Kinship Groups and Ancestor Worship in Li-hsueh (Rigaku) and the Villages of the Han (Chinese) People: Fieldwork in Zhanghu Town in the Northern Region of Fujian Province

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From the standpoint of Chinese history, there was a close relationship between the revival of Lineages that began during the Sung Dynasty and the development of Li-hsueh (Rigaku, or Chu Tzu hsueh [Shusigaku, 朱子学]). A rationalistic Confucian philosophical school that developed during the Sung and Ming Dynasties, known to the west as Neo-Confucianism), at that time. Even today, Li-hsueh has considerable direct influence on ancestor worship and Lineage rituals in folk society. This paper examines the way the Confucian culture, as a grand tradition, and especially Li-hsueh, influenced folk social structure and belief, as seen in a folk society in the northern region of Fujian Province, one of the birthplaces of Li-hsueh. As an example, I selected Zhanghu Town, an ancient village located in the northern region of Fujian Province with a 1,000-year history, as well as several village communities under Zhanghu Town. Based on my field research, I explain the influence of Li-hsueh on both social structure and folk culture, focusing on one hand on the revival of Lineages and their activities, and on the other hand on Lineages as cultural communities and their ancestor worship as a cultural ritual that is ceaselessly being created. In particular, through local ceremonies, such as family rituals, ancestral halls rituals (祖厝祭), shrine rituals and grave-visiting rituals, I can identify a multi-layered ancestor worship structure and a diversity of formats. At the same time, I believe that underneath these Lineage events and ancestor worship activities lies the concept of Feng Shui. This can be explained by noting the locations for the ancestral halls (祖厝), shrine halls and ancestor graves where ancestor worship took place in Zhanghu Town. Moreover, these ceremonies and their functions had already been integrated into the social structure of the Han people. They are a realistic reflection of the formation of Li-hsueh culture and other regional cultures as well as cultural phenomena that promised to be popularized over a long period of time. Finally, this indicates that as active processes, Lineage events in the northern region of Fujian Province as well as Lineages and regional societies are linked to but at the same time separated from the state. These processes are also the processes by which Lineages seek the best points of contact between the state and society.