Constructing the Family in Republican China: Shandong 1944

構建民國時期的家系：1944 年山東

Introduction*

The text being considered here is a cultural artifact created by two members of the common people of China during the late Republican period, who decided to record a chronological listing of their family tree. Most likely, in the back of their minds was some formal idea of how a family genealogy [*jiapu* 家譜] should be constructed. But in preparing their own record, they went beyond the typical formulaic styles of genealogical construction to include information they found relevant to their story that made the picture of their relatives more complete. For example, in one of the ways that they ignored the formal rules of most family genealogies in China, they included information on their female family members as well as some infants who had died relatively soon after birth. These instances are discussed below. Further, they called upon their living memories of family members to a greater degree than in more formal genealogies. By doing so, they gave more comprehensive detail about the recent generations of their family than in the earlier entries recorded by their ancestors. This point is also discussed below.

* I am grateful for assistance offered by two colleagues: Li Yunjie 李雲傑 and Li Donglin 李棟琳, both then at Suffolk University Boston. An earlier version of this chapter, based on a presentation made in Beijing in the spring of 2010, was published as Ronald Suleski 薛龍, “Minguo shiqi de pingmin wenhua: yiben jaipu de gushi 民國時期的平民文化：一本家譜的故事 [Popular Culture in China's Republican Period: The Story of a Family Genealogy],” *Hangzhou shifan daxue xuebao* 杭州師範大學學報 [*Journal of Hangzhou Normal University*], 34, no. 3 (May 2012). An English-language version was published as “Constructing the Family in Republican China: Shandong 1944,” *Frontiers of History in China*, 8, no. 4 (December 2013). Although some published genealogies in China list as many as one hundred generations, the majority, such as the genealogy under discussion in this chapter, are far more modest in their coverage and record in detail only recent generations. See Wang Heming 王鶴鳴, *Zhongguo jiapu tonglun* 中國家譜通論 [*On Chinese Genealogies*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 311. This is an extremely comprehensive work that comments on many of the points discussed below. An excellent collection of sources is also in Taga Akigorō 多賀秋五郎, *Chūgoku sōfu no kenkyū* 中國宗譜の研究 [*Research on Chinese Genealogies*], 2 vols. (Tokyo: Nippon gakujustsu shinkōkai, 1982).

The cultural artifact they created followed the process of defining the world from a local perspective to create their own understanding of the culture in which they lived. As mentioned in earlier chapters, in that process the distant historically determined elements were transformed by the common people in ways that meaningfully influenced their everyday lives. People always engage in this reinterpretation because the culture that people embrace is intimate and deeply relevant to them. Cultural symbols or values that are too distant (in historical time) or too abstract (in conceptual terms) lose their power for ordinary people in everyday life. In the case considered here, the family genealogy was copied and brought up to date, with the goal of solidifying the sense of family continuity at a time of personal and national upheaval. It was 1944, Japanese troops were occupying much of China, and the country was at war.

This chapter places the brief family genealogy in the context of the times in which the copy considered here was written. If only the specific information given in this record were listed, the view of the family would be thin and lifeless. But reading into the information and understanding its significance allows a more vibrant and completely understandable picture of the family and of their place in society to emerge, particularly for the one hundred years of the recent four generations of the family. The Republican-era values and norms about family structure that they absorbed from their neighbors and relatives determined how they recorded the information they collected about their family, while their own energies and determination to do a credible job determined the amount of information they added to this genealogy.

The Genealogy

In March 2009, I visited Yingxiongshan wenhua shichang 英雄山文化市場 [Hero Mountain Cultural Market], in Ji'nan, Shandong Province. The name "Hero Mountain" was chosen to mark the defeat of the Nationalist forces in September 1948 and to honor the Chinese Communist soldiers who died in the battle to liberate the city. The weather was still cold, but it was dry and bright. This antiques market was one of the first to be set up in Shandong, and, at that time, it was more a flea market than an antiques/cultural market, as the current marketing (2017) calls it. Local merchants at the market had individual stalls from which they sold everything from household items, such as pots and pans, to local handicrafts, including pipes, and some food stalls hawked local produce. One merchant, who sold household items, used tools, and miscellaneous items from a farmer's workshop, had some cartons filled

FIGURE 6.1

Hero's Market. This is the Hero's Mountain Culture Market [Yingxiongshan wenhua shichang 英雄山文化市場] in Jinan 濟南, Shandong 山東 Province, in 2015. It commemorates the heroes of the Communist forces over the rival Nationalists in the civil war before the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949.

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with old books and a few piles of string-bound pamphlets with rough and yellowed paper. Upon examining them, I found that several were handwritten. I purchased a family genealogy of only thirteen pages.

This *chaoben* looked like a Republican-era work, which turned out to be the case. The paper was pliable and appeared to be handmade, flecked with bits of bamboo; the mark of the filtering screen was clearly visible. It was light brown and had probably never been bleached white. The paper was inexpensive and could have been locally produced but still felt soft; and it took the ink well without spreading. The book had been bound with rough hand-twisted twine.

On the first few pages, one of the authors had written notes about the Tang 唐 family, whose family tree constituted the main contents of the book. The pieces of information in the first few pages, which at first appeared to be random notes, proved useful in putting the genealogy in a broader context and in helping me come to some conclusions about the Tang family.

FIGURE 6.2

Tang Family Genealogy [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Cover. This thirteen-page genealogy was written in 1944, probably in Shandong Province. Did military action cause the deaths of the two people who died in 1944, as shown on page 2? This chaoben has no title, so I assigned it the title *Tang Family Genealogy*. As informal, though important, texts the chaoben often had no formal title.

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FIGURE 6.3

Tang Family Genealogy [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 10, Generational Listings. This is the beginning of the chronological listing of the family. The first generation began in about 1420, during the Ming 明 dynasty.

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Nothing was written on the “cover page.” The authors did not give this work a title, so for convenience I have titled it *Tang Family Genealogy* [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜]. The basic chronology of the Tang family covered twenty-one generations (pp. 10–13). The first few pages (pp. 1–4 and 9) contained notes about particular family members and some dates. Pages 5–8 were blanks that had been bound into the book, which was not unusual in *chaoben*. In this case, the authors might have hoped to locate more information relating to the genealogy and so included the blanks to add it.

The entries for each generation of the family (pp. 10–13) followed a brief and standard format.¹ Only one entry was made for each generation for the first through to the seventeenth generations. A typical entry read:

Fourteenth-generation ancestors: deceased father, Tang, the gentleman Shijun, *hao* [honorific] name Tianxu; deceased mother, Tang, mother surnamed Jing.

Shisishi zu: kao Tanggong Shijun, hao Tianxu; bi Tangmu Jing shi.

十四世祖：考唐公世俊，號天序；妣唐母經氏。²

The handwriting led me to conclude that this *chaoben* was the work of two individuals who I assume were father and son. Writer no. 1, whose handwriting was elegant, wrote information about the early generations of the Tang family, from the first through the twentieth generations (pp. 10–12). I assume that he was the older of the two writers and was knowledgeable about the historical material on the earlier generations. Writer no. 2 appeared to be the younger writer. He knew more about his siblings and cousins still living, who were members of the twentieth and twenty-first generations. He added information to pages 12 and 13. Writer no. 2 appears to be the person (judging by handwriting) who added most of the specific information about the birth and death of some members of the two most recent generations in the notes on the beginning pages.

The multiple entries for the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first generations confirmed that the Tang family followed the practice of using the same character in generational cohorts, meaning that all males of the same generation shared a character in their given name. In the eighteenth generation, that character was *cheng* 承; in the nineteenth generation, the character was *ji* 繼; in the twentieth generation, it was *zu* 祖 (e.g., Tang Zushi 唐祖仕,

1 It is 9½ in (24.1 cm) h × 5½ in (14 cm) w.

2 Although family histories were common in China, they did not have a single system of organization. A handwritten history in my collection titled **Precious Mirror of the Li Family** [*Lishi chuanjia baojian* 李氏傳家寶鑑] was prepared in 1907 by Li Yaguang 李亞廣. This record of 144 pages contains fairly detailed entries for all the generations, including additional paragraphs on the family property and business interests of family members. The volume of 144 pages is 6¼ in (15.9 cm) h × 5–1/8 in (13 cm) w, was purchased in Beijing in January 2008. The word “mirror” in the title indicates a work that the family could use for self-reflection.

FIGURE 6.4
Tang Family Genealogy [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], *Page 11, A Sample Listing*. Reading from right to left on page 11, the third set of entries is for the fourteenth generation, which dates from 1745. This entry reads: “Fourteenth-generation ancestors: deceased father, Tang, the gentleman Shijun, hao name of Tianxu; deceased mother, Tang, mother surnamed Jing” [Shisishi zu: kao Tang gong Shijun, hao Tianxu; bi Tang mu Jing shi 十四世祖：考唐公世俊，號天序；妣唐母經氏]. This basic format is used throughout the genealogy.
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FIGURE 6.5

Tang Family Genealogy [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Pages 11 and 12, Two Writers. The calligraphy on these two pages shows the hands of two different writers. Writer No. 1 wrote all the entries on page 11, but on page 12 Writer no. 2 began to add his own information.

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mentioned below); and in the twenty-first generation, it was *rong* 榮. As discussed below, the same practice applied for the female members of the family.³

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the writers of most *chaoben*, including genealogies, were so strongly rooted in their locality that they did not think to indicate the name or place where the booklet was written. They did not

3 For a discussion of the use of generational names [*zibei* 字輩], see Xu Jianhua 徐建華, *Zhongguo de jiapu* 中國的家譜 [Chinese Family Genealogies] (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 2002), 40–49. See also the discussion of sequencing characters in Wang Heming, *Zhongguo jiapu tonglun* 中國家譜通論 [On Chinese Genealogies], 341–345. The use of generational names in the present to strengthen family unity is mentioned in Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots*, 212–213. A discussion of the interesting information that can be derived from the prefaces and commentaries of printed family genealogies in China from the past and present is in Zhu Bingguo 朱炳國, ed., *Jiapu yu difang wenhua* 家譜與地方文化 [Genealogies and Local Culture] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2007). For examples of creatively using family genealogical records to extract historical information see Michael Szonyi, *The Art of Being Governed: Everyday Politics in Late Imperial China*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

think the information they were preparing would circulate widely, so they often did not think it was important to record even their own name. Such is the case for the genealogy examined in this chapter. The two persons writing this account of their family had such concrete images in their minds of their relatives and the surrounding landscape that they never thought to write in the name of their village or city, or the province where their lives were being played out.

Searching for Specifics

The Tang family genealogy had no information on when or where it was written. But the miscellaneous notes at the beginning contained some dates, so it was possible to date both when it was written and the likely dates covered by the family tree.

On page 1, Writer no. 1 entered the names of a man and his wife, giving their birth dates: The man, Tang Chengliang 唐承樑, was born in June 1822, the Daoguang 道光 reign period. The entry gives the year, month, date, and time of birth, so that the eight trigrams used to predict one's fate could be constructed. His wife, surnamed Li 李, was born in the preceding Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign period, with no year of birth given. The Jiaqing period ended in 1820, thus we can assume that she was only few years older than her husband. It was not unusual in China for an older girl to be brought in to help a family, especially in the case of poorer families, and to be considered betrothed to a younger son. When the son reached puberty, the two were officially married. In the entry on page 11, where their names are given in the chronological genealogical record, the couple was considered part of the eighteenth generation. Thus, if we consider each generation as twenty-five years long and count backward, we can date the first generation to 1420, during the reign of the Yongle 永樂 emperor of the Ming dynasty.

Writer no. 1, a member of the twentieth generation, was born in 1895 and thus was about forty-nine years old in 1944—the most recent date mentioned in the text. I therefore assumed that the genealogy was written at about that time. This led me to surmise that the couple he listed as the first piece of information were his grandparents, who were members of the eighteenth generation. Thus, the grandfather of Writer no. 1 was Tang Chengliang 唐承樑.

Writer no. 1, by this calculation, had grown up at a time when he would have received a purely traditional education, which accounts for the quality of his calligraphy. He might have been a *xiucai*, though the genealogy does not indicate that.

FIGURE 6.6

Tang Family Genealogy [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 1, The Death of Writer No. 1's Grandparents. The husband, Tang Chengliang 唐承樑, was born in June 1822, in the Daoguang 道光 reign period. His wife, surnamed Li 李, was born in the preceding Jiaqing 嘉慶 period, with no year of birth given. Since the Jiaqing period ended in 1820, we can assume that his wife was few years older than her husband. The entry on page 11, where their names are given as part of the chronological genealogical record, indicates that this couple was considered members of the eighteenth generation.

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Writer no. 2 wrote in a less elegant hand, putting more pressure on the brush and producing heavier, thicker strokes. The difference in the two writing styles is most clearly seen in the way they wrote the character for their surname, Tang 唐. Writer no. 1 used delicate flowing lines, while Writer no. 2's style was less uniformly well-constructed. Based on their handwriting, I hypothesized that Writer no. 1 was the older of the two and had received a better education, while Writer no. 2 was younger and his education had placed less emphasis on calligraphy. Writer no. 2, however, supplied the critical information that helped me to date this work. On page 3 he wrote of the deaths, in close proximity, of two Tang family members. They were Tang Zushi 唐祖仕, who died in August 1944, and his wife, surnamed Zhang 張, who died in October 1944. Their deaths were also recorded by year, month, date, and time of day. Their chronological entries (p. 13) indicate that they were members of the twentieth generation. By my calculation, in 1944 they would have been forty-nine years old, the same age as Writer no. 1.

I assumed that these deaths in close proximity might have been due to some unfortunate events. It was wartime, and anti-Japanese guerrillas harassed the Japanese military forces occupying North and East China. Regular though sporadic violence took place throughout North China during those years. The Japanese were worn down by the continual sniping and unexpected attacks by Chinese resistance forces. In the early 1940s, the Japanese responded to these attacks in Shandong through their extreme policies of the Three-All Policy [*san-kō sakusen* 三光作戰] of Kill All, Loot All, Destroy All [*satsukō* 殺光, *shōkō* 燒光, *sōkō* 搶光], coupled with the policy of Exterminate All [*sōtō sakusen* 掃蕩作戰]. The Chinese resistance had its fighters disguised as ordinary people, which led the Japanese to target ordinary people in their military attacks. Japanese attacks were ruthless and resulted in the wonton destruction of property.⁴

During the warmer months of 1944, as the occupying Japanese tried to maintain their control over widespread areas of Shandong, military activity

4 The fierce anti-Japanese resistance by the Chinese in Shandong from the late 1930s to the 1940s is recounted in Li Zhuanmei 李傳梅 et al., *Jiaodong fenghuo* 膠東烽火 [*The Beacon Fire in Eastern Shandong*] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2005). A detailed review of Japan's extreme policies in Shandong is in Li Enhan 李恩涵, "Rijun zai Shandong de 'saodangzhan' yu 'sanguang zuozhan' (1937–1945) 日軍在山東的 '掃蕩戰' 與 '三光作戰' [The Japanese Army's Military Sweeps and Kill All Policy in Shandong between 1937 and 1945]," *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所季刊 [*Journal of the Institute of Modern History at the Academia Sinica*], 24, no. 2 (1995). The brutal policies of the Japanese military in Shandong and North China are recounted in Itō Hideko 伊東秀子, *Chichi no igen: sensō wa ningen o 'kyōki' ni suru* 父の遺言：戦争は人間を'狂気'にする [Father's Last Words: War Makes People Insane] (Tokyo: Kadensha 花伝社, 2016), 188–196.

FIGURE 6.7

Tang Family Genealogy [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 2, Death of Writer No. 2's Parents. On page 2, Writer no. 2 wrote of the deaths, in close proximity, of two Tang family members Tang Zushi 唐祖仕, who died in August 1944, and his wife, surnamed Zhang 張, who died in October 1944. It appears that they were the parents of Writer no. 2, who added entries to the family genealogy after their deaths.

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FIGURE 6.8

Japanese Soldiers Attack a Private Home. In this photo, Japanese soldiers stand at the ready with bayonets fixed. After they break open the door, they will rush inside and likely bring death to the people cowering there. The location of this photo is not clear, but it appears to be North China. Could it be that the parents of Writer no. 2 died because of such an attack?

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expanded. Large numbers of Japanese troops landed at Qingdao and moved through the province to the frontlines in inland neighboring provinces. Anti-Japanese guerrilla units continually launched attacks against the Japanese. Among the areas in which active military maneuvers by both sides were taking place was the northeastern area of Shandong, near Weihaiwei 威海衛. Proving that the two deaths recorded in this genealogy were related to this military activity in 1944 would be impossible. They may have died because of an accident, or illness.

Regardless of the manner of their deaths, they had a great impact on Writer no. 2. That is why he was able to write the exact date and time of death for both of them. All of this leads me to believe they were his parents. If he was a member of the twenty-first generation, born in 1920, he would have been about twenty-four years old at the time his parents died. At that age, he was able to recall some information about the nineteenth generation, that of his grandparents, who were born in 1870. In 1944, they might still have been alive

and would have been about seventy-four years old. Writer no. 2 would have been able to supply even more information about the twentieth generation, his parents' generation, his aunts and uncles, who were born around 1895 and were about forty-nine years old. He also knew about the siblings and cousins in his own generation, who were in their late teens or early twenties in 1944. It is not surprising that he would have added all six entries on the siblings and cousins in the twenty-first generation to the genealogy.⁵

However, it was Writer no. 1 who added three entries for the eighteenth generation of his own grandparents, seven entries for the nineteenth generation of his parents, and three entries for the twentieth generation. On page 1 of this compilation, Writer no. 1 noted the exact time of birth, including year, month, day, and time, for his two grandparents. His detailed entry as to time of birth for these two members of the eighteenth generation, but not for the other two eighteenth-generation entries he wrote, further confirms that Tang Chengliang, who was born in June 1822 and his wife, surnamed Li and born in the Jiaqing period, were the grandparents of Writer no. 1.⁶

After his parents' deaths, Writer no. 2 penned the final entry for the twentieth generation, when he recorded his parents' names on the final page (p. 13) of the genealogy. As stated above, my supposition is that his father, Tang Zushi, was Writer no. 1, who began writing the genealogy but was interrupted by his death. Probably in a state of shock, his son, Writer no. 2, added the remaining entries to bring the chronology up to date by listing the adults in the twenty-first generation, to which he belonged. He did not list any children, who would have

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- 5 Sporadic and repeated military actions took place in Shandong from May to August 1944, as members of the Chinese Eighth Route Army attacked Japanese forces garrisoning the area. Heavy fighting took place in many parts of the province, including the Bohai Military District, the northeastern section of coastal Shandong Province. See *Bohai kenqu geming jinianguan* 渤海墾區革命紀念館 [*Revolutionary Memorial in the Bohai Reclaimed District*] <http://www.baike.com/wiki/%E6%B8%A4%E6%B5%B7%E5%9E%A6%E5%8C%BA%E9%9D%A9%E5%91%BD%E7%BA%AA%E5%BF%B5%E9%A6%86>, accessed August 7, 2017. The Japanese were frustrated by the situation and retaliated against the Chinese local population, which might be how the parents of writer two died. The war in Shandong around 1943 and 1944 is discussed in Sherman Xiaogang Lai, *A Springboard to Victory: Shandong Province and Chinese Communist Military and Financial Strength, 1937–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), especially 177–184.
 - 6 When family histories were being compiled in China, information for the family history was sometimes gathered by word of mouth, especially when the clan met, perhaps at the New Year, to worship their ancestors. See Xu, *Zhongguo de jiapu*, 80–81. A long discussion with some concrete examples of orally transmitted family histories in China is in Wang, *Zhongguo jiapu tonglun*, 30–40.

FIGURE 6.9

Tang Family Genealogy [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Page 13, *The Final Page*. The entry at the lower-right-hand side of this page shows entries for the parents of Writer no. 2. At the top of the page, the final entry, Writer no. 2 followed the standard format by listing his wife by her surname but did not add his own name.

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made up the twenty-second generation, but since they were either children or in their teens or early twenties at the time this genealogy was written, that would not have been surprising.⁷

7 Families with a written family history had a responsibility to periodically update the genealogy. See Lai Xinxia 來新夏 and Xu Jianhua 徐建華, *Zhongguo de nianpu yu jiapu*

Surveying the Family's History

The Tang family in this genealogy was evidently proud of its lineage, as indicated by the faithful recording of its generations since the Ming. The family did not feel the need to claim descent from a mythical figure in the historical past, as some families did. Rather, the Tang family record began in 1420, with the couple who presumably were the founding members of this branch of the Tang family. The family appears to have been at least locally prominent, as shown by the fact that many of the heads of household took on a *hao* name. The *hao* designation could have been used as a marker of some accomplishment, such as an indication that the bearer had passed a government examination and was thereby promoted to the ranks of the local elite. At the very least, because the *hao* could have been selected and used by the man in question without any formal investiture of its use, the *hao* indicated a pretention to join the ranks of the locally prominent. Use of the *hao* was first adopted in the fourteenth generation of the Tang family (1750s), then used in the seventeenth generation (1830s), the eighteenth generation (1850s), once in the nineteenth generation (1870s), and once in the twentieth generation (1895).

Writer no. 1, Tang Zushi, possessed basic information about the Tang family lineage for the first to the seventeenth generations. In 1944, he likely could recall members of the generation before his own, who would have been ninety-nine years old by that year and had probably passed away. But relying on his own memory he was able to give three entries for members of the eighteenth generation, his grandparent's generation. He also wrote seven entries for his parents' generation (1870) and three entries for his own generation (1895) before his death.

At that point, his son, Writer no. 2, took over, adding three more entries for his father's generation and all six entries for his own generation.⁸ In the final

中國的年譜與家譜 [*Chinese Chronologies and Genealogies*] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1997), 154–155. Prominent families had set time periods for updating the family history. See Hilary J. Beattie, *Land and Lineage in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 114, 119.

8 It was not unusual for the compiler of the family history to record a more detailed listing for the relatives in his own generation, as can be seen in the text under discussion here. In my collection is a handwritten genealogy prepared in 1742 by Zhao Xing 趙星 from Quwo 曲沃 County in Shanxi Province. It is simply titled **Family Registry** [*Jiabu* 家簿] and consists of only seven pages. He has basic listings for five past generations, but for his father's generation (generation six) and his own (generation seven), he lists several uncles (along with the surname of their wives and the number and sex of their children), and he lists his three

FIGURE 6.10

To Write or Not to Write? This photo captures what I imagine as the thoughtfulness and hesitation of Writer no. 2 as he contemplated adding his name as the final entry in his family genealogy. In fact it is a photo of the famous Chinese reformer Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929).

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entry in the chronology on the last page, the son wrote an entry for himself and his wife. But he left his own name blank out of fear of having it written in the long record of the Tang family while he was still living.⁹ So he wrote the entry in the style of all the others, including his wife's surname, Jiang 蔣, but not his

brothers along with their wives and children. This work, bound in twine, is 15½ in (39.4 cm) h × 10 in (25.4 cm) w. It was written in 1742 and was purchased in Beijing in April 2009. The rare book expert Shum Chun (Shen Jin) 沈津, then at Harvard, confirmed that the paper was consistent with materials dating to the time of the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor.

- 9 It was not the rule that only deceased members of the family were listed in a genealogy. Moreover, different families had different rules about which family members to include in the genealogies. For example, some families did not include a child who died before age eight. See Lai and Xu, *Zhongguo de nianpu yu jiapu*, 158. Some families only included deceased members. See Liu Liming 劉黎明, *Citang lingpai jiapu: Zhongguo chuantong xueyuan qinzu xisu* 祠堂靈牌家譜：中國傳統血緣親族習俗 [Ancestral Halls, Spirit Tablets, Genealogies: Chinese Practices in Familial Lineages] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin

own, but from elsewhere in the text it is clear that his surname was Tang 唐 and his generational name was Rong 榮.

Another aspect of the Tang family history reinforces the conclusion that the family was locally prominent: many heads of household took more than one wife. It is possible in some entries the first wife died, and the man remarried, but it is more likely that taking a secondary wife was a sign of the relative wealth of the family head. Multiple wives were listed in seven entries, covering the dates between the fifth generation (1530s) and the twentieth generation (1895). There is no correlation between the *hao* and having multiple wives, since only one man who used a *hao* had two wives recorded.¹⁰

By using the incidence of the *hao* designation and the taking of secondary wives as indications of the family's financial standing, we can surmise that in the 1500s the family began to amass wealth. The family's social and financial position may have been shaken by the victory of the Qing in 1644, the time of the tenth through the twelfth generations, for which no secondary wives or *hao* are noted. Such markers of pretention to elite status disappeared subsequently. As fiscal and social stability returned during the time of the thirteenth generation (1720s), the fortunes of the Tang family recovered, and some men in the family once more took the *hao*, beginning with the fourteenth generation (1745), and secondary wives, beginning with the sixteenth generation (1795). The family continued to prosper through the twentieth generation (1895), with Tang Zuren 唐祖仁 being the last to take two wives, probably in the early years of the Republican era.

Women in the Tang Family

As an established and proud family, the Tang sons found wives from among many other families in their vicinity, and Tang daughters were often married to boys in the families in this network and left to live with them. We can conclude this because Writer no. 2 jotted down information (p. 9) about his sisters and

chubanshe, 1993), 168. It was recognized that war or natural disasters could add a sense of urgency to the need to update a family history. See Xu, *Zhongguo de jiapu*, 77.

- 10 Some families recorded secondary wives and concubines in the family history. For a discussion of this point, see Ouyang Zongshu 歐陽宗書, *Zhongguo jiapu* 中國家譜 [*Chinese Family Histories*] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1993), 100, 156–157. Nevertheless, the handling of concubines in the family history always posed a question. Some families had a rule that a concubine with no children would not be recorded in the genealogy, while other families had no such stipulation. See the discussion in Wu Qianghua 吳強華, *Jiapu* 家譜 [*Genealogies*] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2006), 133–136.

FIGURE 6.11

A Scribe in Harbin. The photo, which was on display at the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Harbin [Haerbin sheng Sufeiya jiaotang 哈爾濱聖索菲亞教堂], shows a typical scribe in Republican China, here seen consulting with a client. The church had been trashed during the Cultural Revolution and its inside was stripped bare of the original ornate architectural fixtures and all its religious items. In 1997, it became the Harbin Municipal Architecture and Art Museum [Haerbinshi jianzhu yishuguan 哈爾濱市建築藝術館]. When I visited in 2011, it was being used for an exhibition of photographs and items from Harbin's pre-1949 past.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

cousins, probably from his own generation, who had left the family quarters to marry (see more on this below). Following the genealogical style, because they were female he wrote down only their surnames, though such girls were not usually recorded in the genealogy.¹¹

11 This was not always true. See Xu, *Zhongguo de jiapu*, 29–30.

Concerning the marriage of Tang sons, the Tang family had a particularly strong connection with the Jiang 蔣 family, from which Tang sons found wives on eighteen occasions over the Tang family's history, lasting hundreds of years; the first Jiang daughter married a Tang in the third generation (1470s) and the last one was recorded in the twenty-first generation (1920s). Other ongoing intermarriage relationships were with the Jing 經 family, four times between the twelfth generation (1695) and the twenty-first generation (1920s); three marriages were made with the Li 李 family between the eighteenth generation (1845) and the twenty-first generation (1920s); and wives for Tang sons came from the Hu 胡 family in the first generation (1420s) and again in the eighteenth generation (1845). In its earlier history, the Tang family had found wives in the Wen 文 family twice between the second generation (1445) and the tenth generation (1645) and from the Yang 楊 family twice in the fifth and sixth generations (1520–1545). Note that just because the surnames are similar for a number of wives does not necessarily indicate that all of these women came from the same branch of another family. These surnames are all fairly common and do not by themselves indicate descent from the same branch of a family. But neither should the recurrence of a few select surnames over the course of centuries be dismissed as coincidental. Rather, it was more likely the mark of long continuing interfamily relationships.¹²

Forty-three marriages are listed in the genealogy, so other surnames also appear for Tang wives. The surnames that appear only once include Lin 林, Ji 吉, Huang 黃, Zhou 邹, Liu 劉, Liao 廖, Wang 王, and Zhou 周.

The genealogy lists the names of six Tang daughters who were married into other families in the vicinity (p. 9). Writer no. 2 most likely listed the information about these girls because he still considered them important relatives even though they had married into other families. Perhaps they were his own sisters or cousins whom he had played with as a child. He listed five Tang daughters who married into the Jiang 蔣, Li 李, and Zhou 周 families. Daughters from families with these surnames had married into the Tang family in past years.

Two of the girls who thus married into other families may have been servant girls or “adopted” daughters raised by the Tang family. While still children they may have acted as servants or “babysitters” and so became well-known to Writer no. two. One such girl, surnamed Jiang 蔣, was sent to the Jing 經

12 Useful comments on the relations developed between families through marriage over many generations are in Keith Hazelton, “Patriline and the Development of Localized Lineages: The Wu of Hsiu-Ning City, Hui-chou, to 1528,” in *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and James L. Watson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 158–160. See also Beattie, *Land and Lineage in China*, 104–105.

FIGURE 6.12

Tang Family Genealogy [Tangshi jiapu 唐氏家譜], Pages 3 and 4, *Females in the Tang Family*. Family genealogies were usually circumspect about listing females, because the sense of patrilineal authority was so strong. Wives and concubines were listed by their surname only. But in this case Writer no. 2 listed the females, probably cousins and sisters, whom he knew because they grew up together. Children who died very early, were not even named. This entry, in the upper-left-hand corner of page 4, reads, “1931, November, 20th day, the mao hour [between 5:00 AM and 7:00 AM], female” [Xinweinian shiyyue nianri maoshi nv 辛未年十一月廿日卯時女].

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

family. The Jiang and the Jing families had, over the years, married many of their daughters into the Tang household. The second girl was surnamed Bin 賓 (unclear character), and she was sent to the Zhang 張 family. Two Zhang girls had married into the Tang family in the twentieth generation (1895). It is likely that these two girls were the same age as members of the Tang family’s twenty-first generation, including Writer no. 2. This means they were twenty-four years old in 1944 when the genealogy was written.

Writer no. 2 recorded birth dates for seven female relatives in his generation, four of whom had already died. The girls who died before their first birthday were not given names, including a baby girl called Younger Sister Geng [Gengmei 庚妹] because she had been born in the *gengshen* 庚申 year, 1920. Another girl who died before her first birthday and not given a name was born

FIGURE 6.13

A Commercial Street. This could be the commercial street in a walled market town. We see the brick of the wall in the background. Shops are all open to the street, which is made for foot traffic, rather than vehicles. The hanging lanterns indicate a holiday and were probably being used for advertising and were for sale. The people's robes appear to be heavy and padded, so the weather must be cold. The ground appears to be dusty and dry, so this is a North China scene. It is possible the Tang family lived in a similar environment.

PHOTO: STREET SCENE, WILLIAM LEETE, 1919; RESTORATION AND PRINT ©2008 WILLIAM MORSE. USED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION

on August 2, 1925, and died on August 1, 1926. A third girl, who may have been stillborn, was listed simply as “female” [nǚ 女] with a date of November 2, 1931.

The three named girls listed shared the generational character 廷 *ting*. For boys, the generational character was the first character of the given name. But for girls, the generational character in this family was the second character of the given name. One of the named girls had already died: Linting 林廷, who was born August 3, 1923, and died July 22, 1926, just shy of her third birthday. Two other girls were still alive: Bingting 丙廷, born in 1936, and Kunting 坤廷, born in 1938, making both of them under age ten when these entries were written (according to my estimation), so they may have been still living at home with their parents at the time and were known to Writer no. 2.¹³

13 There was no set regulation on whether the generational character had to be the first character or the second character of the given name. See Liu, *Citang lingpai jiapu*, 158. In the **Family Registry** mentioned above in the notes written by Zhao Xing, he and his three

FIGURE 6.14

Street Scene in Manchuria. In this typical street scene, taken in Manchuria in the late Qing dynasty, a grandfather appears to be buying some sweet treats for his grandchildren. The shop in the background is called Qiantaihao 乾泰號 [Heavenly Peacefulness Company], perhaps a pharmacy or a money-changing/pawnshop.

PHOTO FROM THE T.C. CHAMBERLIN COLLECTION AT BELOIT COLLEGE

The Family's Home [*guxiang* 故鄉]

One question that remains is: Where did the Tang family live? Because I purchased the genealogy in Ji'nan from a local dealer, I assume it came from somewhere in the area, that is, somewhere in Shandong. The list of the girls who had married into other families included the village where each of them went. The names of these villages were not those of market towns but, rather, those of smaller villages [*cun* 村]. Of the seven villages named by Writer no. 2, two of their names are found online as being in the northeastern tip of Shandong, east of Weihaiwei 威海衛: Miaotou 廟頭 and Zhangjiawan 張家灣. A third village listed in the genealogy as Lijia Cun 禮甲村 was not found in Shandong,

brothers had single-character [*danming* 單名] given names, but each name included a "sun" [*ri* 日] radical. His name was Xing 星, and his brothers were named Min 旻, Yu 昱, and Jing 景.

though a modern-era village called Li Cun 禮村 is in present-day Shandong, in the general area of the other two villages. The village names that could not be located as being in Shandong online were Changwu 長屋, Zhubiantian 竹邊田, and Shenwucun 深塢村. Although geographical research has not provided conclusive evidence so far, I assume that the Tang family in this genealogy lived in the northeastern tip of Shandong east of present-day Weihai 威海.¹⁴

Summary and Concluding Remarks

At first glance, the Tang family genealogy I bought in Ji'nan appeared to have little specific information about when and where it was written. Miscellaneous notes about the family at the beginning obscured the fact that the main body of the text was a chronological genealogy later in the pamphlet. Both of these points are typical of the *chaoben* produced in China between 1850 and 1950. They were written for specific purposes, in this case as a “complete” record of the writer’s branch of the Tang family from its first-generation founder until 1944. Because it was a personal document that the writer did not imagine would be read outside the family, it did not occur to him to list the place, date, or his own authorship of it.

But a careful reading reveals many details. The Tang family had a long history stretching back to 1420. It had once had presumptions to higher social status, as could be seen by the repeated use of the *hao* adopted by some Tang men over the generations and by the number of Tang men who took secondary wives, whose names were also recorded in the genealogy. These two status markers also indicated the family’s changing financial fortunes over the centuries. The family began to amass wealth, or strive for higher status, in the 1500s, when both the frequency of the *hao* and of secondary wives increased. But the family suffered after the Manchu invasion of the mid-1600s, and it was not until nearly a century later, from 1720 onward, that they began to regain their sense of social standing and again used the *hao* and accepted secondary wives. The standing of the family continued to improve throughout the 1800s and into the early twentieth century. It was no doubt the sense of wishing to preserve the family’s

14 The printed maps of Shandong available today usually do not show small rural villages. One way to discover the place names of all the villages mentioned by the writer of this genealogy is to consult the old local gazetteers [*difangzhi* 地方志] for the counties in this part of the province, where the villages surrounding the county seat [*xianshi* 縣市] might be listed. If all of the place names could be located, we would be able to see the geographic spread of their kinship and intermarriage networks.

continuing sense of holding a social position that compelled Tang Zushi, Writer no. 1, to write the family genealogy.

His son, Writer no. 2, must have been shocked at the passing of both parents in 1944. I estimate he was in his mid-twenties at the time, a member of the twenty-first generation of that branch of the Tang family, and he decided to complete and update the genealogy that his father had begun. He added some entries about his grandparent's (nineteenth) generation, two entries about his parent's (twentieth) generation, and a number of entries about his own (twenty-first) generation. He wrote down the specific date and time of both parents' deaths on page 2, then wrote the entry for his parents in the chronological section on page 13.

The son also wrote about a number of girls in the Tang family who had been sent to marry into other families. His record indicates that several Tang girls, and two possibly adopted or servant girls who had most likely been raised by the family, married into other families that over the centuries had built up a marriage-exchange relationship with the Tangs.¹⁵ In particular, the relationship with the Jiang family survived for centuries. Other families as well were part of this intermarriage network. Probably most of the young women recorded by the son were about the same age as he was at the time, in their mid-twenties, and from his own generation.

Writer no. 2 also wrote about the girls in his generation who had died or still lived at home. The death of four young girls between 1926 and 1931 indicates the high birthrate as well as the high rate of infant and child mortality.

The son wrote the names of the villages to which each female had been sent. More research is needed on the names of these villages, but the indications are that the network of families that took part in the marriage exchanges was in villages in the upper northeastern part of Shandong, east of present-day Weihai. The fact that all these place names were of villages or small communities lends strength to the idea that the Tang family was based in a village or in a small market town and that its marriage-exchange relationships were with other families based in villages or small towns. Although as a clan they were striving for higher social position, in fact they were more like rural local gentry whose status was close to that of the common people.

15 I assume that Writer no. 2 was recalling the girls with whom he grew up or whom he remembered living nearby who were treated as relatives. Yet these girls did not have the Tang surname, and they were sent to other villages to marry. Therefore, I conclude they were likely adopted or servant girls who were released from service upon reaching a marriageable age.

Finally, the son wrote the last entry in the genealogy, for himself and his wife. He wrote a standard entry, including only his wife's surname (without her given name). But he could not bring himself to brush in his own name, perhaps because an entry in the family genealogy generally (though not always) indicated a deceased person, whose final record was added along with those of earlier deceased ancestors. So he left his name blank, leaving the final entry incomplete. We do not know the name of Writer no. 2, the son.

The handwritten genealogy discussed here illustrates the attitude toward family construction, as shown by this family in the Republican period. By most accounts, the practice of keeping a family history, which was not uncommon in the Song, flourished in the Qing and Republican periods, when the manuscript discussed in this chapter was written. Moreover, all social and economic classes in China seemed to appreciate the value of having a written genealogy. It helped them to identify themselves in relation their family as well as to society in general. The 1944 genealogy discussed here represents the typical mental construct of a preferred family structure; the family was ideally conceived of as a long-lasting patrilineal line of descent, as seen in the full names of all male heads of household recorded, while, as mentioned several times above, only the surnames of their wives were entered in the official family record.¹⁶

The line of descent of the Tang family gave only the barest of information for each generation: one entry for one male name and his wife. The formal entries lacked any information as to the date of birth or death. But when the father and son, members of the twentieth and twenty-first generations, began to make entries based on their own memories and knowledge of family members, they include several for the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first generations, covering the years from roughly the 1870s to 1944. Clearly, in their minds, the family was composed most importantly of the relatives they knew or had known: the relatives who were within living memory. They did not wish to confine themselves to selecting just one entry for each generation, when the vibrant family members of the most recent generations were still real in their own minds.

16 The point that the value of having a written family history was appreciated by people in all socioeconomic classes in China is commented on in Michael Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship: Lineage and Descent in Late Imperial China* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 35. Possibly one impetus for Writer no. 2 to carry on with finishing the family genealogy was the feeling that because of its perceived importance to the family, failure to keep the genealogy current was considered unfilial. See Ouyang, *Zhongguo jiapu*, 28, 83–84. He had recently lost both parents, thus being a filial son was likely strongly on his mind.

Research indicates that, for many Chinese in the Republican period, and probably also for those in the present day, the relatives they have known during their lives are the most important. In the Republican period, families carefully honored deceased relatives they had known in life, while giving more perfunctory obeisance to deceased relatives of earlier generations. The importance of calling upon one's own memory when drawing a picture of the extended family is illustrated by this genealogy. Generations within memory of the living writers (the eighteenth through the twenty-first generations) received several entries, in contrast to the earlier "historical generations" (the first through the seventeenth generations), which had only one entry per generation.¹⁷

The multiple entries given for the four most recent generations also reflect the fact that each household included a number of children. The Tang family in Shandong held the traditional view of how an ideal family should be constituted. Although the Tang family may have been scattered geographically, it was more likely that the relatives of the more recent generations lived in close proximity. They lived, in other words, according to the tradition of maintaining an extended family. By writing out in brush and ink the basic record of its family genealogy, the Tang family affirmed its acceptance of the traditional family structure. At the same time, the written genealogy was a way of documenting its success with that model over a long period. The genealogy the family lost or discarded, which ended up in the market in Ji'nan, has allowed us to appreciate its respect for its long-recorded history.

17 The important point that people were most concerned with the relatives they actually knew is made in Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots*, 62–65. The gradual loosening of psychological ties between the living and the departed is mentioned in Wei-Ping Lin, *Materializing Magic Power: Chinese Popular Religion in Villages and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 33. This is a realistic view, instead of assuming that the Chinese honored all their ancient ancestors with the same fervor or compassion with which they remembered relatives whom they had known as children. Earlier scholars both Chinese and Western implied that the Chinese lumped together all ancestors as equally important to the living. For example, see S. Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom* (New York: John Wiley, 1853), 2: 268–269. A more recent overview seems to make the same assumption, see C.K. Yang, "The Role of Religion in Chinese Society," in *An Introduction to Chinese Civilization*, ed. John T. Meskill (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1973), 648.