

Visualization of Chinese Genealogies with Digital Technology: A Case of Genealogy of Wu Clan in the Village of Gaoqian

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Abstract : Recording history is a tradition in ancient China. A record of a dynasty makes a dynastic history; a record of a locality makes a chorography, and a record of a clan makes a genealogy – the three combined together depicts a complete national history of China both macroscopically and microscopically, with genealogy serving as the foundation. Genealogy in ancient China traces back to a family tree or pedigrees in the early and medieval historical times. After Song Dynasty, the civilian society gradually emerged, and the Emperor had to allow people from the same clan to live together and hold the ancestor worship activities, thence compilation of genealogy became popular in the society. Since then, genealogies, regarded as important as ancestor and religious temples in a traditional villages even today, have played a primary role in identification of a clan and maintain local social order. Chinese genealogies are rich in their documentary materials. Take the Genealogy of Wu Clan in Gaoqian as an example. Gaoqian is a small village in Xianju County of Zhejiang Province. The Genealogy of Wu Clan in Gaoqian is composed of a whole set of materials from Foreword to Family Trees, Family Rules, Family Rituals, Family Graces and Glories, Ode to An ancestor's Portrait, Manual for the Ancestor Temple, documents for great men in the clan, works written by learned men in the clan, the contracts concerning landed property, even notes on tombs and so on. Literally speaking, the genealogy, with detailed information from every aspect recorded in stylistic rules, is indeed the carrier of the entire culture of a clan. However, due to their scarcity in number and difficulties in reading, genealogies seldom fall into the horizons of common people. This paper, focusing on the case of the Genealogy of Wu Clan in the Village of Gaoqian, intends to reproduce a digital Genealogy by use of ICTs, through an in-depth interpretation of the literature and field investigation in Gaoqian Village. Based on this, the paper goes further to explore the general methods in transferring physical genealogies to digital ones and ways in visualizing the clanism culture embedded in the genealogies with a combination of digital technologies such as software in family trees, multimedia narratives, animation design, GIS application and e-book creators.

Keywords : clanism culture, multimedia narratives, genealogy of Wu Clan, GIS

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