

POST-DISASTER SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION IN WENGDING: INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES AND EVERYDAY PRACTICES IN A WA VILLAGE OF SOUTHWEST CHINA

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Abstract: Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, follow-up interviews, and documentary records, this article investigates how the inhabitants of Wengding, a Wa settlement in southwest China, have pieced collective life back together in the aftermath of a devastating fire, against the backdrop of tourism growth and resettlement. The old village and the new settlement now perform distinct functions, and this division has reshaped the ways in which social bonds are maintained. Through adjustments to the home and through ritual gift exchange, residents keep family and kin connections alive; through tourism employment and daily travel they preserve their attachment to the old village; and through communal rituals and negotiations over land they reconstitute collective affairs. Each of these practices rests on particular conditions—housing, access to work, and institutional arrangements that permit coordinated action. I describe the outcome as conditional continuity: relationships endure through practical adaptation, yet the form and depth of that endurance hinge on resources, rights, and coordination. Reunited residence and shared activities open space for repairing damaged ties, although their longer-run consequences require further study. It is equally important to separate the chance to take part from the capacity to shape the rules that govern participation. The Wengding case indicates that post-disaster social reconstruction should be evaluated in terms of the conditions that hold relationships together and the extent to which residents can help shape collective life.

Keywords: Wengding; Post-disaster social reconstruction; Institutional processes; Everyday practices; Spatial reorganization

1 INTRODUCTION

Wengding, in Cangyuan Wa Autonomous County, Yunnan Province, is widely known for its unusually intact Wa architecture and living cultural traditions, and it has become a significant destination for cultural tourism. As tourism development, traditional-village conservation, and housing-improvement programs advanced in parallel, villagers progressively shifted their residence from the old village to a newly built settlement—a process that increasingly separated everyday dwelling, production, and the staging of culture. In February 2021 a fire razed most of the old village's timber houses. The seventeen households still living there at the time were subsequently relocated to the new settlement, ending the period during which the two sites coexisted as places of residence. Rebuilt on its original footprint, the old village reopened in 2022 and now functions chiefly as a venue for cultural display and tourism, whereas the new settlement hosts the routines of domestic and family life [1]. Even so, the growing functional division between the two places has not severed them in residents' experience: people still move back and forth for work, and the old village remains alive in memory.

Scholarship on Wengding has so far concentrated on tourism development, sacred space, resettlement, and place identity. Existing work has followed the village's conversion into a tourism resource and has mapped the divergent interests of government agencies, business operators, and residents in the control of space and the definition of culture [2-6]. More recent research on cultural adaptation in housing documents how, by repositioning ritual spaces, altering buildings, and persisting in embodied routines, residents preserve household authority, meanings of place, and cultural identity [7-8]. Building on this body of work, the present article widens the lens to cover domestic life, tourism employment, and collective village affairs simultaneously, and asks two questions: through what means do relationships endure in each sphere, and how do the conditions of that endurance differ?

Any interpretation of post-disaster reconstruction has to start from the recognition that the disaster landed on social and historical processes that were already in motion. Disaster anthropology treats catastrophe not as a purely natural event but as the product of an encounter between a hazard and pre-existing social vulnerability: the political and economic relations, development interventions, and mundane living conditions in place beforehand shape both the disaster and what follows [9-10]. Where people are resettled, and whether they have a say in the process, likewise bear directly on outcomes [11]. Nor should we assume that a community maps neatly onto a territory. Meanings of place crystallize through the experiences, interactions, and power relations of the various actors involved [12-13]. Explaining what happened in a resettled community therefore calls for a close account of how its particular relationships were rearranged.

Whether relationships survive depends on adjustments in everyday practice and on the resources that make those adjustments feasible. Actors confronting new circumstances can draw on inherited cultural understandings and established ways of doing things, but only to the extent that resources are within reach [14]. Work on home-making

treats homing as a continuous process in which mundane activities, the use of space, and investment in relationships together produce the feeling of being at home—a process structured by unequal capacities and by wider social inequalities [15]. Reorganizing cultural practice after disaster similarly requires reconnecting people, places, and material resources, and the groups held together—and the meanings attached—may themselves be transformed in the process [16]. Read together, these studies imply that continuity has to be investigated through changes in the form of practice and through the conditions under which practice becomes possible. Offerings to ancestors, exchanges among kin, communal rituals, and residents' ties to the old village sustained through work and travel all need to be examined against the new spatial and organizational setting.

Such practices also rest on particular institutional arrangements. Putting governance arrangements in place and keeping them working demands continuing coordination among organizations, bodies of knowledge, resources, and objectives [17], and decisions about where to resettle people, how to lay out housing, and whether residents' views enter planning all shape reconstruction [11]. I therefore place institutional processes and everyday practices within a single analytical frame. I first trace how tourism development, resettlement, and post-fire rebuilding altered the spatial layout, the distribution of resources, and the organization of tourism in Wengding; I then compare three relational arenas—family and kinship, residents' bonds with the old village, and collective village affairs. In each arena, relationships persist through adaptations to domestic space and ritual exchange, through tourism employment and daily movement, and through shared rituals coupled with negotiation over land; housing conditions, labor arrangements, and land-use rules alternately enable and constrain these practices. I label the resulting process conditional continuity: relations continue by changing their form of practice, yet the manner and degree of that continuation depend on the resources, rights, and coordination available. Comparing the three arenas and their institutional dependencies allows me to separate the opportunity to join an activity from the capacity to influence the arrangements that govern it—a distinction that clarifies which relationships everyday practice can sustain, which arrangements it can reshape, and where its reach ends.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

This study is a qualitative case analysis that pairs village-based ethnography with historical and documentary research in order to investigate how, following spatial reorganization, residents arrange their daily lives and what institutional arrangements underpin that arrangement. The core empirical material derives from fieldwork carried out while I lived in the village between September 2025 and February 2026, enriched by supplementary interviews conducted in May, August, and October 2026. Participant observation, in-depth interviews, informal conversation, and fieldnotes were the principal techniques. Observation concentrated on how domestic space was used, how rituals were prepared, and how collective labor was organized. I joined the preparations and feasting connected with soul-calling and related ceremonies, watched how different households arranged their ritual spaces, and accompanied villagers on trips between the new settlement and the old village tourist site.

Purposive and snowball sampling were used to reach four groups of interviewees. The first consisted of customary authorities and ritual practitioners—village elders, senior and junior moba ritual specialists, and other elders who officiate at ceremonies. The second comprised people involved in local administration, including the village's first Party secretary and relatives of village officials. The third covered tourism workers and other residents, among them ritual practitioners simultaneously employed at the tourist site, bus drivers, and household members taking part in work-point labor. The fourth brought in young people and outside observers: recent university graduates, current university students, young villagers working away from home, and a documentary filmmaker. Documentary and publicly available sources served to establish the chronology of tourism development, relocation, the fire, and reconstruction. Interviewees are anonymized in the text through broad descriptions of their roles and the omission of identifying details. Local terms are transliterated from their Chinese renderings and glossed at first mention. Because fieldwork began only after the fire and the main reconstruction works had been completed, the discussion of the fire and the early resettlement phase relies principally on public sources and retrospective accounts rather than direct observation.

3 FROM A LIVING VILLAGE TO A TOURIST SITE

The spatial separation between the old village and the new settlement did not appear overnight; it took shape through the steady convergence of tourism development, cultural conservation, and housing-improvement policies. Before the 2021 fire, relocation was still partial: some households had moved while others stayed behind, and residential life, cultural display, and tourism operations remained interwoven. The fire, the final relocation, and the rebuilding of the old village pushed this partial division toward completion, and that trajectory supplies the indispensable background for understanding social life after the disaster.

3.1 Tourism Growth and the Gradual Relocation before the Fire

Wengding's encounter with tourism began in the 1990s. In 1995 the county tourism authorities started discussing development plans with village cadres, and around 2000 infrastructure construction got under way [18]. Traditional houses, the village ritual post, the wooden drum house, and the sacred grove were progressively incorporated into programs of cultural conservation and placed on display for visitors; a thatch-roof restoration project around 2004 captures the shift well. Some villagers had already swapped thatch for asbestos-cement tiles to improve their houses, but requirements to keep the village looking traditional obliged them to put the thatch back. Wengding was later named a

historic and cultural village and entered the national register of traditional villages, and its timber houses were placed under heritage protection, which increasingly subjected repair work and the use of interior space to conservation regulations [19].

Tourism and conservation thus froze a traditional landscape while altering the terms on which villagers could actually use village space. Public areas came under tourist-site management; cultural activities were scheduled as performances for paying guests; and residents were compensated for performing and serving. For operators, these spaces and activities were assets to be maintained; for villagers, they remained woven into daily movement, production, and sociability. The mismatch bred conflict—an earlier study documents a dispute over the management of a grassy village square, a vivid illustration of the friction between site rules and everyday needs [4].

Housing-improvement policy and traditional-village conservation jointly produced the new settlement. Construction started in 2012 under the county government's direction, financed by a company taking part in a paired-assistance program; the project's aims combined better living conditions with the spatial demands of tourism development [2]. Relocation, however, was gradual rather than immediate. Villagers worried about housing costs, building quality, and land compensation; they also hesitated to leave ancestral land, to alter the organization of domestic space, and to move sacred places [3-4]. Movement to the new settlement began around 2015, yet seventeen households were still in the old village when the fire struck [20]. For several years the two sites coexisted as residential spaces: the new settlement gradually absorbed everyday dwelling, while the old village combined residence, conservation, and tourism.

Relocation also reworked property relations and tourism arrangements. In 2017 Wengding set up the Wengding Primitive Tribe Tourism Cooperative, and under rules announced in 2019 relocated households registered ownership of their new-settlement houses. Ownership of the old houses stayed with the original families, but the right to use them for tourism was pooled into the cooperative as shares [19]. Dwelling, ownership, and commercial use had thus begun to come apart even before the fire. After moving, villagers remained tied to the old village through property, through tourism jobs, and through dividend arrangements. In short, when the fire came, Wengding was already in the middle of a drawn-out reorganization of space.

3.2 The Fire and the Reconstruction Process

The fire broke out on February 14, 2021, and destroyed most of the old village's traditional buildings; no deaths or injuries were reported [21]. It instantly upended the remaining residential arrangement. The seventeen households that had stayed lost their homes, spent about a month in temporary lodging at a holiday hotel next to the village committee offices, and then joined the others in the new settlement—ending several years of residential separation and concentrating the entire community in one place. At the same time, the local government set up a dedicated headquarters to direct reconstruction on the old village site, and the tender for planning and design services was completed within two months of the disaster [22]. The fire, in other words, destroyed material space while simultaneously producing both residential concentration and a tightly organized, administratively driven rebuilding process.

The blaze drew intense nationwide attention. On March 6, 2021, the Research Center for the Protection and Development of Traditional Chinese Villages at Tianjin University convened a symposium on Wengding's future. Its director, Feng Jicai, brought together prominent scholars and researchers with long familiarity with the village to take stock of the disaster and consider possible responses. Most favored rebuilding on the original site and stressed that residents' rights and preferences had to be respected [23]. Reconstruction thereby turned into a public argument about the ethics of conserving traditional villages, about villagers' agency, and about the limits of tourism development—and not merely a construction project.

Implementation proceeded according to an original-site plan. Townships and neighboring villages were each assigned particular households and buildings, and homeowners worked shoulder to shoulder with craftspeople brought in from surrounding settlements. Fire-prevention facilities were upgraded in parallel to strengthen protection and emergency response. A resident of a neighboring village recalled that villages across the county prepared materials on the instructions of township Party committees: some were told to have every household fell trees and ready rafters; others delivered bundles of thatch. The authorities also invited craftspeople skilled in timber-splitting and house-building to volunteer their labor [24]. Reconstruction thus fused administrative planning, restoration of the village's former appearance, improved fire safety, and residents' own labor. The arrangement allowed for rapid, state-led rebuilding while drawing neighboring villages—and their carpenters and materials—into the supply network.

On February 20, 2022, the new settlement staged a collective rite to raise a new village post. The post embodies the village's peace and prosperity and is not customarily replaced without cause. According to a published account, elders read a series of accidents during the previous three Lunar New Year periods as signs that the village's fortunes had been disturbed, and they resolved to replace the post in order to set matters right. Its fabrication and installation required contributions from all households, including the seventeen that had relocated after the fire [22]. The episode shows villagers meeting the uncertainty that followed relocation and disaster through local interpretation and joint action—and it gave residents who had lived apart for years a shared undertaking to join.

Alongside the rebuilding of physical space and the renewal of social symbols, tourism management was also reorganized. At the time of the fire the site was developed and operated by Cangyuan County Cultural Tourism Industry Development and Investment Co., Ltd. [25]; in September 2022 the company signed a cooperation agreement transferring operations and management to Cangyuan Jinglan Cultural Tourism Co., Ltd. [26]. The rebuilt old village

thus entered the operational system of a specialist tourism firm. Corporate arrangements increasingly governed the use of its spaces, the staging of culture, and the terms of residents' tourism employment. A new pattern settled in after the fire: everyone lived in the new settlement, while the old village was run as a scenic area. Residential and tourist spaces were pulled further apart, and the conservation, display, and commercial exploitation of the traditional village became more tightly bound up with the tourism market.

4 REORGANIZING EVERYDAY LIFE ACROSS TWO SITES

Today the old village functions mainly as a stage for tourism and cultural display, while the new settlement hosts the routines of domestic life. Villagers, however, keep the two connected through work, kinship visits, ritual, and the ongoing use of space. Institutional change has altered the material conditions of life, but it has not dictated how people inhabit space, tend relationships, or conceive of home. Drawing on six months of village residence between September 2025 and February 2026 and on follow-up interviews, this section looks at how everyday life has been rearranged through domestic arrangements, household livelihoods, and social relations.

4.1 Domestic Space and Kinship Exchanges

Moving house changed the material infrastructure of daily life. A Wengding student attending university elsewhere remembered the old houses as dim inside, with people living cheek by jowl with poultry and livestock. New-settlement houses separate kitchen, living areas, and animal quarters much more distinctly, making domestic routines cleaner and easier. The same changes reshaped animal husbandry: poultry and livestock no longer wander freely; most animals are kept in communal pens at the village edge, and some families have thrown up simple sheds for chickens and ducks on their cultivated slopes. In the old village, residence had tracked kinship closely—different branches of one extended family often lived within sight of one another. For one northeastern family, descendants of the founding household were concentrated within a radius of about fifty meters, forming a dense kin-based residential cluster [27]. In the new settlement, allocation by lottery scattered relatives who had been next-door neighbors and made unrelated households into neighbors.

Dispersal did not, however, put an end to exchange. Soul-calling rituals—*xiaohun*, *zhonghun*, and *zuodan*, in ascending order of scale—create repeated occasions for contact and, just as importantly, teach people where everyone now lives. The smallest rite uses a chicken as offering and is held simply at home, with only the closest kin and neighbors invited. The middle rite requires slaughtering a pig and draws guests from across the village. The largest and longest adds collective activities—pounding glutinous rice cakes, making large candles—to the pig feast. When a family prepares a soul-calling, its younger members ride electric scooters from door to door, inviting people according to the circle appropriate to the rite. They pay their respects at the threshold and direct the invitation toward the ancestral shrine: “Honored guests, please come and help, have tea, or share the ancestors' meal.” The rounds of invitation double as a geography lesson in the new settlement. Guests, for their part, ready a small bamboo table laid with white cloth, rice, tea leaves, beeswax, and a variable sum of cash called “soul money” (*hunqian*), and carry it to the host household in the exchange known as *songhun*, “sending the soul”—which in turn helps the guests fix the hosts' location. Through these reciprocal journeys, hosts and guests learn one another's new addresses and keep their relationships operating within the altered layout.

Domestic rearrangement accompanied the rearrangement of the village. Traditional houses were organized around a hearth, with fixed divisions—living areas, an ancestral ritual compartment, the elders' inner rooms—that expressed a strict hierarchy of the household. Since relocation the hearth, once the center of domestic cultural life, has largely vanished: only four or five families retain one, and only because older members insist; even these have been moved into the kitchen. Families that gave up the hearth have nonetheless kept the ancestral ritual space known locally as *de log vai* [2]. In the traditional house this was a sealed compartment beside the inner room, entered only by the household head and the officiating elder; its placement was already a worry during relocation debates—one villager remarked that moving would mean finding a separate room for the ancestors, which would be difficult [2].

Since the move, its form and position have diversified considerably. Most families no longer reserve a separate compartment; instead they adapt it to available space and storage needs. In some homes it takes the form of a large, plain wooden cabinet with doors and an enclosed interior; in others it is recessed discreetly into a load-bearing wall. Households with generous floor space still devote a room to the shrine, using it for rituals and for receiving elders; those with less room often fold it into the living room, built into modern wall cabinetry so that it reads visually as part of the storage system; and some tradition-minded elders keep it close to their own bedrooms.

The slow disappearance of hearths alongside the persistence of ancestral shrines reflects both practical calculation and a difference in felt spiritual proximity. A hearth is a conspicuous installation affecting temperature, odor, appearance, household spending, and fire risk; keeping one means regular use, maintenance, and constant vigilance, and under the conditions of the new houses these demands weigh on the decision. An ancestral shrine, by contrast, takes up little room and can be positioned flexibly; once installed it needs mainly periodic cleaning and the renewal of offerings at festivals and rituals, so accommodation is easier. Residents also distinguish the remote fire deity of creation narratives from the deceased ancestors who receive shrine offerings—the latter being the household's most familiar and dependable spiritual presence—and this sense of nearness informs their choices. Flexibility, though, does not dilute sacredness, and

the altered floor plan can generate uncertainty: one mother preparing her child's first-birthday celebration hesitated over whether to shift the party decorations farther from the shrine for fear of "disturbing the ancestors."

In short, the continuation of family and kin relations in Wengding depends on how people inhabit their new houses and keep exchanges moving across the settlement. Families fit ancestral shrines to house size, daily needs, and ritual requirements, so observance carries on; they answer the dispersal of kin with personal invitations, delivered offerings, and shared ritual participation. Domestic adaptation preserves a niche for relations with ancestors, while ritual exchange keeps interaction alive across the new geography. The hearth's decline beside the shrine's retention underlines that different material forms rest on different conditions of continuation. As villagers refit their houses and meet obligations toward one another, the new dwellings gradually become home—homing as an ongoing practice rather than a finished state [15].

4.2 Tourism Work and the Meanings of the Old Village

Relocation shifted residence out of the old village without cutting villagers' attachments to it. Many spend their days inside the old walls—serving tourists, taking part in cultural performances, running small businesses—and return to the new settlement at night. Living in one place and working in another establishes a daily rhythm of movement. Institutionally the two sites are now differentiated, but in lived experience they remain stitched together. The old village operates at once as a source of livelihood, a managed scenic area, and an emotionally charged home.

Tourism employment is the main thread holding this connection in place. Villagers take part in two broad forms of work. The first is household-based work-point labor (*gongfen*): each household ordinarily sends one member, and tasks include cultural performances and welcoming visitors; pay follows actual attendance at RMB 60 per working day, with possible deductions for lateness. The second comprises individual posts—guiding, ticket sales, driving sightseeing vehicles, fire watch, and logistical support—paid according to duties and requirements. The two forms differ in the unit of participation and in how money is calculated. One interviewee explained that their mother had previously performed at the site every day but now worked roughly one day in four, unpaid on the off days. Such rotation links household time and household income: days without site work can go to farming, family care, or other tasks, but they also forgo site earnings. Rotation, then, is a rule governing access to paid work time, not merely an arrangement that offers flexibility.

Corporate management shapes tourism participation in two connected ways. Specialized operation brings relatively stable organization and a range of paid roles, allowing villagers to earn through different jobs. Yet drawing a wage confers no authority over how tourism resources are used or how the operation is run. During fieldwork a young villager talked about the use of the site's resources, about which businesses villagers were allowed to run, and about how returns were divided. He recognized the income tourism had brought while questioning how far villagers could use the old village's resources on their own terms. His remarks isolate two distinct issues: whether residents can earn from tourism, and whether they can shape resource use and operating decisions.

The conversion of the old village into a scenic area has not exhausted its meaning as home; it stays woven into everyday life in several registers. Rodman's notion of multivocality captures how one place can carry divergent meanings for different users [13]. A villager working away from Wengding said they would not want to work at the site long term, because repeatedly witnessing the changes the fire brought back memories of their former life. Others felt that tourism work gives older people more chances to gather and relax, lifting their spirits while paying them; for children, the activities at the old village are simply fun. On major holidays—National Day, May Day—when school is out and visitor numbers swell, children gather spontaneously, learn *Wa* dances from videos on their phones, and join staged ritual performances, while others sell local products or sing at different points around the site. The old village thus continues to hold memories, sustain sociability, and provide experiences that differ by generation.

Tourism work is the principal route by which villagers repeatedly return to their former home. Through daily journeys and on-site activities, the old village remains inside livelihoods, relationships, and lived experience. These connections are nonetheless channeled through job assignments, rotation schedules, attendance rules, and pay arrangements. The old village keeps its homely meaning, but commercial rules now set the terms of presence—how long people stay, what they do there, and through which opportunities they earn. Divergent evaluations of tourism work further show that memory and attachment do not translate uniformly into willingness to participate. Staying involved through work, therefore, must be distinguished from having a say over resource use and operating arrangements.

4.3 Social Ties and the Handling of Collective Affairs

The fire also reshuffled relations between two groups of villagers. Before the disaster, spatial separation between old village and new settlement had hardened positional differences. Those who remained saw the movers as having "abandoned their homeland"; the movers suspected the stayers of hanging on to run guesthouses and earn more. After the fire, each side blamed the other for failing to stop the blaze's spread. One young villager recalled:

"I felt we had split into two groups. Those who stayed in the old village spent a lot of time together, so naturally they became closer. We who moved earlier grew more distant from them. It was still like that when they first moved here: those who had moved last tended to get together. Later, as we had more chances to see one another, we started talking and spending time together again, as we used to. Now, although we study or work away and live in different places, we still get together on video calls every week or two."

This narrative tracks slow change within one young person's circle: ties thinned by distance began to thicken again as people shared a settlement and met more often. Post-fire concentration created occasions for reconnection, and soul-calling and other rituals supplied shared activities. Before the fire, each settlement had its own body of elders who organized rituals separately; afterward, ritual life was coordinated mainly by the new settlement's elders, and villagers who had lived apart began to join the same ceremonies. Repeated encounters, exchanges, and rites allowed relationships to adjust gradually.

Mending ties among residents, however, is only part of rebuilding collective order; stability also hangs on the relocation of sacred space. In Wengding's customary understanding, the sacred grove is both the dwelling of particular spirits and a foundation of the village's founding and persistence. Wa communities have histories of household fission, village moves, and the re-establishment of sacred sites, but such moves cannot be made at will: they demand confirmation through divination and ritual. Villagers habitually link death and misfortune to the grove's location, which gives them a local idiom for judging whether the village is settled and secure. Mueggler's account of divination and healing helps make sense of such practices as ways of sharing suffering and redistributing responsibility [28]. When deaths and other disturbing events cluster together, elders versed in divination and ritual must supply an explanation and propose a remedy.

When villagers first moved to the new settlement, the grove's location had likewise been fixed through divination. In recent years, however, they increasingly blamed the village's run of misfortune on the grove lying in the same direction as the cemetery. Four residents died between September 2025 and February 2026, which sharpened the sense of urgency. In November 2025 the customary elders began sounding out a new site, using two chickens respectively to “ask the spirits” and “ask the earth,” and they informed village officials only after establishing that relocation was permissible. A provisional site was chosen in December, but it sat on a villager's tea-growing land and the owner refused to give it up; a final location was not settled until February 2026, when the move was completed. The new grove stands on collectively owned land, and the elders negotiated an exchange involving unused land with the village authorities, which made the relocation feasible. Wengding then held collective rites to purify the village and raise a new village post, aiming to sweep away calamity and ill fortune.

Living side by side again multiplied occasions for encounter, and shared rituals drew some previously separated villagers into common projects. The grove relocation additionally shows that reorganizing collective affairs means converting local explanations into joint action. Villagers' reading of misfortune made the grove's position a problem requiring an answer; elders proposed relocation through divination, but the tea grower's refusal of the first site demonstrated that ritual selection also needs workable land arrangements. Only after those arrangements were negotiated could the move and the subsequent rites proceed. Collective order was thus rebuilt through the interpretation of misfortune, the design of a response, and the coordination of its execution.

The episode also lays bare the practical relations among organizations. A core member of the elders' body described the division of labor to me in these terms: “Our own customs are handled by our headmen. State affairs are handled by their officials.” Yet relocating the grove straddled ritual requirement and land use, fusing the two domains in practice. Customary elders could formulate and organize the ritual response, but implementation still required land coordination and the cooperation of village administrative bodies. The continuity of collective life therefore depends on the ongoing organization of shared undertakings and on workable accommodations among different rule systems. The case displays local society's capacity to manage its own affairs, and equally the specific conditions under which that capacity becomes operative.

Across Wengding, relationships are held together by different practices. Domestic adaptation and ritual exchange let family and kin relations function within the new layout; tourism work and daily travel keep the old village inside livelihoods and sociability; organizing collective affairs brings ritual requirements and land-use rules into practical coordination. Each form of continuity leans on its own supports—domestic space, employment opportunities, and arrangements enabling joint action. Relationships assume new forms as they persist. An adequate account of social reconstruction must therefore ask both how residents sustain relationships and whether they can influence the arrangements that make those relationships possible.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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