

Flexible Intergenerational Relations in Rural Southern China

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ABSTRACT Lineage has a long history in southern China where many villages have maintained lineage ethics and activities even in present days. Previous researches suggest that the intergenerational relations in such areas appear a relax situation owing to the strong lineage tradition. However, this paper, from the perspective of the younger generation and the daily contact among generations, reveals that the younger generation challenges the authority of the elder generation in everyday lives, which results in the strained intergeneration relations. Nonetheless, the funeral ceremony plays an important role to alleviate the tension in the symbolic domain. The experimental design of this research relies on participant-observation, questionnaire, and in-depth interview in a multi-lineage village in Fujian province, China.

INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational relationship refers to not only the relationship between the parental generation and the filial generation in a family but also the relationship between the elderly and young people. The intergenerational relationship in traditional Chinese society was affected by Confucianism that emphasized seniority order and took filial piety as the core of all virtues. Parents' caring and upbringing of their children are the ethical foundation for filial generations to obey, support their parental generations and fulfill filial duties to them. These intergenerational ethics constitute an important part of the Chinese lineage culture. In other words, the lineage provides fertile ground for the maintenance of traditional filial ethics.

Lineage culture in southern China has a long history, which can be traced back to the Ming Dynasty. It has greatly transformed after the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949. Lineage activities such as ancestor worship were strictly forbidden from 1949 to 1978. But after 1978 when the Communist Party of China (CCP) started to implement the reform and opening-up policy, the CCP has gradually loosened the control of lineage activities. Many lineages in rural southern China have been revived

since the 1980s. Has the revived lineage culture heavily influenced the intergenerational relations in contemporary rural Chinese societies? Is parental generation's authority over filial generation still as strong as it was before? Is intergenerational interaction still themed by filial generation's obedience? If not, what do today's intergenerational relations look like? Why? This paper aims to address these questions.

Recent researches on intergenerational relations are mainly carried out from an empirical perspective in central China (Chen 2009; Xiong 2009; Xiao 2010; Sun and Wang 2013), eastern China (Tang and Ma 2009) and northern China (Wang 2010; Fan and Gong 2015), but little attention is paid to southern China. It is noteworthy that Xuefeng (2009) has conducted a comparative study of the intergenerational relationship in different regions. He pointed out that the intergenerational relations in southern China appear to be in a balanced and relaxed state and there is a strong obligatory relationship between parents and children. In addition, parents have powerful rights over their children mainly because traditional ethics such as filial piety still play an important role in this area.

Studies of intergenerational relationship are usually associated with the discussion of filial piety and support for the elderly (Jin et al. 2015;

Li 2016). In the 1990s traditional filial piety still existed in the family. In that period, children were still filial to their parents, and grown-up children cherished traditional values more than their parents (Whyte 1997). Modernization is a factor that affects the intergenerational relations. Young people in rural areas have suffered less influence from modernization than those in urban areas. Therefore, compared with those in urban areas, young people in rural areas take better care of the elderly (Wang 2012). However, studies in northern rural China show that rural areas are also faced with serious supporting problems. Yan (2003) held that people of different generations changed their views about “filial piety”, which mirrored the decline of filial piety, the key of elderly support mechanism in Chinese traditional culture, thus causing the crisis of elderly support. The issue related to elderly support not only involves traditional sons’ support for parents but also refers to married daughters’ care especially emotional comfort for natural parents (Lin and Yi 2011; Cui and Jin 2015).

The influence of the state on intergenerational relationship has always drawn scholars’ attention. In traditional China, lineage organization, marriage and funeral ceremony emphasized hierarchical relationship, internal operation rules and property ownership right in family, which made the elder especially father’s power above children. Children must support the aged parents, because if they fail to take good care of them, their right of inheriting land might be deprived (Watson 1988). Since the founding of the PRC, the central government started to regulate relevant family ceremonies such as funeral and ancestor worship, but never criticized the traditional supporting manner in rural areas. The state advocated equality among family members. Since the reform and opening-up, the younger generations had more choices than their elder generations in terms of the means of living, so they relied less on their parents to arrange their life. Additionally, a series of reforms in the initial stage of the PRC further drove the decline of parents’ authority in the spiritual world of faith, thus affecting the intergenerational relationship in rural China (Chen and Chen 2016; Yan 1997).

Previous studies on intergenerational relationships have paid little attention to present rural southern China, which has a long history of lineage traditional culture. Many researches

have shown the changes of intergenerational relations along with the social transformation in China and emphasized how social transformation broke the traditional filial values and brought problems of current elderly support. This paper investigates the daily contact among generations from the perspective of younger generation and intends to showcase the pendulum relations between the parental and filial generations. On the one extreme, the relations between the elder and young generation appear a tense situation and their conflict even cannot be solved in mundane life, and on the other extreme, the practice presenting filial piety in symbolic field is a feasible strategy to relax the tension between the two generations. By doing so, a more comprehensive and detailed picture of intergenerational relations in Chinese rural society can be gained.

METHODOLOGY

Research Site

Since 2002, the researchers have been engaged in long-term fieldwork in Tian Village. From 2006 to 2007, the researchers spent about one year at the village and then paid a regular revisits every year there. Tian Village is located in southwest Fujian province, China. It belongs to Shuyang Town in Nanjing County, which administratively belongs to Zhangzhou City. Tian Village had 366 households and its total population was 1,302 according to the village registration record. Three surnames of Lv, Liu and Xiao reside in Tian Village and each surname has its own ancestral hall. From 1949 to 1978, lineage activities were banned. Since the 1980s, people of these three surnames have begun to rebuild ancestral halls, recompile genealogies and hold ancestor worships and other lineage activities. The elders of the lineage are in charge of lineage affairs such as organizing collective ancestor worship and general maintenance of the ancestral hall. Owing to the revival of lineage activities, adult villagers (especially males) are aware of the status of a generation in both family and lineage.

Methods

The research methods used in this study include literature review, participant-observation, questionnaire, and in-depth interviews.

Participant-observation is a useful method for this research. The researchers lived in the local villager's house, attended villagers' production, ate meals with villagers and observed trivial matters and rituals in their daily lives. During the stay at the village, researchers made a good relationship with villagers, which facilitated further investigation on personal relationships in this village.

Questionnaire is another method of collecting data. In 2012, the researchers conducted a sampling questionnaire survey on "Living Conditions in Rural Areas", with an aim of knowing the daily living conditions of groups in this community. Respondents were community members at the age of 18-70. The method of stratified multistage sampling was used for investigation. A total of 300 samples were designed and a total of 273 complete valid questionnaires were obtained. Except for the deleted invalid-reply samples, 241 valid samples were collected (including 107 males and 134 females). According to later interviews, the quality of data was good.

Based on analysis of the questionnaires, the researchers selected 27 people from all ages of respondents for in-depth interviews. Through profound and detailed interviews, abundant and vivid qualitative data was achieved. After analysis, the characteristics and changes of intergenerational relationship in Tian Village were summarized.

RESULTS

In the questionnaire survey, main questions involving intergenerational relationship include:

1. Do you think government propaganda plays a big role in family harmony?
2. Does the Old Men Association play a big role in the village?
3. What do you think of your relationship with your parents (parents-in-law)?
4. What do you think of your relationship with your children?
5. What can best reflect your relationship with your parents (children)?
6. Who do you think is the most authoritative in your family?
7. Do you think funerals are important?
8. Do you think larger scale for a funeral is better?
9. Are you familiar with the process of a funeral?

10. Do you think a funeral is complicated?

One can find some characteristics of the intergenerational relationship in Tian village based on the data collected from the questionnaire (Table 1).

1. In terms of family harmony, 74.7 percent of respondents considered that government propaganda played a big role and 80.9 percent of them considered that the "Old Men Association" played a big role, which shows both the government and local organizations play important roles in the rural people's family relationships.
2. Regarding the relationship with parents (parents-in-law), the older respondents considered that they had a better relationship with their elders, and regarding the relationship with children, the young people believed that they had a better relationship with their children.
3. Concerning the funeral, according to the investigation, 98.4 percent of respondents considered the funeral to be important or average, and as for the scale, 89.2 percent of them believed that the larger the better. Young people thought the funeral was complicated and they were not familiar with the process of funeral.

Other responds reflect the daily practice of the Tian villagers regarding intergenerational relations. For the question, "What can best reflect your relationship with your parents (children) (multiple choice)", forty-eight percent of respondents chose "wedding", fifty-two percent of them chose "funerals", twenty-three percent of them chose "the relationship between *Poxi* (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law)", thirty-four percent of them chose "naming child", twenty-five percent of them chose "the order of seats at table", twenty percent of them chose "one's own career development" and twelve percent of them chose "other".

As for the question, "Who do you think is the most authoritative in your family", seventy-eight percent of the respondents chose "old male" (188 persons), 9.1 percent chose "old female" (22 persons) and ten percent chose "young male" (24 persons), while only 2.9 percent of them chose "young female" (7 persons).

The field data may explain what one gains in the questionnaire. The researchers found that the local government has great interest in advocating for traditional filial ethic in rural areas. The government of Nanjing County, the higher

Table 1: Intergenerational relations in Tian Village

Age *		18-30				30-50				50+				Total	
		Males (22p)		Females (37p)		Males (47p)		Females (57p)		Males (38p)		Females (40p)		p	%
Person and percent		p	%	p	%	p	%	p	%	p	%	p	%		
<i>Government Propaganda's Role</i>	Big	14	63.6	22	59.5	36	76.6	42	73.7	34	89.5	32	80	180	74.7
	Average	5	22.8	10	27	9	19.1	13	22.8	4	10.5	7	17.5	48	19.9
<i>Role of the Old Men Association</i>	No	3	13.6	5	13.5	2	4.3	2	3.5	0	0	1	2.5	13	5.4
	Big	14	63.6	23	62.2	40	85.1	45	78.9	37	97.4	36	90	195	80.9
<i>Relationship With Your Parents</i>	Average	4	18.2	10	27	6	12.8	10	17.5	1	2.6	4	10	35	14.5
	No	4	18.2	4	10.8	1	2.1	2	3.5	0	0	0	0	11	4.6
<i>Relationship With Your Children</i>	Good	14	63.6	16	43.3	29	61.7	23	40.3	32	84.2	33	82.5	147	61
	Average	5	22.8	14	27.8	16	34	25	43.9	6	15.8	5	12.5	71	29.5
<i>Is Funeral important</i>	Not good	3	13.6	7	18.9	2	4.3	9	15.8	0	0	2	5	23	9.5
	Good	18*	100	30	93.8	23	48.9	25	43.9	30	78.9	34	85	160	69
<i>Is Larger Scale of Funeral Better</i>	Average	0	0	2	6.2	17	36.2	27	47.3	5	13.2	4	10	55	23.7
	Not good	0	0	0	0	7	14.9	5	8.8	3	7.9	2	5	17	7.3
<i>Is Funeral Complicated Familiar With the Process of Funeral</i>	Important	12	54.5	20	54.1	39	83	50	87.7	36	94.7	34	85	191	79.3
	Average	9	40.9	15	40.5	7	14.9	7	12.3	2	5.3	6	15	46	19.1
<i>Is Funeral Complicated Familiar With the Process of Funeral</i>	Not important	1	4.6	2	5.4	1	2.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1.7
	Yes	16	72.3	32	86.5	40	85.1	52	91.2	36	94.7	39	97.5	215	89.2
<i>Is Funeral Complicated Familiar With the Process of Funeral</i>	No	6	27.3	5	13.5	7	14.9	5	8.8	2	5.3	1	2.5	26	10.8
	Yes	14	63.6	25	67.6	20	42.6	19	33.3	6	15.8	8	20	92	38.2
<i>Is Funeral Complicated Familiar With the Process of Funeral</i>	No	8	36.4	12	32.4	27	57.4	38	66.7	32	84.2	32	80	149	61.8
	Yes	6	27.3	6	16.2	32	68.1	34	59.6	34	89.5	32	80	144	59.8
<i>Is Funeral Complicated Familiar With the Process of Funeral</i>	No	16	72.7	31	83.8	15	31.9	23	40.4	4	10.5	8	20	97	40.2

*1. People at the age of more than 50 are regarded as the elderly in rural areas; People at the age of 30-50 are middle-aged adults. They are considered as the main force of rural labors; People at the age of 18-30 are young people. They were born after 1980 since China's reform and opening-up and are greatly affected by new ideas.
2. Among the age of 18-30, 4 males and 5 female have no children.

authority of Tian Village started to actively propagandize the idea of respecting for the elderly since this century. For instance, the County-level Working Commission on Aging compiled a book named *Respect for the Aged*, which praised 10 fine examples who took good care of the aged in the family. The Old Men Association¹ in Tian Village is an important bridge to make this propaganda widely known. It has organized old people to learn the book and asked them to disseminate the ideal models' good behavior among family members.

The majority of the aged in Tian Village can financially support the family's economy from the tea agribusiness. Before the reform and opening-up, people in Tian Village mainly cultivated rice, and in the 1980s, they started to plant flue-cured tobacco, while in present century, they plant tea on a large scale. In labor-intensive rice and flue-cured tobacco cultivation, experienced fathers always played a leading role. In compar-

ison, tea cultivation requires lower labor intensity, which turns out that the aged managed and planted tea bushes at home while young and middle-aged adults went to cities for work. Moreover, tea cultivation helped the aged gain more income than rice cultivation. Therefore, the elderly in Tian Village can maintain the authority in respects of both tradition preservation and realistic economy.

In fact, the standards of respect for the elderly advocated by the local state not only represent the officially ideal intergenerational relationship but also are expected by the elderly. That the government calls on everyone to learn from examples of taking care of the elderly creates an atmosphere to respect the elderly in Tian Village. The elderly in Tian Village indeed keep some authority in their family, but along with the expansion and division of the family, the nuclear family becomes financially independent, and as a result, younger generations always challenge

the parental generations' authority in an open or concealed way because of some "conflicts" accumulated in daily lives, thus causing strained intergenerational relationship and disappointing the elderly. The relationship between the young people and their parental generation has formed two sides of tension and relaxation.

Strained Intergenerational Relationship in Villagers' Mundane Life

In Tian Village's daily life, the filial generation's challenge to their parental generation can be divided into three types.

Type I: Concealed Revolt

This type mainly manifests the strained relationship between filial generation and parental generation in a concealed form. Take A Xiang, a daughter-in-law in Tian Village for example. In A Xiang's husband's family, the elder male, A Xiang's father-in-law regulated that his grandsons' names should contain three characters and the middle one is representative of the boy's status of a generation in the lineage. However, A Xiang named her son without the middle character. In a community with strong traditional lineage culture, people's name can reflect their identities and interpersonal relationship (Watson 1986). In this sense, A Xiang's son is de-symbolized. Why? It reifies the strained relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. A Xiang's mother-in-law is her husband's stepmother. Originally, the mother-in-law wanted her daughter from previous marriage to marry her stepson, but it failed. For this reason, A Xiang does not get along well with her daughter-in-law all the time. The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is a kind of intergenerational relationship within a family. In Tian Village, it is rare that a daughter-in-law openly clashes with her mother-in-law (Maria and Suzanne 1994). A Xiang makes an issue of her son's name, which is undoubtedly her "concealed" challenge against the authority of her mother-in-law and father-in-law in the eyes of other villagers who know about her family background. In other words, her son's name is an important tool for her to express her dissatisfaction with the parental generation (especially her mother-in-law).

Type II: Reciprocal Exchange

According to the younger generation of villagers, this type means "if you treat me well, I will treat you well, but if not, I will treat you in the same way as you do", which indicates they strive for reciprocal exchange. Take A Li for example. A Li with her husband opened a small-scale restaurant in the town within less than half a year after getting married and they seldom went back home because of her poor relationship with father-in-law and mother-in-law. A Li confessed that her father-in-law and mother-in-law "do not treat her husband well but think of the elder brother (her husband's elder brother) all the time", which was the major reason why they seldom went home. In this case, parents' unfair attitude (especially reflected in economic support) towards their sons is the trigger of this young couple's discontent. A Li's case is not uncommon in Tian Village. Filial generations feel their parental generations fail to "pay" much to them, especially in a family with more than one child, parents "pay" to their children unequally, which is an important reason for filial generations' discontent and thus creates the indifference of filial generation to their parental generation. Therefore, in the intergenerational relationship based on reciprocal exchange, once one side (here mainly refers to the filial generation) feels unbalanced, it will easily cause intergenerational conflicts.

Type III: Being Obedient in Trivial Matters but Keep Independent in Important Matters

The aged in Tian Village believe that filial children and grandchildren should always keep respect for seniority in mind and be obedient to elders, which can be seen from the daily dietetic custom in the village. At the table, the most respected one is supposed to be the eldest male in a family, second is the eldest female. The eldest male or female should be the first to take the first taste and seat at the "most important" position at the table, which symbolizes that the elder generation has authority in everyday lives. However, on the other hand, the elder's authority has its limitations, for filial generations are not obedient to parental generations all the time, especially when it comes to something important mattering their small family's development. For example, a young couple always follows their

parents' advice, but when the husband's decision of giving up his business at home and going out to find a job is strongly opposed by the parents, he sticks to his own plan. In his words, "I can find a job easily anywhere. I just want to make some money when I'm young. What's more, there is broader room for development outside. As soon as everything settles down, I will take them (wife and son) there." Obviously, the young couple gives first priority to their small family's development, that is, they should make the best decision for their small family and then stick to the right path.

Funeral Ceremony: The Symbolic Field of Relaxing Intergenerational Relationship

In recent decades, funerals in Tian Village have experienced a reform from burial into earth to cremation. In 1997, the State Council issued "Regulations for Mortuary Management" to practice cremation instead of burial. In 2000, the Shuyang Town government started to carry out cremation. At the beginning the government met much resistance, but later it reached an unwritten agreement with villagers that everyone should be cremated after death, the government would provide some subsidy for his/her family, villagers could hold a funeral ceremony, but the funeral procession should not pass the gate of the town government or appear in the street during the period of superior government's inspection.

In Tian Village, everyone has two birthdays throughout their life, namely, birth and death. For this reason, everyone should be respected in terms of funeral, though funeral ceremony is labor-consuming and costs money. Children of the dead elderly are main undertakers of the funeral. In general, local people describe the size of funeral with "big scale" and "small scale". The size of funeral and etiquettes during the funeral arrangement are visible carriers openly expressing children's filial piety in public.

During the funeral arrangement, the funeral organizer should distinguish the living from the dead as well as their relatives. For example, people who offer help during the funeral are listed on red paper because they are alive. In the ceremony, the hanging cloth before the altar should be yellow linen when sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, daughters, nephews, nieces-in-law and grandnephews of the dead kowtow, and

it should be white cotton cloth when sons-in-law kowtow and be blue when other relatives do. At the end of the ceremony, the coffin carrying the dead will be placed on the special vehicle provided by the crematorium. When people who carry the coffin return to the door of the host, the host has already prepared holy water with a spell cast over it by a master and invites them to wash their hands before taking their seats for the funeral feast. During the banquet, sons of the dead should kneel down before the participants and show appreciations for everyone's help, which is called "ardent acknowledgement". When people who participate in the auspicious banquet are ready to leave, the host has attached a bundle of red silk threads and lets everyone take them home. It is said that people who put the silk threads in their pocket or hang them up in their bedroom for at least three days will be blessed.

At the end of the funeral ceremony, the joss sticks and candles of the dead will be placed in the big incense burner at the ancestral hall, which is called "returning to the clan". According to a local saying, the dead should return to the clan, otherwise, he or she will become a wandering ghost. Only after his or her joss sticks and candles are placed in the ancestral hall² will the dead be worshiped and avoid becoming a wandering ghost. For this reason, before one's death, the family members have to prepare an incense burner, light up three joss sticks and pray with words like "please go in peace", meaning guiding the soul of the dying to the joss sticks. On the night of the funeral procession, the master makes a brilliantly colored paper house, which is called "soul house" by local people, and then the eldest son of the dead places in person the incense burner before the soul house. From 7:00pm to 6:00am the next day, the Taoist master practices religious rites to release the soul of the dead. After that, the master commands to burn down the soul house, selects some ash from the remains of the soul house and places it in the incense burner. Hereto, the joss sticks of the dead have been transferred to the incense burner and then the master places it in the ancestral hall. When placing the joss sticks into the ancestral hall, people should bring a light and then take it away. In local dialect, "light" and "son" are homonyms, so taking the light home means continuing the family line.

DISCUSSION

Affected by traditional culture, strong self-supply ability and government policy, the aged in Tian Village remain some authority in family life and hope their offspring obey them, but on the other hand, their authority is challenged by their filial generation, which can be found in trivial matters in villagers' mundane world, thus causing strained intergenerational relationships. Under these circumstances, how should one bridge the gap between hope and disappointment, obedience and independence? In other words, how to relax the strained intergenerational relationship? Recent research (Fan and Gong 2015) indicates that living together creates the conflicts between parents and their children. The division and reconstruction of residential space of parental and filial generations can reduce the friction between them. Some (Wu 2016) suggest that the practice of holding festival activities in village scale can raise intergenerational responsibility ethics to balance the relations between the elders and the young people. However, material rearrangement and celebration activities in mundane life may not satisfy the elder's needs in areas with a strong traditional culture atmosphere. Villagers in such areas concern themselves much about how to "reside" in lineage ancestral halls and thus not to be a wandering ghost in the hell after death. In Tian Village, funeral ceremony for the dead elderly is an approach of solving this problem for the elders, bridging the gap between two generations and achieving "filial piety" in the symbolic field for the younger generation.

The death ritual in Chinese rural societies has kept its basic traditional structure (Chen 2015). A funeral reflecting filial piety has a lot of rules and taboos, including the correct treatment of joss sticks and the soul of the dead, the invitation of the Taoist master, and the distinction from the living to the dead. In fact, to the dead elderly, they naturally cannot see their funerals, thus in some sense, the funeral is shown to the living. Moreover, through funeral, people reveal to others that they well arrange the soul of their dead father (or mother) and comfort his (or her) living spouse. The discord or strained relationship between parental generation and filial generation does not prevent filial generation from actively arranging the funeral ceremony. Just as the elderly in Tian Village said, "Don't worry

about it. They (sons and sons-in-law) will arrange it (funeral) well. This (death) will also happen to them, so they have to set a good example for their children. If the filial generation set a good example when handling the funeral for their parental generation, their children will treat them in the same way after they die." Guo (2001) argued that weddings and funerals are ritual intergenerational exchanges, that is, parental generation arrange wedding for their filial generation, while filial generation arrange funeral for their parental generation, thus constituting ritual intergenerational exchange. In Tian Village, a funeral is not only the exchange of parental generation's arrangement of wedding for filial generation, more importantly, it is rooted in local people's world view, which enables the funeral to play an important role in coordinating the strained intergenerational relationship.

CONCLUSION

As one of the numerous administrative villages in China, Tian Village has experienced political and economic reforms like other villages. The study of it cannot be separated from the state's macro environment. The local government used to set examples of filial piety, which is totally consistent with family virtues advocated by the state.

In Tian Village, one of the villages where traditional patriarchal culture still prevails in southern China, parents have strong power over their children and there is strong obligatory connection between parents and children, but the regularizing function of traditional ethics is not as strong as it was before 1949, so intergenerational relationship is still strained. Compared with the females' filial image created by the local government, Tian Village's daughters-in-law explicitly or implicitly express their discontent with their mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law with the power of uterine family instead of public opinions, which factually means they abandon absolute obedience to the authority of elders in family. All of these are closely related to Tian Village's overall economic development and personal experience. Parents want their children to be obedient. However, children living separately only take parents' advice in the face of trifles, but when it comes to an important decision, they give first priority to their small family's future by totally disregarding parents' suggestion. More-

over, they never consider their behavior to be disobedient. On some occasions, children's challenge against parents' authority becomes increasingly fierce in the field of mundane life, and the conflict cannot be resolved in realistic life. Thus, the practice of "filial piety" in symbolic field appears particularly important. In such a community, local people's understandings of ancestors and ghosts and attention to their joss sticks and worship after death are crucial reasons for the well-arranged and complicated funeral ceremony that still prevails today in this village. In this way, a funeral becomes the embodiment of filial piety. A large-scale and considerate funeral ceremony is a kind of comfort to the living father or mother and a good opportunity of showing filial piety to the public. Apart from setting a good example for filial generation, it can relax the strained intergenerational relationship in real life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditional cultural practice such as funeral ceremony has an important function in relaxing the tense relations between parental and filial generations in present rural China. The active engagement of younger generation in holding family banquets and funeral ceremonies shows their filial piety to the elders. Accordingly, the elder generation should realize the rising power of their adult children and respect the autonomy of the nuclear families of the younger generation in daily lives since the authority of the elders over the younger generation has greatly declined since the 1990s.

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NOTES

1. In the 1980s, an organization for the elderly, "Old Men Association" was set up all over China. Originally, the Old Men Association was just a club organized spontaneously by aged groups for the purpose of enriching the life of the elderly. Afterwards, to

make the Old Men Association support and assist in grassroots government's work, the government set up "Working Commission on Aging" in cities, counties, and even villages and towns to be fully responsible for elderly-related problems including guiding the Old Men Association. In 1993, the Old Men Association was set up Tian Village. All elders above 60 in this village could join the Association. Principal of the Association was held by clan leader of three clans in the village. In usual respecting-the-elderly activities, the Association would organize its members to learn and propagandize law on the elderly and documents related to elderly work issued by county-level or town government.

2. There are three cases where one's joss sticks are not placed at the ancestral hall temporarily after death. The first is, if the parents are still living, the joss sticks will be placed at the ancestral hall after both of the parents pass away. The second is, the family members cannot afford the invitation of a master but they will do it when they can afford it, and the third is, for those without offspring, their joss sticks will be handled by their clansmen.

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