

Rethinking on the Functions of Fortune Bridge of Dong Ethnic Minority in Contemporary China

Zhou Dandan

Shanghai University of Engineering Science

Abstract

There is a particular type of bridge called Fortune Bridge (福桥, 又称风雨桥) in each Dong ethnic minority (侗族) village of southwest China. Fortune Bridge is a symbol of Dong ethnic culture embedded in social structure and interaction. In form and design, Fortune Bridge represents a skill and style influenced by Han people at the late era of Chinese empire. At the same time, Fortune Bridge balances the belief of natural harmony and the fear of unexpected disaster in its design. The former research on Fortune Bridge emphasizes its multi-functions in local people's daily life, but ignored the role Fortune Bridge plays in local community as a separated and united factor. In this article, the author reconsiders the function of Fortune Bridge in a particular Dong ethnic minority village named Zhaoxing (肇兴) in Guizhou province (贵州省). This village is the largest Dong ethnic minority village in China and the local culture is well preserved through tourism. There are five Fortune Bridges named after Chinese Confucian thoughts *Wuchang* ("五常"). The complicated condition of the communities is connected with the five Fortune Bridges. The communities of local spaces are separated by Fortune Bridge and are highly recognized by local people, with local order and local leaders. However, the administrative spaces are officially separated with political authorities. The double spaces constitute a struggle between local society and village governance of state. This case study intends to place Fortune Bridge in a context of contemporary Chinese social governance to rethink the society-state relationship and reconsider the function of Fortune Bridge.