

Visual Representation of Ancient Chinese Rites with Digitalization Technology: A Case of Confucius Worship Ceremony

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Abstract : Confucius is the first sage in Chinese culture. Confucianism, the theories represented by Confucius, has long been at the core of Chinese traditional society, as the dominating political ideology of centralized feudal monarchy for more than two thousand years. Confucius Worship Ceremony held in the Confucian Temple in Qufu (Confucius's birthplace), which is dedicated to commemorate Confucius and other 170 elites in Confucianism with a whole set of formal rites, pertains to "Auspicious Rites", which worship heaven and earth, humans and ghosts. It was first a medium-scaled ritual activity but then upgraded to the supreme one at national level in the Qing Dynasty. As a national event, it was celebrated by Emperor as well as common intellectuals in traditional China. The Ceremony can be solemn and respectful, with prescribed and complicated procedures, well-prepared utensil and matched offerings operated in rhythm with music and dances. Each participant has his place, and everyone follows the specified rules. This magnificent ritual Ceremony, while embedded with rich culture connotation, actually symbolizes the social acknowledgment for orthodox culture represented by Confucianism. Rites reflected in this Ceremony, is one of the most important features of Chinese culture, serving as the key bond in the identification and continuation of Chinese culture. These rites and ritual ceremonies, as culture memories themselves, are not only treasures of China, but of the whole world. However, while the ancient Chinese Rite has been one of the thorniest and most complicated topics for academics, the more regrettable is that due to their interruption in practice and historical changes, these rites and ritual ceremonies have already become a vague language in today's academic discourse and strange terms of the past for common people. Luckily, we, today, by virtue of modern digital technology, may be able to reproduce these ritual ceremonies, as most of them can still be found in ancient manuscripts, through which Chinese ancestors tell the beauty and gravity of their dignified rites and more importantly, their spiritual pursuits with vivid language and lively pictures. This research, based on review and interpretation of the ancient literature, intends to construct the ancient ritual ceremonies, with the Confucius Worship Ceremony as a case and by use of digital technology. Using 3D technology, the spatial scenes in the Confucian Temple can be reconstructed by virtual reality; the memorial tablet exhibited in the temple by GIS and different rites in the ceremonies by animation technology. With reference to the lyrics, melodies and lively pictures recorded in ancient scripts, it is also possible to reproduce the live dancing site. Also, image rendering technology can help to show the life experience and accomplishments of Confucius. Finally, lining up all the elements in a multimedia narrative form, a complete digitalized Confucius Worship Ceremony can be reproduced, which will provide an excellent virtual experience that goes beyond time and space by bringing its audience back to that specific historical time. This digital project, once completed, will play an important role in the inheritance and dissemination of cultural heritage.

Keywords : Confucius worship ceremony, multimedia narrative form, GIS, visual representation

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