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# A Study on the Return of Local Emotions of Ancestor Worship- A Case Study of Dangjia Village in Hancheng City

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**Abstract.** In the current environment of social change and development, the decline of Chinese rural culture has become increasingly prominent. Taking the Dangjia village as an example, this paper analyzes the relationship between the village, the ancestral culture and the local emotions by applying the method of text analysis and interviews. It is found that the ancestral culture is the core embodiment of the rural culture. With the development of the economic marketization, the ancestral public space gradually disappears, and the main body of ancestor worship is from collective to individual, and the ritual is from the complex to the simple. It reveals the decline of Chinese traditional culture and the weakening of local emotional attachment. This paper puts forward the suggestions of the local emotional return of the ancestral sacrifice culture by analyzing the internal and external causes of the emotional changes of the ancestors, and provides theoretical guidance for the rural development.

## 1. Introduction

As a carrier of cultural inheritance, the rural intrinsic emotional value is expressed through material space and spiritual space. To a large extent, the spatial layout of the village reflects the characteristics of the rural style and the economic culture and customs. As the core element of spatial layout, the ancestral hall is the bond of family or clan. It is the place of family management and ancestor worship, bearing the rural local emotions. However, in the context of social change and development, China has shifted from an agrarian society rooted in land to a rapidly developing industrial society, and the traditional rural culture has gradually become indifferent in the process of urbanization. The supporting space of local emotions has been gradually compressed. In particular, the culture of ancestor worship has a tendency to be "simplified" or even disappeared in terms of material, institutional, and spiritual aspects. With the proposal of rural revitalization and rural rejuvenation development, the return of rural local sentiment has become a hot topic of current research.

For the study of local emotions, the Western humanities and social sciences began to pay attention to the influence of emotions on space and society, and thus triggered the "Affective Turn" of Western geography[1]. In 2001, Anderson and Smith advocated the study of emotional shaping of social space [2]. According to Davidson et al, the content of emotional geography is constructed from three aspects: the emotional location, the emotional connection between human and environment and the visual geography[3-4]. Duan Yifu made a study of people's experience and feelings about places and spaces from the perspective of geography, especially the discussion of the function of ancestor worship in human society. Based on the emotional attachment of immigrants to the place, Richter believes that



local emotions can be extended and reconstructed through “heterogeneous emotional space” such as churches and restaurants [5]. This broad understanding of the sanctity of the dead space has gained a deeper interpretation in anthropology - that is, sacredness. It makes more sense for the living. This broad understanding of the sanctity of the dead space has gained a deeper interpretation in anthropology - sacredness. It makes more sense for the living.

Domestic research on local emotions is based on local reconstruction studies under the Western “Affective turn”. Qian Junxi used Liede Village in GuangZhou as an example to reach that local reconstruction is a double reconstruction of local cultural landscapes, symbols, texts and emotional spaces. It is believed that geography should not neglect the importance of emotions in spatial construction [6]. At the same time, according to Yang Rong and Zhu Xi, the landscape of death represents the emotional connection and communication with relatives, and it is also the material carrier of the deep emotional attachment[7]. There are some studies on the culture of ancestor worship and the layout of the rural space. Liu Peilin pointed out that the clan image is one of the basic images of the ancient Chinese village landscape through the study of traditional Chinese villages. The village space is mostly represented by the layout of the ancestral hall as the geometric center or the center of the mark[8]. Wu Xiaofei based on the study of the villages in the Hakka area of eastern Guangdong shows that the ancestral hall is the main component of the ancestor worship, it also improves the cultural cohesion and attraction of the clan [9]. Hou Haikun's case study of the ancestral rituals during the Spring Festival in North China pointed out that folk beliefs and ancestral rituals play an important role in clan cohesion and family centripetal force [10]. It can be seen from this that the ancestral culture represented by the ancestral hall has a certain representative meaning for the elaboration of local emotions.

In summary, It can be concluded that foreign scholars pay attention to people's experience and feelings about places and spaces, and the local feelings and emotions can be extended and reconstructed through the “heterogeneous emotional space”. The domestic research is mainly focus on the material changes in rural space, and most of that is concentrating on the layout of villages and traditional culture based on the perspective of social space, but lack of research on material and spiritual emotions. Taking the party village as an example, this paper explores the decline and internal causes of the ancestral culture through the method of text analysis and interviews, and it reveals that local emotional return is one of the paths of rural revival.

## **2. Analysis of the Connotation of the Ancestor Culture**

### *2.1 Text analysis*

This paper uses Rost Content Wininr software as a tool for text mining to analyze the relationship between rural culture and ancestor worship and the typicality of the ancestral sacrifice culture in party villages. Though analyzing the local emotions embodied in the ancestral culture, it is argued that the promotion of the ancestral culture has an irreplaceable necessity for the return of local emotions in the countryside.

From CNKI full-text search separately input "Dangjia Village", "Dangjia Village" and "Traditional Culture", "Dangjia Village" and "Traditional Village", "Dangjia Village" and Ancestral Culture", "Dangjia Village" and "Public Space", "Dangjia Village" and "Local Emotion", "Countryside" and "Ancestor worship". It can be separately Obtained 207 articles, 110 articles, 82 articles, 46 articles, 336 articles, 17 articles, and 780 articles. From the Ctrip, MaFengwo two network platform travel panel search into the "Dangjia Village", there are 47 articles in Ctrip website and 209 articles in Ma Maocai website.

### *2.2 Correlation Degree Analysis*

*2.2.1 Analysis of the inner relationship between the village and the ancestral culture.* The 780 articles appearing in the network which can be obtained by input into “National, Sacrifice Ancestors” will be

restricted by culturology, sociology and ethnology and journals. There were 259 articles remaining after the final screening. Selected the text obtained from the article, and excluded invalid text and images, finally, more than 150, 000 words of text were adopted.

Though the analysis of the text found that “culture”, “construction”, “village” and “the ancestral temple” are a line with high correlation and stability, which reflects that the temple can be used as an important carrier for building rural culture. “Traditional” and “culture” as important connecting points of the graph, it fully proved the importance of traditional culture in the countryside. In addition, “construction”, “culture” and “inheritance” are a highly stable triangular relationship. It is enough to show that the revival of the countryside is inseparable from the inheritance of the rural culture.

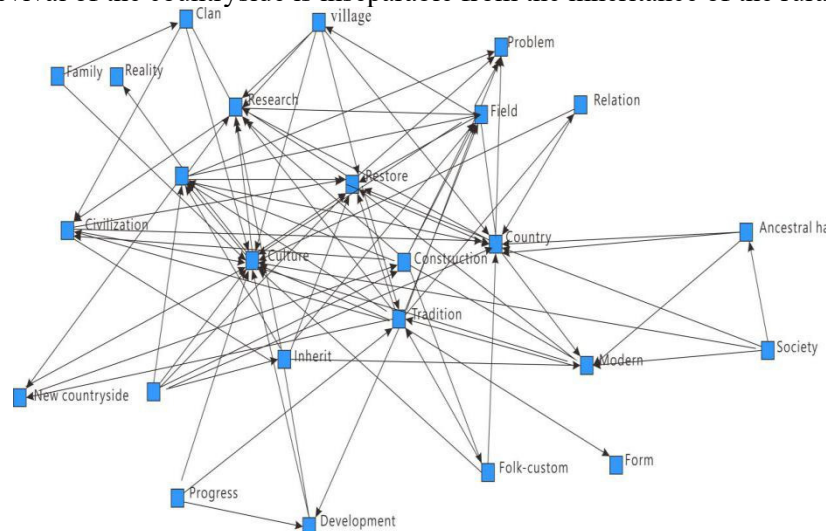


Figure. 1 Correlation Degree Analysis

**2.2.2 An analysis of the relationship between the ancestral sacrifice culture and the local emotions.** After sorting out 17 articles that appeared after the input of "Dangjia village, local emotions" on the knowledge network platform, and then the text analysis was carried out. The high-frequency words in the top 50 were selected after the word segmentation. (the overlap of meanings does not affect the research results).

After sorting out the meanings of the high-frequency words of the text, it can be found that among the top 50 high-frequency words, “Ching Ming Festival”, “Ancestral”, “Culture” and “Village” account for the highest proportion, which indicates that the Qingming Festival in the traditional activities of worship ancestors occupying an important position. The “cemetery” and the “ancestral temple” as the “material space” of the ancestral culture is an important carrier of the preservation of traditional culture. At the same time, "seeking the roots", "reminiscent" and "worship" represent the "spiritual space" of the ancestral culture and an important channel for spreading traditional culture. Whether it is "material space" or "spiritual space", it reflects the local sentiment of the ancestral culture. “Hometown” “identity” and “land” as local “symbols” reflect the characteristics of rural culture. The words "ancestor worship", "culture" and "emotion" contain the old-fashion complex, and also reflect that the ancestral emotion is the epitome of local emotions. Therefore, the study of the changes of the ancestral sacrifice emotions is of great significance for the study of local sentiment in rural civilization.

Table. 1 High frequency vocabulary ranking table

	F	C	F	C	F	C	F	C	F
Ancestor worship	151	Culture	140	Ancestor	106	Qingming Festival	101	Sacrifice	89
Ching Ming	89	Tradition	85	Sweeping the grave	64	Village	58	Flower	47

Home	47	Society	46	Ancestral hall	45	Ceremony	44	Forefather	43
Hemetery	42	Root seeking	40	Faith	40	Worship	39	Rural	38
Festival	38	Spirit	37	Nongover nmental	36	China	34	Emotion	32
Custom	31	Ancestry	30	Education	29	Public	27	Memorial	27
Place	27	Clan	25	Grave	25	Vicissitude	25	Paper money	24
Land	23	Nation	22	Development	21	Space	21	Local	20
Country	19	Settlement	18	Folk-custom	18	Relative	18	Individual	18
Civilization	17	Value	17	Identification	17	Thanksgiving	16	Remember	16

Note: F is on behalf of Frequency(Times)

C is on behalf of Characteristic word

### 3. Case area selection

The case area is based on the Chinese historical and cultural village of Dangjia Village, which is located in Hancheng City in Shaanxi Province. Dangjia Village is the representative of traditional Chinese villages, with typical “traditional space” and “spiritual space” of traditional rural culture and local emotions. Through the case of the Dangjia Village, we can profoundly reveal the problems that need to be solved, such as the return of local emotions and the recovery of traditional culture, which are faced by rural rejuvenation and development. The texts of 256 articles obtained in the travel section of Ctrip and Mafengwo are downloaded, and the invalid texts and pictures are eliminated, and the final use of text is more than 100, 000 words.

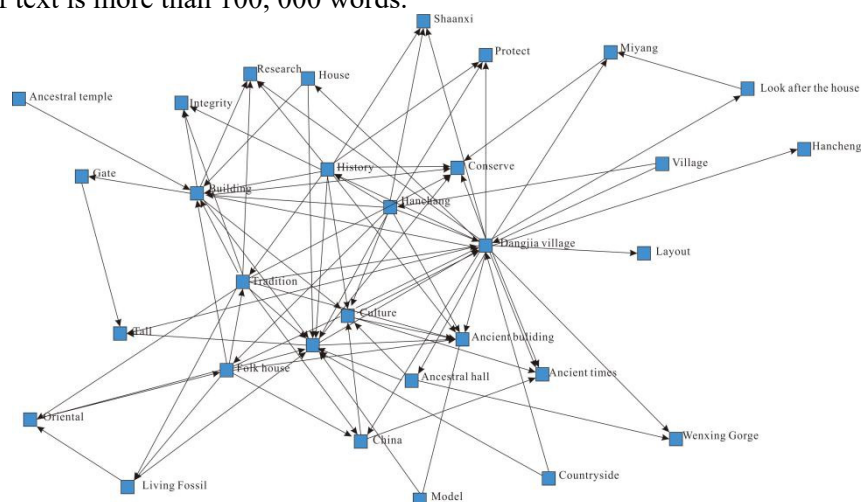


Figure. 2 Correlation Degree Analysis

The social analysis and semantic analysis of the text found that traditional culture is a typical representative of the Dangjia village, and the traditional culture is mainly expressed through its characteristic architecture. For example, the "Siheyuan", "Yutang", "Biyang Fort" and "Guest House" in the network map. From the perspective of the overall network map, “Dangjia Village”, “Culture” and “Ancestral hall” are a highly stable triangle and they are located in the core of the network map. It is enough to illustrate the importance of the ancestral worship culture carried by ancestral temples in the traditional culture of Dangjia Village.

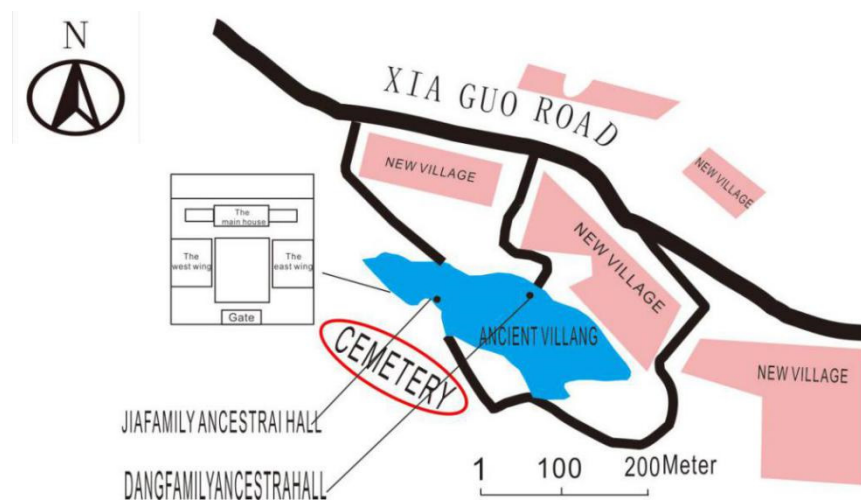


Figure. 3 Dangjia Village Floor Plan

#### 4. An Analysis of the Emotional Changes of the Ancestor worship

Taking the field trips and interviews of the Dangjia Village as the main idea, combining the research texts to analyze the current situation of the ancestor worship, it is found that the following changes have been made to the emotions of the ancestor worship.

##### 4.1 The public space of the ancestor worship gradually disappeared

In the investigation, it was found that after rectification movements from the middle of the last century to the 1960s and 1970s, a large number of ancestral halls and temples were severely damaged, and they were changed into administrative institutions such as schools and village battalions. The ancestral hall lost its original Features. At present, there are only two ancestral halls in Dangjia Village. Dangjia Village are all open to the public, and they can simulate the scenes of ancestor worship for tourists, but do not have the functions of worshipping the entire clan or hosting important clan things.

"Now no one has gone to the ancestral temple to worship the ancestors or hold major activities, only tourists will go to visit."-- From interviewee A, villagers in Dangjia Village. It indicates that the public space and its functions of the ancestral worship of the Dangjia village have gradually disappeared and shifted to the internal space of the private house.

##### 4.2 The subject of ancestor worship from collective to individual

In the text analysis, the two high-frequency words "relatives" and "individuals" indicate that the current main body of the sacrificial activities is a small range of group with direct blood relationship as the link.

"Now there are only the old men and old ladies left in the old village, and their children live on the new village."-- from Interviewee B, Villagers of Dangjia Village.

In the conversation with the village head we learned that more than 85% of the population living in the old village are old people and children, and most of the young work in the cities, or other places. Migrant workers can only go home during the Spring Festival or when they encounter family changes, and stay in the village for a short period of time. Even in major festivals such as Ching Ming Festival and The ancestor days, they rarely go home. In the past, the clan colony and clan consciousness that the ancestral sacrifices depended on gradually disappeared. The subject of ancestor worship has been turned from the collective to the individual, and the main body of the ancestor is only two or three generations.

##### 4.3 The ceremony of the ancestor worship from the complex to the simple

In the furnishings of the ancestral hall in Dangjia village, through some imitation of the exquisite offerings, you can think of the complexity of the ancestral rituals of the Dangjia village. In the visit of



the new village, only a small incense burner and some fruits were placed in front of the photos of relatives who died in the family, and the memorial tablets of the older generation were not seen. "Now there are only photos. The memorial tablet of the previous ancestral halls were given to their immediate family members, and only for generations. There is no ceremonial tablet in our family for nearly three generations. " --From interviewee E, villagers in Dangjia Village.

Flowers are a way of expressing tribute and also is a way to meet environmental requirements in modern times. Toasting is a continuation of traditional etiquette. Modern ancestral rituals lack many ceremonial procedures compared to traditional ancestor rituals. The space on which emotions are based gradually disappears. The Consanguinity of the ancestor worship group began to decrease, and their social connection shrank, which to some extent weakened the sacred value of the ancestor.

## **5. Analysis of the reasons for the decline of the ancestor worship emotional value**

### *5.1 Transformation of production relations under the impact of urbanization*

The residents of traditional agricultural society are largely lives on the providing of Heaven. The natural environment restricts people's agricultural production activities, thus it bringing a belief worship of nature and ancestors, so as to pray for good weather and peace of life. However, With the acceleration of urbanization and commercialization, most of China's cities and towns and rural areas have been hit by the market economy. Dangjia Village cannot avoid the influence of the current situation. Young people choose to go out to work, and the residents who have money in the village have set up another house on Beiyuan. Constantly changing to form the new village now. In the environment of commercial culture and foreign culture invasion, the traditional ancestral culture was quickly annihilated by the impact of modern elements. This change has made the rural development more and more fading, and the traditional ethics and values are gradually distorted, which brings certain troubles to the rural rejuvenation.

### *5.2 Disintegration of rural social structure*

In the traditional rural society, people valued the concept of a big family, which composed with several generations. The family's internal was priority in rank. Ancestor worship and clan organizations dominate the family development. Among them, the patriarch has absolute authority, has a certain right to speak on the leadership and domination of family affairs. They are often the moderator and operator in the ancestral activities, following the ethics of traditional culture. In this context, the villagers have strong local emotions and local attachment to the village where they live.

However, with the increasing productivity a new group with higher economic ability has emerged. The younger generation is between towns and villages, and their local and cultural identity to the countryside is weak. Under the influence of subtle generations, the younger generation gradually got rid of the native complex. Therefore, the two generations of father and son uphold different cultural characteristics. The younger generation is no longer restricted by the traditional methods of production and ethics. They often shows indifference to the traditional culture. The ancestral culture has been gradually simplified and abandoned in this environment.

As the population increased and the per capita land became less and less, the residents of the Dangjia village began to move from the old village to the new village, and the links between relatives were alienated. At the same time, the continuous branching and movement of the population, the inherent mode of coexistence of the ethnic group was broken, and gradually began to live in different places. As a result, clan powers and family concepts began to weaken and fade, and the centripetal force and cohesiveness gradually decreasing. At the same time, ritual activities within the clan family were banned, and ancestor sacrifice were the first to bear the brunt.

### *5.3 Unbalanced village space order*

The layout of traditional villages pays attention to ethical relations, pays attention to the hierarchy, and advocates the spatial awareness of "middle" (centered for large). As the carrier of the clan authority,

the ancestral hall and the temple occupy the central authority of the village, and the religious belief function plays an important role in the village social order. From a historical point of view, the collective sacrifice ancestor is the original function of the ancestral hall, but as time changes, the function of the ancestral hall gradually changes. For example, in the land reform period of the 1950s, the land under the name of the ancestral hall was distributed to the farmers, and even the ancestral hall was distributed to the peasants who had no housing, or to other functional sites. In the course of political, economic and cultural changes in the past century, the social foundation of the clan ancestral hall has been shaken, and the traditional clan ancestral hall also experienced a painful transformation.

## **6. The local sentiment regression strategies**

### *6.1 The spatial return of the ancestor worship emotions*

The peasants' consciousness of "pay respect to our ancestors" needs to rely on specific objects to continue to transmit. Therefore, certain sacred places and material carriers can be set up, then the villagers can have emotional belongings and memory symbols, and the ancestral culture naturally has its roots. Therefore, in the construction of the new village of Dangjia Village, similar public open space should be added and its function should be optimized, so that the young people in the new village can better understand the excellent traditional culture of Dangjia village. Other villages or communities should pay attention to the use of traditional space in the process of modern social planning, adding some public space and exploring the path of rejuvenation of the ancestral sect, so that the emotion of "modern people" has a certain space to be place. For example, re-planning and developing new ancestral public spaces and increasing the social function of the ancestral hall.

### *6.2 The return of ancestor-memorial ritual*

The ancestral culture has its own value in each period, but its essential meaning is pay a careful attention to the funeral rites to parents recall forefathers, then the virtue of the people will resume its proper excellent. Today simple and civilized rituals of ancestor worship can be duly held. On the one hand, they can pay her respects on the deceased. On the other hand, they can educate their descendants. In addition to the traditional methods of sacrifice, the integration of modern elements can develop a richer way of ancestor worship, thus promoting and reshaping the ancestral culture. For example, repairing genealogy and building a village history museum. Genealogy culture can effectively infiltrate the emotions and spirits of the ancestors into the psychological consciousness of each family member. The perfect combination of traditional cultural factors and modern cultural factors develops the "root-seeking ancestral tour" and realizes the "root-seeking ancestor". The modern pilgrimage realizes the transformation from the daily world to the spiritual world, so that people's inner abstract sentiment can be found and pinned. Online Sacrifice is a kind of worship method that uses the internet to cross the space. Through WeChat and other online public platforms, people can send pray anytime, anywhere, and this way can saving the economic cost.

### *6.3 Spiritual return of ancestral emotions*

Carry forward traditional Confucianism and socialist core values to guide and influence the daily life of the villagers, such as benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, intelligence and credit. In the streets of Dangjia Village, Chinese outstanding traditional ideas such as "respecting the teacher", "filial piety" and "diligence" can be seen everywhere. The tourists who visited it were shocked and deeply influenced, but the new village did not show the traditional ideas and culture. And some young people rarely return to the old village. Therefore, it is necessary to restore inheritance and carry forward the traditional ideas and core values. On the basis of inheriting the essence of traditional culture, it is inevitable to integrate the elements of modern culture in order to make the spiritual return of traditional ancestral ancestors.



## 7. Conclusion

By using the text analysis method and the field interview method, it can be seen from the case of the Dangjia village that with the development of economic marketization, the public space of ancestor worship is gradually disappearing, the main body of ancestor worship is from collective to individual, and the ancestral sacrifice ceremony is also from complex to simple. Its essence is the decline of traditional Chinese culture. In particular, the ancestral culture has been broken and disappeared. People's rural complex and local attachment are becoming more and more indifferent, which has a great impact on the development of the whole village and society. With the rise of rural rejuvenation and the rejuvenation of rural civilization, the local attachment of traditional culture and local complex is still one of the soul and support of rural development. Therefore, finding and reviving the disappearing local emotions are the fundamental measure of, rural rejuvenation, and the inevitable process of building a new socialist countryside. With the expansion of the vision of rural revitalization research, the return of rural local sentiment will also be a hot topic.

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