

Clan, family, and drug crime: A Boshe village in South China as an example

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According to reports on family drug crime organizations in Guizhou province in China, 13 family members belonging to drug-trafficking group stood trial, some of whom were couples, brothers, and a sister [1]. Similarly in Gansu province, over 10 family members participated in drug crimes, including the wife and the wife's parents [2]. In Sichuan province, a 50-year-old woman and her son, daughter, son-in-law, younger male cousin, nephew, and over 10 other family members were involved in drug trafficking, having sold drugs to over 1000 drug consumers [3]. Why do these people want to develop a trafficking group composed of their family members, especially with their own sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters? When people see their family members falling into trouble, some of them do their best to help them. Some of them even give their own life. From the perspective of evolution, through their own sacrifice, the lives of their relatives, who have the same genes, are preserved. Thus, their lives are prolonged through those preserved genes [4]. However, in China, when one engages drug trafficking, he (she) can be sentenced to death. Nevertheless, some people will place their relatives at such a risk of death. As drug trafficking is high risk, some police even use "fishing law enforcement," encouraging someone to commit a crime as a reason for conviction [5]. In this way, not betraying group members becomes the primary criterion for joining a group. In the process by which, drug-trafficking group leaders find their helpers, they usually search within their own families given the blood relationship. In comparison with

non-relatives, there is higher trust between relatives. The Chinese especially have a strong sense of family, as China has a long tradition of agriculture, and engagement in agriculture required the help of family members. In China, the largest family involvement in drug crimes occurs in Boshe village, which is the most serious illegal drug manufacturing area in China.

Boshe village is located in the Shanwei region in Guangdong province in South China near Hong Kong. In 2013, one-third of the methamphetamines sold in China, were produced in the Shanwei area, and Boshe village has the most serious drug problem in Shanwei region [6]. Boshe covers an area of 0.54 km² and has a population of 14,000 [6]. In 2013, 20% of the families in Boshe were directly or indirectly involved in drug production [7].

All of the residents of Boshe village are surnamed Cai, as they have the same ancestor [7]. Four lineages originally descended from this ancestor. One of the four lineages already left Boshe and the other three stayed [7]. They are all relatives.

A clan is a kinship group with the same family name and common ancestor [8]. Clans are mainly paternal relatives [9]. Prior to 1949, clans had a strong influence in Chinese rural areas, with clans filling the basic needs of the people. For example, clans provided support for the elderly and orphans, relief in case of famine or other social stressors [10], and even cross-clan cooperation for economic or security purposes, such as marriage [11]. These measures gave the people a sense of security. Furthermore, through sacrifice, genealogy gave people a sense of belonging. Before 1949, the power of the state government only extended to towns. The management of villages was mainly accomplished by various clans. After 1949, the power of the state reached the village, and the clans' power was weakened in a planned way [12]. Since 1978, the Chinese government has overseen economic reform, with farmers having more freedom in production and migration. The power of the country left the village, and the power vacuum was filled by clans or "clan elites" [13], patriarchal clan members who won spontaneous worship and obedience from powerful clan members [14]. Behind the "clan elite" are powerful clans with large populations. For example, most families associated with drug manufacturing belong to the largest lineage

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in Boshe, as they have the largest number of people in the village and the strongest influence [7]. Because of the state's long-term attack on clans and clan forces, clan forces always avoid conflicting with state power. Therefore, before members of clan commit crimes, they make every effort to have the power of the state on their side. After the clan revival, the most important factor in the rural area is to control rural elections and autonomous organizations through the village committee [14]. The largest drug trafficker in Boshe village, Cai Dongjia, was sentenced to death and executed in 2019. He served as the director of four sessions of the village committee of Boshe [7]. Whenever a leader becomes a social dictator, there exists such a phenomenon, that is, nominal voting proliferates, which eventually leads to the imposition of the concept of substantive justice on people, resulting in various restrictions and controls on production and consumption [15]. Democracy and voting have become the instruments of drug traffickers. Through voting they accrue more legal power, thus supporting their illegal activities. In the process of making drugs, a large amount of sewage is discharged, which pollutes the environment. "There is no way. They are powerful and have guns. We can only swallow our words and dare not do anything for fear of being beaten," a villager stated [7]. Many villagers are dissatisfied with the behavior of drug manufacturing groups. However, because of the power of these groups, these villagers have to remain silent, especially because these drug manufacturing groups have good relationships with corrupt police and government officials [16]. In Boshe, it is not for just a short time that many villagers engage in drug manufacturing activities [17]. At the beginning of the economic reform, some of these clan elites wanted to lead others to get rich by legal means, but they failed, at which point they turned step by step to producing illegal drugs. In the beginning, they only engaged in smuggling activities, after which they turned to making fake and inferior goods. When these activities were stopped by the government, they turned to drug production [18]. Methamphetamine entered China through Hong Kong, and Boshe is not far away from Hong Kong, methamphetamine is easier to be produced than heroin. Initially, there were only some powerful villagers involved in the manufacture of drugs. They did so secretly, and they did not share their experience in drug manufacturing. The spread of drug manufacturing in the population was slow [17]. With the expansion of drug production, drug makers began to lure villagers to take part in drug manufacturing. For safety reasons, they often sought the help of clan members with whom they were familiar [7]. Some of the members of their lineages were also envious of the rapid growth in income of the drug manufacturers and actively sought to join in the drug activities [17]. Clans have the following characteristics: There is strong cohesion among clan members. They can easily find help among the members of their lineages for the production of drugs. When faced with outsiders, they show a strong exclusiveness. This characteristic

has historically been useful for the entire clan in its fight against difficulties throughout its existence. Moreover, the system is supported by blood relation, not the legal system. In this way, clan members demonstrate that the interests of the clan are more valuable than the pursuit of social fairness and justice. In Boshe, clan members will stop police from entering the village to capture drug manufacturers. This can be viewed as a country developing from an agricultural entity (rule of man) to one of modern industry (rule of law). The famous Japanese writer Haruki Murakami stated "I think the most terrible thing today is something like a 'spiritual cage' created by certain doctrines and claims." Most people need that framework. Without it, they cannot stand it. That's what Aum's Truth Religion is [19]. When a clan conducts evil, it can be considered a "spiritual cage." However, if it participates in a good thing, it can be useful. In the contemporary rural areas of China, the law alone cannot solve all of the social problems. For example, abuse of the elderly exists in many areas [20]. Many children squeeze money from the elderly and do not support elderly who are unable to work. Because people around them do the same, no one around them condemns this abuse of the elderly. Many elderly people choose to commit suicide, such as in Jingshan District of Hubei province [21]. To solve this problem, on the one hand, the government should intervene. On the other hand, the clan should play its role in education.

Keywords: Boshe, China, Clan, Drug crime

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Author Contributions

Zhuoli Tao – Conception of the work, Design of the work, Acquisition of data, Analysis of data, Interpretation of data, Drafting the work, Revising the work critically for important intellectual content, Final approval of the version to be published, Agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved

Guarantor of Submission

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Author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

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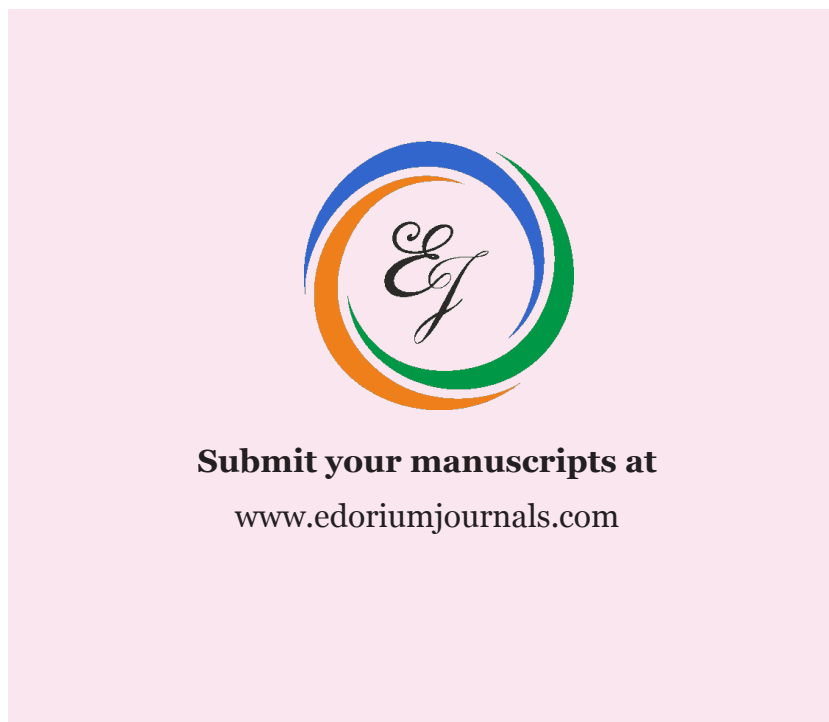
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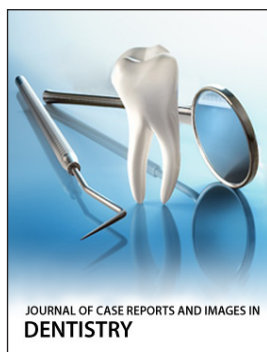
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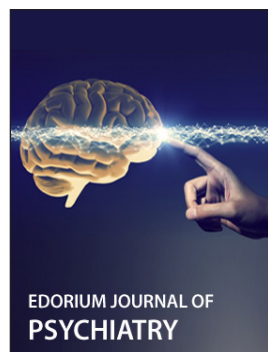
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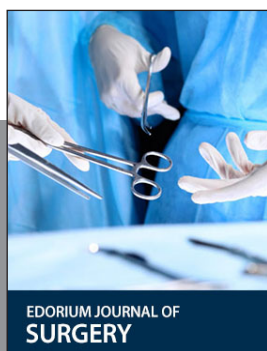
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