order. Those universal ritual changes, then, make us wonder why most rituals of folk beliefs are so easy to change over times or events, while institutional religions keep its ritual traditions strictly according to its old doctrines? Do the ritual changes on the surface mean a new change in its inside of faith? In the process of changes, what is living in the center of folk belief? Will the vague limits of folk belief to the divine and the secular be obvious, or more entangled? Does the emergence of a new ritual mean the construction of a new “sacred relationship”[5]? Is social order a constraint, a motivator, or a fundamental power to Chinese folk belief?

In order to understanding the meaning of social order to the construction of the sacred relationship in folk beliefs, it may need a large number of field researches, classic case studies of folk belief, and even exchanges and cooperation in different disciplines. And it is also best to base itself on the present, realistic and practical materials, rather than on the unified theory of premature assumptions, so that the “rituals of the folk belief are attributed to the realm of faith, and its order is attributed to the social sphere”, making them only seem close to each other. In the problem of the construction of sacred relationship, from the social practice of folk belief, the practical logic of each temple should be an important angle to examine the social foundation of folk belief, the self-construction of folk belief in the changing social environment and so on. Therefore, this paper will try to take an ancient village called “Xiadi” in eastern Guangdong province as an example, through combing the social relations between villages and temples, to explore the connection between the social meaning of folk belief and its construction of sacred relationship.

2 FOLK BELIEFS: A VASSAL OF CLAN CULTURE OR A FOOTNOTE OF INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION?

“Xiadi Ancient village” (hereinafter referred to as Xiadi) located in Guan Bu Town, Chaoyang District, Shantou, is a simplex clan village which have a long history of over 700 years. People lives here have a same family name “Huang”. According to the local history book “Chaoyang Annals” published in the years of Qing Dynasty's Emperor Kuang Hsu, Huang Jingde is the Xiadi's first generation ancestor. His original hometown was Putian, Fujian. He moved to Xiadi in Song Dynasty and became the governor of Chengxiang county after a selection. He was not only kind but also good at handling government affairs. He was later transferred to Chaoyang county but did not take the office on the grounds of illness and finally settled in Xialin. [6] Huang's clan of Xialin was later divided into three (Tanghou, Pushang, Xiadi),

and Xiadi was established by Huang Jingde's fourth son Huang Dongchun. Since then, both in the genealogy of Xiadi and the inscription of ancestral hall, Huang Jingde was the first-generation ancestor of Xiadi and Huang Dongchun was the second.

Today, Xiadi is home to more than 8,500 people of Huang's clan, with a village area of about 3.27 square kilometers. There are four ancestral halls in the village, as well as one Buddhist Lodge, one Xuan Tian Ancient Temple, one Double-loyal Ancient Temple and other places of religious belief. Around these shrines, Xiadi villagers attend more than 20 related sacrificial activities each year (as shown in the table 1 below). Among these sacrificial activities, the worship ceremony for Huang's ancestor has the most unified organization as it is organized by the clan and it is also the most solemn one as its hosted by clan elders. Distinguished from this serious and unified ancestor worship ceremony, Chaoshan area's folk belief rituals are grand in scale and extremely colorful in form. There are "pig weight competition, racing goose, fighting drama, fighting canopies and other customs" from the past, and now as "the content of festive entertainment is added", folk belief rituals are becoming increasingly lively and extraordinary. [7] So compared with the serious and unified ancestor worship, is this kind of celebration of hustle and bustle is only the cultural vassal of local society (in Chaoshan, it is more about clan organization)? Are the operating organization and social structure only the "dual" (Faith Organization-Social Structure) mosaic relationship?

Table 1 Annual Timetable of Worshipping Activities in Xiadi^①

No.	Time	Topic	Location	
1	January	morning on the 1 st	Worship the ancestors	at home
2		morning on the 2 nd	Worship the ancestors	at home
3		4 th	Welcome the Gods (back to earth from heaven)	Worship gods at home or outside
4		5 th	Worship the Xuan Tian God	Xuan Tian Ancient Temple
5		9 th	Birthday of Heaven and Earth Parents	Tian Gong worshipping site
6		dust on the 15 th	Worship the ancestors on the Lantern Festival	at home
7		29 th	Birthday of the Goddess Hua Gong Ma	at home
8	February	11 st	Worship the seventh-generation ancestors	graveyard
9	March	3 rd	Birthday of Xuan Tian God	Lord Palace
10		19 th	Birthday of the Goddess Zhu sheng	A Niang
11		29 th	Birthday of the local land god	Sites of the local land god
12	April	Noon of 4 th 、5 th 、6 th	Worship ancestors on the QingMing Festival	at home、tomb sweepings
13	May	Noon on the 5 th	Worship the ancestors on the Dragon Boat Festival	at home
14		13 rd	Birthday of Kuan-ti	Kuan-ti Temple
15	June	15 th	Birthday of the Goddess Wu Gu	at home
16	July	7 th	Worship the Goddess Hua Gong Ma	at home
17		14 th	Worship Si Ming Gong	at home
18		noon on the 15 th	Worship the ancestors on Hungry Ghost Festival	at home
19		29 th	Worship gods	the squares of each district
20	August	evening on the 15 th	Worship the ancestors in the midterm festival、Moon God	at home
22	October	15 th	Birthday of the Goddess Wu Gu Mu	at home
23	December	morning on the 29 th	Worship the ancestors on the winter solstice	at home
24		24 th	Farewell to Gods (see of the Gods go to haven)	ancestral halls、at home

^① Note: Dark color is for folk belief related activities and the rest are the ancestor worship activities. The time is according to Chinese traditional calendar.

25		29th/30th	Worship the ancestors on the New Year's Eve	at home
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3 THE “BAI LAOGONG” AND “BAI LAOYE” CENTERED ON CLAN ORGANIZATION

People lives in Chaoshan district call their sacrifice tradition which worshipping their ancestors as “**Bai Laogong**”. Based on the scale and form of villagers’ participation, “Bai Laogong” custom in Xiadi can be classified into three categories: the first is the worship of close dead relatives which held separately in each family, the second is for each big branch house’s ancestors, and the third is the worship of the first-generation ancestor Huang Jingde which held by the whole clan of Huang, and even the whole Xialin Huang’s clan. The first family-based ancestor worship is the smallest, and the worship objects are usually dead family members within five generations. This is usually carried out in their own homes or cemeteries within the home unit. The second is to worship the ancestors of each branch. In Xiadi they are the descendants of Huang Wuwei (Huang Jingde’s third son) worshipping him in the annual lunar calendar February 11 and the descendants of Huang Tingyu (Huang Jingde’s fourth son) worshipping him in the annual Lunar New Year February 9. The third is the distant ancestors worship organized by the “**Association of the Elders**” (composed of the Huang’s prestigious male elderly in the village) and involved by the representatives of Huang’s clan. The object of worship is the earlier ancestors of Xiadi, the original ancestral, the second-generation ancestor, the sixth-generation ancestor. The number of villagers participating in the worship is usually about 50, mainly composed of the elderly over the age of 60 in Xiadi.

“Association of the Elders” in Xiadi is not only in charge of the co-ordination of “Bai Laogong” ceremony, but also responsible for presiding over the Xiadi’s folk gods celebration named “Bai Laoye”. These folk belief rituals are born out of the traditional religious beliefs, because of the large number of temples in Chaoshan area (according to the book “Chaoshan Temple”, there are tens of thousands of various large or small temples, shrines, halls, palaces and more than 170 species Gods being worshiped in Chaoshan area.) [8], institutional religion in the historical process of Chaoshan society gradually declined, or have never strictly controlled the local temples, so that these folk temple rituals become the collective activities of local villages to a greater extent. According to Huang Ting, in the sacrifice ceremony of the local village, the social sacrifice and the temple festival gradually fused, forming the tradition of “Bai Laoye” and “began to shoulder the society function of promoting the community unity and strengthening the rural governance”[9]. So, were the social festival and temple festivals in the villages of Chaoshan area clearly separated in the past, or they are the same subject’s activities on different topics from the beginning? This issue requires a great deal of historical research, let us move on and put the focus on today’s ritual activities to see whether the two sacrificial activities have been combined today, or to what extent, in which areas are still divided.

4 FOLK BELIEFS CENTERED ON “XUAN TIAN GOD TEMPLE”[10]

There are three relatively important folk beliefs festivals in Xiadi each year, “Shen Luotian” (welcome the Gods back to earth from heaven to guard the people) at the beginning of the year, “Farewell to Gods” (to thank the Gods’ work and see them off to heaven to debrief to their boss) at the end of the year, as well as “The Birthday of Xuan Tian God” (which hold on the lunar March 3rd), the villagers will also worship local gods of the land and other gods in the 5th and 15th day of each month in lunar calendar. Even on the sacrifice day of the Huang’s family, these gods will enjoy incense at home at the same time. In addition, the ancient temple is also dedicated to the Mercy Goddess, Prince, Huang Yilong, Bagua Master, Prince (Wang Yu), Longwei Master, and so on, some villagers will also go to the ancient temple for those gods’ birthday.

In Xiadi, the sacrificial activities of all kinds gods are centered on the “Xuan Tian God Temple” (commonly known as “Xuan Tian Ancient Temple” and “the Palace of the Lord”), and the celebration day for the birth of Xuan Tian God is the most spectacular one. On this day, the villagers who works out side will do their best to come back home for attending this celebration. The celebration also provides Huang’s members a great opportunity to bond with their friends and relatives. XuanTian God (also known as Zhen Wu God) is been called “Big Master”, or “Buddha” in Xiadi, even though he is more often seen as a god of Taoism. According to the inscription of “A Brief history of the temples in Xiadi “, Xuan Tian God Palace was founded in the Ming Dynasty (1456). Huang Yingjin of the Huang’s sixth generation advocated the establishment of the temple after becoming an official in Taihe County, Jiangxi Province. Inside the Xuan Tian God Temple, Xuan Tian God is in the center, on the left is the Mercy Goddess, on the right is the Flower Goddess, and on the small pavilion was Prince as the god to keep the village safe. During the third year of K’ang-hsi emperor in the Qing Dynasty (1633), temples were destroyed because of war between the empire and pirates. In 1668 after war end, people restarted farming and got harvest in successive years. In 1678-1959, temple was reconstructed. In 1968, during the Cultural Revolution, the wood of the temple was demolished for reform tools and only the site was remained. After Chinese economic reform, in 1992, reconstruction was hosted by the Association of the Elders and it was completed in August 1993. The total area was 282 square meters, Temple Front Square covers an 490 sqm and cost more than 500,000 yuan.

Xuan Tian God temple is also the “light the Lantern” site. At the night of fifth to seventh day of Chinese lunar January, the villagers will in the unit of family take lanterns and incense to the ancient temple to worship. In general, the number of lanterns is decided by the number of males in each family, because the origin of the “light the Lantern” custom is closely related to the patriarchal society, and now it is more a ritual of praying for peace.

There is also a Double Loyalists Ancient Temple on the left of Xuan Tian God Temple. This temple is also managed by the Association of the Elders. It stands in the same place and have similar building style like Xuan Tian God Temple. But for the villagers, its importance is far less than the Xuan Tian God Temple. “Double loyalists” refers to two heroes in history called Zhang Xun and Xu Yuan. The story says that An Lushan’s rebel army attacked the strategic town Sui Yang in 757. At that time, Zhang Xun was the deputy general, and Xu Yuan was the governor of Suiyang. In the case of huge gap of strength and lack of supplies, they insisted on keeping the city and won 10 months’ precious time to conquer the rebellion. The story of these two loyalists is popular in Chaoshan and became the Gods in history. In the annual Chinese New Year celebration for Gods in village, these two loyalists also have their vital position in the Gods Parade. Chen Chunsheng believes that the widespread worship of the two loyalists in Chaoshan area and the growing influence of local clan organizations on local forces actually strengthen and complement each other. [11]

5 THE BUDDHIST LODGE HAVE A FOLK GOD, AND THE XUAN TIAN GOD TEMPLE HAVE THE LIGHT OF BUDDHA

In addition to Xuan Tian God Temple, Double Loyalists Ancient Temple of folk belief, there is another important place of institutional religious called Buddhist Lodge (Full name is “Shantou Chaoyang District Buddhist Lodge) in Xiadi. Folk beliefs such as the Xuan Tian God Temple, Double Loyalists Ancient Temple are managed by the Huang’s clan organization “Association of the Elders”, while Buddhist Lodge is managed by Buddhist believers. Usually we think the diffused religion and intuitional religion run in separately because they have different faith, however, in Xiadi those two kinds of religion linked to each other in a special way. In today’s Buddhist Lodge, there is still a “Ancient Tree Goddess Temple” of folk belief. On the lintel of the Xuan Tian God Temple, there is a board saying, “The Light of Buddha Shines Forever”. Also, the Xuan Tian God is called Buddha in here. It seems that the folk belief temple derived from Taoism was no longer the vassal of Clan culture but became the footnote of institutional religion.

Buddhism was spread into Chaoshan from the Southern Dynasties (457-465) [12]. There are many Buddhist temples in Chaoshan and the Chaozhou Kaiyuan Temple, Chaoyang Lingshan Temple and Jieyang Twin Peaks Temple are rather famous. Near Xiadi, three Peaks Temple and Mozang Temple were built in the Song Dynasty, and Meifeng Temple, Jingshan Temple were built in the Ming Dynasty. Buddhism has a wide range of believers in Chaoshan, but until the 60’s, Xiadi had its first place to worship the Buddha named the Tranquil Heart House. In terms of rituals and the scale of activities, Xiadi Huang’s worship activities around the folk gods and ancestors are very grand and colorful, especially “the Deities Parade” in Chinese New Year and “Wuwei Memorial Day” (one of Huang’s famous ancestor) are usually participated by the whole village. Some folk Gods are enshrined by every family such as the Flower Goddess, Kitchen Master and so on. In contrast, Buddhism is slightly silent in the village. There are no large-scale Buddhist activities in village, nor is it believed in the whole village. Then why did this small-scale faith affect the folk god, and the light of Buddha can shine on the most important Xuan Tian God Temple? The reason is closely related to the fact that Buddhist Lodge was the first to win the legalization from local government.

Buddhist Lodge’s predecessor, the Tranquil Heart House, is the first free Buddhist worshipping place set up by a group of cousins for the four towns (Guan Bu, Jin Yu, Zaopu, Xilu) around Xiadi, and it was founded by Huang Hongjin. In 1990, Huang Lilie served as the vice president and secretary general of Guangdong Buddhist Association. In order to give Huang Hongjin and local Buddha believers a legal place of faith, Huang Lilie applied to the Guangdong Provincial Religious bureau to set up a Buddhist Lodge. The Buddhist Lodge was built in 1995 and then became a cultural unit officially protected by Guan Bu local government. When the establishment of Buddhist Lodge, in order to respect the villagers’ natural god belief, the “Ancient Tree Goddess Temple” is preserved, the Buddhist faith does not exclude the folk faith of the Ancient Tree Goddess.

In addition, believers of the Buddhist Lodge will even “do in Rome as Rome does” and attend the ceremony when Xiadi villagers celebrate the Deities Parade festival in Chinese New Year. Besides, on 7th July “Sending Incense Boat” day, Lantern Festival and 15th January some festival of folk beliefs, a few of believers from Buddhist Lodge will be invited to the Xuan Tian God Temple to chant. As mentioned earlier, Xuan Tian God here is regarded as a “Buddha” revered by the local believers of Buddhism.

Whether Xuan Tian God is a deity of Taoism or a Buddha of Buddhism maybe is serious academic problem, but in Xiadi it’s just a history result. It should be noted from the “Brief History of Xiadi temples”, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Buddhism and Taoism those institutional religion in Chaoshan began to decline as they were impacted by folk belief gods incense. At that time, the Xuan Tian God and other folk belief gods were introduced to Xiadi by Huang’s clan, and the Xuan Tian God Temple was seen as a folk belief temple at the beginning. The Mercy Goddess, the Flower Goddess and the Prince of the temple sacrifice are all popular folk gods in Chaoshan. After the temple was re-built in 1993, the temple was first time marked by the “The Light of Buddha Shines Forever”. In 1990, Xiadi Buddha Lodge was established, and it was completed in 1995 as a cultural unit protected by Guan Bu town. In 1992, Xuan Tian God Temple and Double Loyalists Ancient temple were reconstructed. In 1993, Xuan Tian God Temple’s reconstruction was done. With the combination of time and relationship, it seems that folk temples inlaid “The Light of Buddha Shines Forever” is also a matter of water.

6 THE MIXED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF FOLK BELIEF AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP

In Xiadi, the Xuan Tian God is known as “Buddha”, the Mercy Goddess in this folk belief temple is the incarnation of

“Guanyin”, on the other hand there is a folk god named Ancient Tree Goddess living in Buddhist Lodge. In the first month of every lunar year, the Association of the Elders in Xiadi will host the biggest celebration “the Deities Parade” in this village, and all the Xiadi villagers would be mobilized, even the believers of Buddhism would take part in. Theoretically, the clan, folk beliefs and Buddhism obviously have distinguished existing and acting forms, but in Xiadi they interact with each other in rituals and culture. Behind this religious harmonization is the co-ordination of the Association of the Elders in Xiadi, a kind of secular social power. Ancestor worship, institutional religion and folk belief accept each other, while the power of clan dominates and accommodates all forms of belief. When it comes to the incense money management of sacrifice of ancestors and gods, this kind of fusion and relation is more prominent.

Xuan Tian God Temple has a donation boxes called “Tian You Xiang”. All of the money raised from believers is managed by the Association of the Elders. And it is also the main income of the Association of the Elders. In addition to the expense on the day-to-day running and big celebration activities related to the temple, those money will also be used for clan festivals, as well as village education, other cultural events and so on. “Bai Laogong” and “Bai Laoye” as said before are the biggest events in Xiadi, and they are especially hold in large-scale at the beginning and the end of the Chinese New Year. Activities involve a large sum of money, for the sake of fairness and transparency, the Association of the Elders will publish a list of the income and expense details at two times each year. One is published at the Xuan Tian God temple in the early year, another is published at the Huang’s ancestral hall after the worship events at the end of the year.

From March 2017 to March 2018, the Association of the Elders in Xiadi received more than 290,000 Yuan after holding the activities such as “Buddha’s Birthday” celebration (it’s actually the Birthday of the Xuan Tian God) and “ the Deities Parade” (worship all folk gods in lunar January). Together with the association’s savings over the years, it currently has a total of about 715,000 Yuan. 386,800 Yuan of them are regularly deposited as start-up funds for the rehabilitation of the Huang’s ancestral hall. In terms of expenditure, it mainly includes expense on “clan”, “Temple” and “education and culture” three items. Among them, “clan” includes the preparation and the hold of all kinds of ancestor worship activities, the ceremonial exchange of the Huang’s clan villages, the management of ancestral halls, the condolences of the old clan, the relief money, etc. “Temples” include the organization and preparation of various gods worship activities, the management of temples, etc. “Education and culture” includes funding for cultural expenditures such as maintaining the Huang Wuxian Memorial Museum and rewarding to teachers of Xiadi Primary School. (See Table 2)

Table 2 Expenditure Summary of the Association of the Elders (2017.03-2018.03)

Category	Expenditure/Yuan	Proportion
Clan	75,793	35.4%
Temple	91,194	42.6%
Education & Culture	47,156	22.0%
Total	214,143	100%

The folk beliefs and ancestor worship in Xiadi have different rituals and activities like we saw on the surface, but they are both actually hold in hands of one practice subject “the Association of the Elders”. All of the money collected from the holy temple are used not only on sacred items but also on secular need of the clan. The belief relationship, we usually see as an individual subject to society in institutional religion, in here is born to be one thing inside the village or even more the clan. The social meaning of folk belief therefor has beyond the limit of belief field. About the social meaning of the religion or its institution and function, there are two different interpretation methods in sociological study of religion, Weber and Durkheim. In Webb’s view, religion is a social fact and the study on it is more about analysis and interpretation of its form and function, while in the analysis of Durkheim, the essence of religion is “society.” Here, we may use Durkheim’s way to analyze the social meaning of folk belief and the construction of its sacred relation.

7 IS THE SOCIAL MEANING OF FOLK BELIEF AN EXTERNAL CHARACTERISTIC OR AN INTRINSIC ESSENCE?

In 1912, Durkheim published “*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*”. In this book he defines religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.” [13] But what is the sacred thing? Durkheim believes that the sacred thing is the manifested, personified collective ideas or group power, in fact, the society itself. In other words, “the idea of society is the soul of religion” [13]

Unlike Durkheim, Weber shelved the discussion of the essence of religion, shifting the focus of his research from the essential problem to the study of religious practice behavior.^① Weber believes that religious behavior is rational and oriented to **This World**. It follows rules of experience. Weber believes that primitive people do not see things like our

^① Weber at the beginning of the book "Religious sociology" said " The essence of religion is not even our concern, as we make it our task to study the conditions and effects of a social action." Weber: Max Weber. *The Sociology of Religion*. Beacon Press, 1993, p1.

modern humans. They distinguish between the greater or lesser. On the extraordinary powers, a kind of primitive belief called *Geisterglaube* (belief in spirits) born, which is the source of the magician's Charisma. On this basis, the extraordinary "being" is symbolized and personified as a tribal deity. After that, ancestor worship, house priest, political groups, local gods, monotheism and other religious forms known to modern people gradually formed. Based on this view of origin, which is attributed to the difference of primitive people's thinking, Weber laid aside the discussion of the essence of religion. Subsequently, in the book *"The Sociology of Religion"*, he focused his exposition on prophets, sacrifices, religious ethics, taboos, religious community and so on.

Durkheim and Weber's studies on religion represented two approaches to the study of the sociology of religion, the former equated religion with society and traced the social essence of religious origin and religious sanctity, while the latter regarded religious belief as a form of behavior and, as a social fact, analyzed the relationship between its various elements and society. Weber's way of studying, which see religion as a social fact, influences the study of religion in later sociological function theory, conflict theory, compensation theory and so on. In the functional theory of Parsons, Morton and others, religion has become a part of the integration function in the social system. In conflict theory, religious organizations are regarded as one of the interest groups in the social system. In the theory of compensation, religion becomes a human organization committed to general compensation. [14] These theories have a unified feature. They see religion as an independent entity isolated from many social relations, then analyze its function towards whole relationship of society.

So, does the folk belief in Xiadi become an independent entity and run in its own way?

Judging from previous description, the practice subject of the folk belief of "Xuan Tian God" in Xiadi is actually the clan organization, and its management has been presided over by the Association of the Elders. Even when the Buddhist Lodge entered Xiadi and Buddhism splits out of the Association of the Elders. It is still influenced by the clan organization. This kind of same-subject characteristic of folk belief organization and clan organization in social relations lead to the situation that Worshipping Ancestors and Worshipping Gods can be fused in the income and distribution of money, even though they are supposed to be different faith. The expenditure of three aspects of "Clan", "temple", "education and culture" means that these money collected from Xiadi finally returned to the collective of the Huang's family. The folk belief of Xiadi has its individual festivals and rituals, however, from its social meaning, it seems that this alienation is not out of the Durkheim's "the idea of society" scope.

8 BASED ON "THE LAW OF HUMAN BEING", FOLK BELIEFS IN CHINESE VILLAGES IS CONSTRUCTING THEIR UNIQUE SACRED RELATIONSHIPS

In his book *"The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion"*, Peter L. Berger divides the study of religion into two parts, one part is the system of religion and the other is the religion of history. Berger believes that the core of the religious system is its theodicy part, which provides plausibility structure to make people's relationships orderly. "Religion makes people build sacred cosmic activities." he says in his book. To put it another way, "religion uses divine means to make order." [15] Thus, behind the construction of the sacred relationship of religious beliefs is actually the "Law of Human Being".

The belief relationship in Xiadi, as mentioned above, seems to explain the extension of the "Law of Human Being" in the "sacred relationship". Chaoshan district has always been a place whose Chinese clan culture is relatively well preserved, and this strong cultural tradition (social order in essence) has also affected the important ritual of the Xuan Tian God belief—"the Deities Parade" activities.

On 5th January of the lunar new year in 2017, "the Deities Parade" celebration held like the past years in Xiadi. The parade started from the Xuan Tian God Temple, went along the village for one circle, through the Market, Huang Jinfu's mansion, Xiadi Primary School, and other important public places, to the Huang's ancestral hall as the end. On 7th January, "The Deities Parade" team started from the ancestral hall, walk to the big ancestral hall (the Zhichang Ancestral Hall dedicated to the first-generation ancestor of Huang's clan) of the village called Pushang nearby and finally returned to the Xuan Tian God Temple.

From the management of temples and the distribution of the money collected from temple, to the practice and symbol of faith rituals, all of which have the full participation and deduction of the secular social order. The Xiadi case reflects a constructed sacred order based on social relations. This kind of construction model, like Durkheim's exposition of the social origin of religious belief, the construction of sacred relationship is also formed around "the idea of society" and "the survival goal of ethnic groups". Religious belief in here therefore is fundamentally a kind of "belief of relationship" based on community. Interpersonal relations determine the relationship between human and God, and social order directly affects the construction of sacred relationship. [16] The social meaning of folk belief is therefore not only an organizational relationship characteristic here, but also not limited to the mosaic relationship of "dual relationship of subject and object" (belief organization-social structure), but the core of folk belief, which can be integrated into the foundation of society. Therefore, folk belief constructs a unique sacred relationship which is different from the institutional religion and crosses the divine and the secular. On its surface, it seems to be secular and utilitarian, but in its inside, it has its own sanctity and legitimacy which stems from collective consciousness and social order.

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