

# Stone Bridge and Village Life World: A Case Study on *Luqiao Village* in Shandong Province, China\*

ZHANG Xing-yu, GUAN Xia

Shandong University, Shandong Place Names Research Institute, Jinan, China

Based on the custom of stone bridge and village, by categorizing and interpreting the relationship between *Lufeng Bridge* (鲁封桥) and *Luqiao Village* (鲁桥村) in Southern Shandong Province, China, this paper focuses on discussing the dynamic of rural society change in China and the practice of village life world. It provides detailed materials of field research about folk life of stone bridge and village in North China. Here village life world not only includes the folk integration of their everyday life, but also covers local villagers cognitive attitude towards village, such as village history, legend, belief, ritual, clan and other everyday life styles. Expounding and reconstructing of village life world, shows the essential meanings and categories of bridge folklore, it also demonstrates the consequence of shifting connection between stone bridge and village life. Firstly, the crucial context of understanding village life world is still promising. Secondly, folklore fieldwork is an significant part to comprehend the connotation of village life world.

**Keywords:** Life World, Legend, Folklore Space, Bridge, Village

## Introduction

In fact, since 1990s, the controversy of life world in the field of Chinese folklore research has never been terminated. The renowned phenomenological scholar, Husserl<sup>1</sup> expounds the cultural essence of life world with his transcendental philosophical thinking (Husserl, 1988). As for contemporary folklore studies in China, GAO Bing-zhong is the first civil scholar who introduced the view of life world, and he also intends to interpret the new era of folklore research paradigm (GAO, 1994). When it comes to the word of life world, they have given full explanations to the concept of life world on folklore studies, especially emphasize the importance of life world on folklore theory. However, it is only limited to the level of theoretical discussion, they don't concentrate on the view of folklore field research to the depth, but choose to hang it.

---

\***Acknowledgements:** This paper was presented on American Folklore Society Annual Meeting on Oct 15, 2015.

A lot of thanks should be given to Professor Sue Tuohy (Indiana University), Professor ZHOU Xing (Aichi University) and Dr. YOU Zi-ying (Ohio State University).

ZHANG Xing-yu, Ph.D. candidate, Advanced Institute of Confucian Studies, Shandong University; Joint Ph.D., Department of Anthropology, Boston University.

GUAN Xia, Assistant Editor, Shandong Place Names Research Institute.

<sup>1</sup> Husserl points out that the only reality is our everyday life world, it is the world that can be given, experienced by intuition. Please refer to Husserl, 1970.

Not only that, for the transformation of contemporary folklore research paradigm in China, LIU Tie-liang has great interests and puts forward an important view of folklore, which is a knowledge of feeling life. He pointed out that the inheritance and change of folklore has always been connected with the specific population, individuals connection, but also with the specific era of social background closely linked, so the current folklore research in China may cause a series of problems. People are condensed in the elastic changes Expression and presentation. So the folklore of feeling life should be pursued, the study of feeling life culture is not regarded as the object of the concept of collection, but also as a fundamental perspective of folklore research, which is required on folk area. Observe the life style of certain area and the crowd in a special view, then examine and understand the culture which they inherited from generation to generation (LIU, 2011). WAN Jian-zhong argues that folk life is an endless charming life style and cultural vitality (WAN, 2010). Folk culture as a cultural existing form, which is full of life culture, and it is not out of life culture, also known as folk life. When people are unable to eliminate the alienation of non-everyday life, they are required to return to the everyday life world and regard it as the source of folk value and folk life.

Indeed, folklore studies is essentially a method of phenomenological description of life world (that is, everyday life in the world). As such a description, this experience is completely different from its empirical feeling of clericalism (HU, 2010). Throughout the life world and village life related to theory and field research achievements, it is not difficult to find that the current research and understanding the concept of life world is no longer too simple, and has been keenly aware that folklore's transformation of disciplines requires the incorporation of life world. Although there are few Chinese folklore studies on the field case associated with it, at least the fresh blood is given to it (LV, 2006; ZHANG, 2011; SHAO, 2012).

Conversely, as for China's rural society, if village life tradition is seen as a long river, the river is natural, then folk life is a traditional culture; local culture has a long history, naturally, the folk life world needs the heavy accumulation of local history. There is a river, so there is a shore. The shore of the two sides is connected by the bridge, the bridge is built by local people, village life world will be in the state of crisscross on river, shore, bridge, people and other things between cohesion and development. Cultural connotation of local rural society has abundant resources in the combination of these five elements, and shows that the external is a colorful village life world. As a carrier with practical functions, to understand the village folklore context, stone bridge not only has an actual function of connecting two different sides, two poles or both ends<sup>2</sup> (ZHOU, 1998). ZHOU Xing, who's first book on bridge and folklore intends to do a deep interpretation of popular rural culture, but he puts forward the shortcomings of his book, that is not able to focus on a specific bridge to show or reveal its whole cultural information. However, this study is derived from the folklore fieldwork on stone bridge and its village life world.

### Overview of *Luqiao Village*

#### Geographical Location, Population and Clan

*Lu Fengqiao Village* (鲁封桥村), also known as *Luqiao Village* (鲁桥村), *Luqiao Village* (芦桥村), which is located in Taozhuang Town, Xuecheng District, Zaozhuang City, Shandong Province, China. It is about 7.8 kilometers away from west of XueCheng District. In history, Taozhuang Town was managed by *Tengxian* (滕县),

<sup>2</sup> He argues that the bridge has a different function of link and connection. Based on this practical function, people have given the bridge a lot of important symbolic significance. Please refer to ZHOU, 1998.

*Yixian* (峰县). In June 1962, with the establishment of Tao Zhuang people's commune, it became the member of Xuecheng District, Zaozhuang City. In 2001, *Luqiao Village* was managed by Taozhuang town. It is close to the S347 provincial highway; on the east, Beijing-Shanghai high-speed rail (Zaozhuang section) crosses the village; on the west, it is next to Beijing (G3) highway. Less than 1,000 meters, on the east of the village, it is *Qianshan Mountain* (千山头), which has great reputation of its religious culture. The ancient *Xue River* (薛河), nurtured countless local people, which flows along the west of village. In 2011, *Luqiao Village* has 356 households, the total population is 1458 people. there are 181 acres of arable land, and about 0.12 acres of arable land per capita. The village clans are mainly *ZHANG family* (张家), *ZHAO family* (赵家), *GUO family* (郭家), *SUN family* (孙家) and other small families, 80% of the village population is *ZHANG family*<sup>3</sup>. Overall, after more than 20 years of development, *Luqiao Village* did not have big changes in the proportion of population and arable land.

### Village History and Folk Memory

According to *Xue County Annals* (薛城区志), *Luqiao Village* was constructed in *Ming Dynasty* (明朝). As for the folk legend, hundreds of years ago, *Prince Lu* (鲁王) passed here, he went to *Qianshan Mountain* and investigated *Liu Xuan-yang* (刘玄阳) coffin case. Because river blocked the road, then he issued orders to build a new stone bridge. Later, people were settled in the east of the bridge, the number of local people gradually increased. Thus it formed a big village, and the village was named of *Luqiao Village*. Now *Lufeng Bridge* is located in the west of *Luqiao Village*, which is a total length of nearly 100 meters, 4.2 meters wide, 5 meters high, and it has stone fence on both sides, now it is also the cultural relics in Zaozhuang City.

In *Luqiao Village*, villagers believes that their village was built in the end of *Ming Dynasty*. The first home came to this village is *GUO family* and *ZHAO family*, roughly in the late *Ming Dynasty*, people moved from other areas. At first, there were only less than 10 families, most of them lived along the east bank of *Xue River*. Later *ZHANG family* settled here. In the early time of PRC, the village population reached about three or four hundred people. After *Cultural Revolution*, the village's population increased rapidly. In 1990s, the population has reached about 1300 people. In the past, local villagers found a stone tablet on the west side of the village, which named *Lufufeng* (鲁府封), and now it is preserved by cultural station in Taozhuang town.

More importantly, *Luqiao Village* is one of ancient official road to *Yixian* (峰县) in *Qing Dynasty* (清朝), so *Lufeng Bridge* is an very important artery to connect with East and West traffic. In late *Ming Dynasty* and early *Qing Dynasty*, *Luqiao Village* has not yet formed a large village, there were only a stone bridge. When people wanted to worship gods, *Lufeng Bridge* was the only way to *Qianshan Mountain* for the West people (*Feng County*, *Pei County*, *Xiao County*, *Dang County*). During the period of PRC to *Cultural Revolution*, *Luqiao Village* began to grow fruit trees. At that time, the local land was rarely used to grow wheat, corn and other crops. The village also enjoyed the reputation of "want to eat peach, go to *Luqiao Village*". After *Cultural Revolution*, local government began to flatten the land. In 1972, villagers gradually cut down fruit trees. Up to now, there are little fruit trees in this village. Over the past years, *Luqiao Village* had a village market, there were four times in ten days for villagers to trade everyday life goods.

<sup>3</sup> The above information is quoted from the Public Affairs Column of *Luqiao Village*, and it mainly introduces the village development information in recent years.

### Legend and Symbol: The Internal Tension of *Lufeng Bridge*

Since ancient times, basing on the hill at the back and overlooking the river, always is the best choice for traditional Chinese people to settle. *Fengshui* (风水), from a book *Zangjing* (葬经) in *Jin Dynasty* (晋朝), which is written by *Guo Pu* (郭璞). In the contemporary scene, village name is a linguistic symbol that representing the settlement entity, but also contains local history, culture and complex folk heritage. Residents, houses and residential custom has really important relationship. In the long history, with the development of village, the language symbol gradually formed into village folk tradition, and village history, culture and folklore needs of local community, that villagers look folklore as an important village culture and folk heritage. For *Lufeng Bridge*, two folk legends circulate among *Luqiao Villagers*.

#### The Legend of *Lufeng Bridge*

The first legend roughly tells us a story about local famous Taoist in *Ming Dynasty*, *Liu Xuan-yang*. He lived in *Qianshan Mountain*, and he loved his country, also had a good heart to local people. But when he died, he was framed by criminals. *Prince Lu* was the leader of *Yanzhoufu* (兗州府) in *Ming Dynasty*, so he was ordered to investigated this case. When soldiers opened the coffin, and saw *Liu Xuan-yang* was sitting in the coffin, a few seconds later, he was disappeared with the wind. *Prince Lu* was surprised by the fantasy scene and sealed *Liu Xuan-yang* as an immortal. After this case, In order to facilitate village life, and encourage them to go to *Qianshan Mountain* and worship Gods, *Prince Lu* appropriated funds and called for money, then built a stone bridge, which is named *Lufeng Bridge*. Because of the fertile land, the number of the household living on the east of stone bridge gradually increased, then formed a large village, which is known as *Luqiao Village*.

The second legend is related to the *Eight Immortals* (八仙). Long times ago, *Chang Kuo-lao* (张果老) had become one of the eight-immortals. When he came to *Lufeng Bridge* and made a sightseeing tour here, saw one village local tyrant, *Xuanshi* (宣示) was oppressing local people, and most of them felt miserable. Then a good idea occurred to *Chang Kuo-lao*, he told *Xuanshi* that his donkey could lay golden eggs. The local tyrant wanted to get profit from *Chang Kuo-lao*'s expense, but he was deeply punished. Finally *Chang Kuo-lao* distributed tyrant's money to poor people. When he rode his lovely donkey and left this village, the local people found that there was a new bridge on the river. Later, in memory of *Chang Kuo-lao*'s donkey, villagers named the new stone bridge as donkey bridge. Because the donkey bridge is not away from the village, people called it "donkey bridge village"(In dialect, call it *Luqiao*). Hence, the village name became *Luqiao Village*.

#### Village Symbol

In this context, these two folk legends described the origin of *Lufeng Bridge* and *Luqiao Village* from their respective perspectives. First of all, compare and analysis these two legends, "*Prince Lu* seal legends" tends to be official discourse. In the narrative structure of the text emphasizes the sacred nature of *Lufeng Bridge*, *Prince Lu* was on behalf of official discourse, and *Liu Xuan-yang* became into the god. Building bridge was considered as a plot of meritorious deeds. Commemorating the gods also reflects the fear of heart, and the local people seem to be happy to spread the sacred discourse of *Lufeng Bridge* legends. On the other hand, it is also an important village card as the source of culture symbol. Then "*Luqiao Village Legend*" tends to be the perspective of folk discourse, its narrative art is much humorous, and it shows that folklore is the process of life characteristics in the localization. Donkey bridge village sounds really bad and this sculpture looks ugly, villagers are more inclined to

turn it into “*Lu*”. In the specific narratives of this legend, some times it mentions the larger collections of village. As we all know, river and bridge are common things in the village, *Chang Kuo-lao* is always known by local villagers. On the surface, it is a simple story that god punishes the bully, but it also reflects folk legend’s activation and spirituality. When we consider local people’s folk context, “*Luqiao Village* legend” should be regarded as the right to narrative of local community of villagers. it displays that practicality and entertainment Function of folk legends are still powerful in contemporary Chinese rural society.

### **Construct Folklore Life World: Interaction Between Bridge and Village**

#### **Economic Space: Stone Bridge and Village Livelihood**

ZHOU Xing used the concept of “bridge field” to define the regional folklore space of bridge. He pointed out that the bridge and its surrounding area, the bridge field, have special nature in folklore space, because the river is the boundary, and the bridge is also the boundary. The river constitutes a realm of division, and the bridge constitutes a realm of link. But from three-dimensional view, the state of contradictions and conflicts always exists. *Lufeng Bridge* goes across the south branch of ancient *Xue River*, so the river and *Lufeng Bridge*’s field also builds the boundary. *Lufeng Bridge*, as a traditional stone bridge, because of its special traffic location, not only is closely related with the village livelihood, but also plays an economic role. On the east of *Lufeng Bridge*, there is a village market, its frequency and size are not small in the local market. Villagers in this market can buy the daily goods, and the market has become one of important material exchange places for surrounding villagers .

On a basic level, the transformation of *Luqiao Village* from the traffic road to original economic and commerce center reflects the stone bridge acting as a carrier of village culture. It can not only promote the development of village economy, build the village economic space, it can also act as a cultural carrier of the stone Bridge, and its function has undergone a new change. Just as Duara’s theory of “cultural network of power”, he said that culture refers to the symbols and norms in various relationships and organizations. This symbolic value gives a respectable authority to the cultural network. To stimulate people’s sense of social responsibility, honor, *Lufeng Bridge* changes from economic carrier to cultural symbol. The transformation of local community highlights the symbol of organization and norms of the dynamic reproduction mechanism. Village life world can be material, because villagers can not do anything without this material life world, and they are difficult to survive, let alone construct the ideological and spiritual ideal. *Lufeng Bridge* is not only the economic tool , in fact, it also contains the culture factor that deviate from *Luqiao Village* and its villagers.

#### **Belief Space: Temple Fair and Village Belief**

Generally speaking, most of the temple fairs in China’s urban and rural areas commonly both have dual purpose of sacrifice and market. Some temple fairs also focus on achieving the purpose of folk belief, which needs to proceed from the specific circumstances of activities. But only those who held the ritual of temple will become a folk religion of obvious signs in local rural society. Only exceeding in the sacred ritual space is enough to express a certain regional community or a certain group’s common will. At the same time, the emergence of temple must have two conditions, one is the religious prosperity, the temple is widely built, and religious activities are increasing quickly; Second, the development of commodity currency economy increases business activities, urban market increases, the development of temple fair depends on two aspects. Under the background of the current urbanization process in China, the temple fair is not only existing as belief activity, it is not

confined to the scope of cultural and entertainment, because the temple fair is mainly for local community. And it can provide a combined folklore space of gods belief, material exchange, cultural and entertainment, and other elements.

In the past, *Lufeng Bridge* was the only way for local people to worship gods. No doubt, it occupied a very important geographical location. On the northwest of *Luqiao Village*, villagers had built a *Bingling Palace* (稟灵宫), and it was demolished during the Cultural Revolution, which belongs to the part of *Qianshan Mountain* Taoist architecture. As an indispensable religious activity, temple fair still plays an important role in local community. These belief activities of village are part of the everyday life for these villagers. Village is a unit, and it is characterized by intercourse, temple fair activities create a different and special cultural and social context. The former comes from daily accumulation, the latter comes to cohesion and strengthening. Also due to this reason, for *Luqiao Villagers*, it exists in the village's living system of folk beliefs. According to annual lunar calendar, September 12 is the local temple fair date, and it is an essential activity for local villagers, *Lufeng Bridge* became an important link of constructing a sacred space.

In *Luqiao Village*, villagers also would like to worship some animals and plants and other natural objects in their everyday life, that is, spiritual worship. In addition to the family worship categories, such as *Tiandi* (天地), *Zaowang* (灶王) and other folk gods, villagers also worship to ancient trees, weasel, stone, and so on. these spiritual objects also construct the sacred belief space of village life.

Obviously, in Chinese rural society, village as an overall settlement, has some local cultural characteristics. The cultural knowledge system can not be separated from the elements of village belief, and it can be condensed into the sacred folklore space. Durkheim argues that religion is a reflection of society, and it is a kind of folk religion and belief that coincides with its social situation, which is also a more natural cultural phenomenon. In *Luqiao Village*, villagers have psychological demands of belief. Through the sacred space of village, it is not only for the maintenance of individual dignity of life, but also for the deep understanding of the value of life. In fact, these belief activities and customs, for the people of *Luqiao Village*, can not be avoided in the folk customs and in their everyday life. After all, it is associated with every individual villagers and families. The formation of the group's belief in rural society can also be regarded as a kind of educational mode in the village, which can promote and highlight the centripetal force of the village collective, and make it as an important means to maintain the village order and individual emotion. In spite of this, the construction of the sacred space of *Luqiao Village* and the construction of its village belief system, from the individual spiritual objects to the sacred experience of temple between villages, even if the local people are filled with much common utilitarian appeal, and it can not deny that they are feeling the holistic sentiment in everyday life of village. The simple sense of perception, reflects the villagers' conception of life world in local society.

### **Ritual Space: Funeral Ceremony and Its Custom**

Often times, stone bridge, as a medium of human and supernatural things, plays an important role in folk beliefs and witchcraft. In *Luqiao Village*, Except for the communication and transportation between East and West, *Lufeng Bridge* also has an ritual function of the entity. Furthermore, it has an momentous function of ritual space, The villagers hold funeral ceremony on the stone bridge, and it is an essential funeral place. *Luqiao Village*

is close to *Qufu* (曲阜), which is the hometown of Confucius<sup>4</sup>. In this region, Perhaps people are influenced by Confucianism, villagers would like to pay great attention to funeral rituals, and even cost much money for funeral ceremony, so *Luqiao Village* is no exception.

During the investigation, villagers mentioned that the funeral ceremony “*Songpanchan*”<sup>5</sup> (送盘缠) on *Lufeng Bridge* has been extended for a long time, roughly a hundred years. This ritual means that died people cross over the immortal bridge. As *Lufeng Bridge* is located in the southwest of the village, it is also an ancient stone bridge, taking the advantages of geographical location, so this custom can be inherited many years. Ritual is an important activity in human spiritual life, it has symbolic characteristics. As a unique discourse of mankind, ritual is a kind of super Practical means. The individual’s funeral ritual reflects the style of village life world.

Likewise, stone bridge can be viewed as a carrier to construct the village ritual space, its existence prompted the village folk rituals to achieve an orderly heritage and mutual structure. In a certain sense, the change of village ritual is the villagers who continually “invent” and “consult” to construct their everyday life. In view of this, villagers in *Luqiao Village* make something special of the rituals, This behavior is a rational choice. It can be said that, from the contemporary form of social life in the village, people would like to link village folk culture with its living environment and its subject. As mentioned above, the close relationship between *Lufeng Bridge* and *Luqiao Village* has been described. In the process of a long historical development of village, its formation always changes, and folk culture exists in the everyday life of village. It has long been restored to the origin, seamless, one of important features, that is, the overall characteristics of folk objects. From the perspective of main object, we can consider these questions deeply about ordinary village life world.

### Conclusion

In popular discourse, stone bridge can be deemed as a materialized form of *Luqiao Villagers* in people’s everyday life. It also has a rich cultural imagination, and it gives its corresponding meaning in the construction of village belief, clan, culture and society. Not only that, for villagers, in their everyday life and practice, it can be verified that stone bridge has an irreplaceable position between their narratives and actions. Furthermore, in the context of specific local society, the text of different historical periods isolated with village context. The local villagers build stone bridge and operate a series of things, behind of this, it coincides that *Luqiao Villagers* how to express their life world concept through the demands of village life. It is not limited to their clans, village, and even regional community. Because it is the only village life world. As Berger and Del Negro (2004) says,

To the contrary, everyday life is best understood as an interpretive framework defined in dialectical opposition to the notion of special events and used by both scholars and non-scholars alike to make sense of practice. (p. 4)

Therefore, the crucial context of understanding village life world is still promising. As for the stone bridge and village life world case, it inspires us what and how to express the life meaning of rural society in contemporary China. To observe its various meanings in folk life, to extract its cultural values and characteristics,

---

<sup>4</sup> Qufu locates in the south of Shandong province, China. It is a county known as the birth place of Confucius, and it includes *Confucius Mansion* (孔府), *Confucius Cemetery* (孔林), and *Confucius Temple* (孔庙), which enjoys a worldwide fame as a traditional Chinese cultural site.

<sup>5</sup> This is a traditional funeral custom in *Luqiao Village*. When old people died, villagers went to *Lufeng Bridge* and sacrificed dead people, it is also a place to honor and worship one’s deceased ancestors.

to pay attention to its context coincidence and dislocation, to clarify its division and boundaries, understanding the folk culture of rural society is really crucial and meaningful. Second, folklore fieldwork is an significant part to comprehend the connotation of village life world. It is conceivable to explicate the materialized symbol which represented by stone bridge, and folk image of local villages. To summarize, in contemporary Chinese rural society, When we call for the increasing “nostalgia” of traditional rural culture, especially in the perspective of village life world, it also means that the folk art research still has a great development prospect for a long period of time.

### References

- Berger, H. M., & Del Negro, G. P. (2004). *Identity and everyday life: Essays in the study of folklore, music, and popular culture*. Conn: Wesleyan University Press.
- Duara, P., & American Council of Learned Societies. (1988). *Culture, power, and the state rural North China, 1900-1942*. Calif: Stanford University Press.
- Durkheim, E. (2001). *The elementary forms of religious life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- GAO, B. Z. (1994). *Folk culture and folklore life*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House.
- HU, X. H. (2010). *Return to the life world of love and freedom*. Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Press.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- LI, W. Z. (2011). *Sidamen*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- LIU, T. L. (2011). Folklore is the subject of feeling life. *Folklore Studies*, 2, 21-27.
- LIU, Z. Q. (2002). *Annals of towns and villages in Shandong Province*. Jinan: Shandong Map Press.
- Seligman, A. (2008). *Ritual and its consequences: An essay on the limits of sincerity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- SHAN, M. (2006). *Residential folklore in Shandong Province*. Jinan: Jinan Press.
- WAN, J. Z. (2010). Think about the charm of folk life. *Shandong Social Sciences*, 7, 27-31.
- ZHANG, S. S. (2009). Chang yu fei chang: A village's belief order of Luzhong. *Folklore Studies*, 4, 148-169.
- ZHOU, X. (1998). *Realms and symbols: Bridge and folklore*. Shanghai: Shanghai Literary Press.