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Finding the Stories behind the Tombstones: The Dead Chinese Laborers in WW1 and Their Families

Zhang Yan, the Chinese University of Hong Kong

This is not a strict academic paper, but an unfinished investigation report. The purpose of this investigation is to find some information about the Chinese laborers who died during WWI, making a footnote for our past research on the DCL. The clues to the investigation were mainly from the records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Beijing Government, where 178 DCL are listed, with their villages. During the period from 2009 to 2014, I investigated 26 DCL, gaining a less than optimistic result, because most of the information about them in local society has long been erased by time. From a limited investigation result, we can see that DCL's sacrifice does not ennoble their character. Instead, they are still considered as a humble group in rural society. As with other Chinese Laborers, most of these DCL were not married, their death seems to be insignificant for the family. Compared with the soldiers in the war, the Chinese laborers' motives to enroll in the Labor Corps were to make a living. However, as an interpreter in the Labor Corps said, it was not their original intention that instead of making a living, they should lose their lives. In accordance with Chinese customs at that time, the most unfortunate thing is that their corpses were buried in a foreign land. Therefore, a few of the DCLs' memorial tablets were brought back, so that their souls could follow them home.