

Mortuary Ritual Practices and Socio-cultural Changes in Rural China

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ABSTRACT Based on the ethnographic data collected in a rural village in Chongqing, this paper discusses changes and continuity of mortuary ritual practices in this village and uses it as a window to show socio-cultural changes that this rural community has gone through since 1949. The researcher has found that death ritual in the village has kept its basic traditional structure, but the performance of many rites is simplified and symbolic meaning of many rites has lost, especially among young villagers. The researcher argues that the contemporary sociocultural structure in this village consists of two distinctive components: traditional practices and beliefs, and the newly introduced ideology and values by the party-state and market economy.