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Standardization of Chinese Local History Compilations

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Abstract:

There is a close racial relationship between Taiwan's aborigines and New Zealand's Māori people. During process of immigration from Taiwan to New Zealand, revealing the two races connected. Through evidence of the words "Genealogy", "Whakapapa" "Family Chronicles" which have similarity but also differences. The language differences existed but in what extent the differences are. The major objective of this study is to compare the differences among these concepts of whakapapa, genealogy and family chronicles to explore the meanings beyond these three words. Authors retrieved Māori and related literature to find out the differences. The difficulties came from that aborigines did not have archives or written records of the history. However, there are not sufficient information available. With limited information, authors extract valuable concept worth further exploration. Authors suggest that public libraries of these two area should systematically collect related information. The other suggestion is to produce oral history of local aborigines in order to maintain the language heritage and cultural development.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese Historiography, Local History, Chinese Local Chronicle, Standardized Management

I. Introduction

The archaeological ruins of Liangzhu City in Hangzhou, China, was officially included on the *World Heritage List* at the 43rd World Heritage Conference held in Baku, Azerbaijani, on July 6, 2019. It is the 55th world heritage site in China which is an outstanding example of earlyhuman urban civilization. The success of applying World Heritage indicates a recognition of the five thousand years of Chinese civilization by the international society. Liangzhu City,

located in Yuhang District, Hangzhou, China, has the scale, formation and structure of which are miraculous. The Liangzhu culture, named after the Liangzhu City which was found about 4300 to 5300 years ago and developed for about 1000 years. Liangzhu City is an early urbanized capital with complex structures and well-equipped facilities. Besides, Liangzhu is not only a country but also a civilization with a distinct stratification and standardized etiquette systems rooted in the society on the basis of rice farming and unified belief. According to the archaeologists, the total earth volume of Liangzhu City is over 7 million cubic meters, and of which the dam projects around the ancient city are more than 2.88 million cubic meters. The gigantic projects cannot be accomplished without high centralization of state power, meticulous layout, overall organization and long-term construction, which is an important symbol for Liangzhu to step forward into the stage of civilization. Judging from the advanced social productivity, the differentiated social class, the power system of the unity of God and King of Liangzhu culture, especially from the appearance of urban civilization, this prehistoric culture has already possessed the early state pattern. Liangzhu culture is famous for its developed ploughing rice agriculture, systematic and professional handicraft industry including the craft of exquisite jade and lacquerware, water conservancy system, hierarchical tombs, altars and sacrificial vessels represented by jade. The assorted relics and the intact site provide a solid evidence for the existence of the five-thousand-year history of Chinese civilization. The success of applying World Heritage has convinced the world that five-thousand-year Chinese civilization is a historical truth.

History plays the role of mirror, reflecting the past and providing insights of today; thus it is wise to learn from it. China is a nation with five thousand years of history and the Chinese value, record and learn history. Not only do they respect their ancestors and nature, but also prefer to ponder and pursue the future from the past.

II. The tradition of Chinese History Compilation

China is among many of the countries that attach great importance to the compilation of history. For five thousand years of Chinese civilization, the valuing and studying history, as well as drawing lessons from history of the Chinese has been a noble tradition, for instance, the emphasis on the compilation of history records, a complete system of historiography, various styles of historical classics and historians with great accomplishment. China is one of the countries with a long historical standing in the world, and focuses on the tradition of historiography most in the world. Among all the studies in China, historiography is the most developed subject; and of all countries studying historiography, China is leading the world. (*Law on Chinese History Research* by Liang Qichao). In ancient China, rulers of all dynasties put historiographers in an important position since they were entitled to record the history in truth. Therefore, their job was sacred. According to *Rites of Zhou Celestial*, historiographers praise the rulers in history records. In *Rites of Zhou: Chun Guan Zong bo* (four Chinese ancient officials who offer sacrifices to gods or ancestors), records show that some historiographers held the laws in terms of six aspects in governing the state, some were in charge of the chronicles of the state while some were responsible for the chronicles of countries, the history of rulers and the famous works at that time. Historiographers assume the responsibility to keep the books and classics, which is specifically recorded. Wang Guowei also believed that the historiographers play a pivotal role in recording the history, which is a valuable title since ancient times. (*Interpretation of History from Guantang Collection* by Wang Guowei). The oracle bone inscriptions are regarded as the earliest Chinese characters, which were engraved on tortoise shells and animal bones. It has caused a sensation in the world when it was found at the end of the 19th century. Although the inscriptions on oracle bones are presumably used for divination, they still record some important social events back at that time in an indirect

way, which also confirms that the early historiographers were also involved in divination. Later on, historiographers gradually took a professional practice and finally became officials specialized in recording history. Sima Qian, the author of *The Historical Records* which is one of the greatest historical books in China, whose ancestors were all historiographers, admitting that he inherited the position of historiographer after he wrote *The Historical Records*. Although the emperors feared nothing, they were intimidated by the historiographers and cared about their historical figures in the history. Out of this reason, stories of Tai jianshi and Dong Gubi (both historiographers ignored the threat from the rulers and recorded the truth) have been passed on. Du Yu described what role *Spring and Autumn* plays. From his perspective, 'it would be a crowning glory if historiographers paid compliment; otherwise it would be the most severe punishment if they gave a criticism. Before the Tang Dynasty, the emperors had no right to read the historical records about themselves by historiographers. Therefore, the title of historiographer have an exceptional position. (*Learning from History and Chinese History Tradition* by Xiong Yuezhi)

Numerous historical books are handed down from Chinese history. During the Western Zhou Dynasty in China, schools were run by the government who was responsible for the compilation of historical books. By the Spring and Autumn Period, Confucius, the most famous thinker and educator in China, opened private schools, revised the Theory of Six Classics and privately recorded history. Therefore, in the history of China, the compilation of historical books can be divided into two main categories in terms of recorders, which are the records written by the authority and records written by the common people. As for the official records, they are organized and compiled by the government while the private records, which includes unofficial information were compiled by individuals. There has always been a tradition in China in which the rulers compiled the history of the previous dynasties. For example, the *Twenty-Four Histories* is deemed as the official history record. It not only has included the *Historical Records*, *History of the Han Dynasty*, *History of the Later Han Dynasty* and *The History of the Three Kingdoms*, but also has covered the official records such as *History of the Song Dynasty*, *History of the Yuan Dynasty* and *History of Ming Dynasty*. The Chinese history books are varied in style, such as the biography style, annalistic style, a style of which history presented in separate accounts of important events, and canonical style so on and so forth. Historians in different dynasties have used different ways to record and inherit the five thousand years of Chinese history in different genres, and thus formed the Chinese historical studies with a sense if strong Chinese characteristics.

People say that all the six classics are historical records. Many ancient writings have been regarded as historical books by Chinese people. There are a myriad of well-known historians in Chinese history, for instance, Confucius, Zuo Qiuming, Sima Qian, Bangu to Sima Guang, Liu Zhiji, Ma Duanlin, Wang Fuzhi and Zhang Xuecheng. Not to mention a host of famous historians have appeared since modern times.

The emphasis of the governments on the historical records, rich historical records and numerous historians have formed a complete system of Chinese historiography, shaped a complete historiography theory and promoted the tradition of Chinese historiography which has the following characteristics. Firstly, it emphasizes the objectivity, aiming at recording the integrity and revealing the wickedness. Secondly, the experience learned from historical events should be summed up. Learning from history is beneficial to the government to educate people. Thirdly, it lays emphasis on personal cultivation of the historiographers. Morality, knowledge, recording history with a correct perspective are required.

The traditional Chinese historiography has great impact on Chinese culture, which obtains a high status in Chinese culture. It is not only reflected in the compilation of Chinese national history, but also in the local history. The history of the compilation of local history in China is as long as that of the Chinese national history, both of which are important regardless of the official recordings or private writings.

III. Local History and Local Chronicles

Local chronicles which is unique historical literature in China, is only one word different from local history. As a kind of local historical literature, local chronicles have coexisted with local history to mutually develop since Song Dynasty. The definition of local chronicles are as follows. It is the literature that has described the natural, political, economic, cultural history and history of the society and current situation comprehensively and systematically. It can be seen that the local chronicles first depict the situation in a certain administrative region, which includes both history and current situation. Some hold the view that local chronicles and local history have the same source, for example *Yuejue* and *Spring and Autumn Period of Wu Yue*, which are both from the Eastern Han Dynasty and *Huayang National Chronicles* of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, all of which can be regarded as early local history or local chronicles. Of course, from the point of view of current academic circle, the sources of local chronicles seem to be more complex and diverse. However, the local chronicles are still quite different from the local history when it has been defined. First of all, they have different contents. Local chronicles pay more attention to the recording of the current situation, stressing the present society, and describing the social development of a certain region comprehensively and systematically valuing current reality. However, local history emphasizes the historical development of the region in the past, and summarizes the laws of historical development and historical experience by centering the historical events or historical figures. Secondly, the local chronicles emphasize the objective description and the opinions can be traced in the selected literature. On the other hand, the local history not only records but also comments historical events and figures. In contemporary China, there is another significant difference between local chronicles and local history. Local chronicles are compiled by departments of government, while local history is mostly written by historians or institutions. As a result, the local chronicles are official work with authority while the local history is compiled mostly by individuals with academic purposes.

IV. Standardized Management of Local History Compilation: An Investigation from the Perspective of the *Formulation of Provisions for the Work of Local History and Basic Specifications for the Compilation of Local History*

By July 2019, there are 34 administrative province, including 23 provinces (Taiwan included), 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities and 2 Special Administrative regions, 333 second-level administrative regions (prefecture-level administrative regions), including 293 prefecture-level cities, 7 regions, 30 autonomous prefectures and 3 alliances), and 2844 third-level administrative regions (county-level administration) including 963 municipal districts, 375 county-level cities, 1335 counties, 117 autonomous counties, 49 banners, 3 autonomous banners, 1 special zone and 1 forest area) in China. As the country with the largest population on earth and the third largest territory in the world, China attaches great importance to the compilation and publication of local history. It requires relevant departments of government to strengthen the leadership and to organize the compilation and publication of local history. Reviewing the content, and having the correct opinions and making local history accurate historical materials should be demanded. Since the compilation of local history is inextricably linked to the work of local chronicles, it is necessary to strengthen communication and coordination with local chronicles organizations in the region during the compilation of local

history. If necessary, the compilation of local history can be incorporated into the work of local chronicles to be supervised under the generalized regulation. Therefore, local chronicle organizations bear the responsibility of the compilation of local history in China.

In order to reinforce the management of the compilation of local history, to standardize the procedures related to the compilation, to ensure the quality of compilation and publication, and to promote the institutionalization and standardization of the compilation of local chronicles, we have drafted the *Formulation of Provisions for the Work of Local History* and *Basic Specifications for the Compilation of Local History*. The *Formulation of Provisions for the Work of Local History* stipulate the stylistic rules, content and management of the compilation of local history. On this basis, we also drafted the *Basic Specifications for the Compilation of Local History*, involving nine chapters that comprise general principles, opinions, stylistic rules, contents, descriptive approach, requirements on quality, assessment and acceptance, publication, organizational management, and supplementary rules, all of which are in over 10,000 words. The compilation of local history has been standardized in more details which will play a specific guiding role in standardizing compilation of local history in China.

The *Formulation of Provisions for the Work of Local History* and *Basic Specifications for the Compilation of Local History* define the concept of the local history and the work related to the management of local history. It has been pointed out that by describing the natural, political, economic, cultural history and social history in a certain administrative region, local history can clarify the basic features of the development of regional economy and social development, demonstrating the accomplishment of the regional development and summing up the experience and learning from the history. In addition, the local history can also reveal the law of development, provide references to improve the quality of local people's and the social undertakings by offering authoritative historical textbooks and local textbooks for cadres to learn and study local history. Local history can fall into two parts according to time limit of the recording that is general history and dynastic history. It can also be divided into comprehensive history and thematic history in terms of the content. Apart from that, the local history can also be categorized into the provincial, prefectural and county-level history according to the level of administrative divisions.

With doubt, there is still room to discuss on how to compile local history, who to compile it, how to manage it and to what level of management. Regional regulation at different levels in China and the variety of historical records in China have brought great difficulties to the compilation and management of local history. At present, research institutions and scholars are mainly in charge of the compilation of local history in China. If the local history of each administrative region is compiled by the government, as the compilation of local chronicles, or to be compiled by research institutions or scholar, all of which may causes difference in content. Once the compilation of local history at provincial, municipal and county levels are organized by the government as the compilation and management of local chronicles in the future, it is necessary to formulate a perfect working system to standardize the compilation and management of local history.

According to the content, the *Formulation of Provisions for the Work of Local History* drafted by us is mainly a institutional design for the work related to local history compilation. Similar to the work of local chronicles, the work of local history refers to the organization, management, arrangement, research and use of the compilation of general history, dynastic history, comprehensive history and special history, as well as other kinds of local literature. In the *Basic*

Specifications for the Compilation of Local History, there are more specific rules and requirements for the compilation of local history, which exerts greater guiding significance for the compilation of local history. For instance, *"Local history should reflect the trajectory, characteristics and laws of the historical development of the administrative region and emphasize human social activities and civilized achievements and record major events, important figures, rules and regulations, which not only reflects the characteristics of local historical development, but also demonstrates the background of national historical development"*. This basic requirement makes a fundamental distinction between local history and local chronicles. One describes the details of the present, the other narrates the past. One presents the truth without viewpoints while the other records the history with comments. The compilation of local history is required to take time as the order and major events as the main clue and combine history with theory, personnel with narration. Making the narration clear, concise, integrated and complemented is what the compilation needs. As for the structure, we should strive for rigorous arrangement, clear organization with logic. As for the narration, we should record based on the history, seek for the combination of theory and history, and describe and comment on the history. With regard to writing, we should ensure the literary quality and standard annotations. The compilation cannot simply be the rearrangement of materials. The compilation of local history, whether in terms of research methods or narrative specifications, is more in an academic sense, which is obviously different from the characteristics of local chronicles. This is also the main reason why the compilation of local history requires higher academic literacy than that of local chronicles.

China is a country with thousands of years of tradition of historiography with numerous historiography talents. All regions are possessed of the basic conditions to compile local history. However, how to compile the local history with more objective and correct historical views and accurate history still needs to be instructed by the compilation specifications of local chronicles. Furthermore, the local history compilation should be guided under the scientific management of certain institutions so as to pass on historical works to future generations.

V. Conclusions

In the long process of history, the Chinese nation has created a unique and splendid culture and accumulated rich experience in governing the country, which includes the experience of successful social development and progress in the peaceful era and the harsh lessons of social turbulence in the declining era. Past is future. We should learn from history. By all means, it includes gaining the historical experience from other countries and regions in the world, but the most direct and effective way is to learn from our own history. So Chinese people have realized this from a very early age. Historiography has always been a prominent subject in Chinese history. Each country and nation has different historical tradition, cultural antecedents and basic fundamental realities of the country, so the country develop with its own characteristics. For thousands of years, China's historical inheritance and cultural tradition have determined that the Chinese nation is taking a different road of civilization development. From ancient times to the present, everything that happens in the course of the development of human society can be deemed history. It should be emphasized that the principal part of history is human, and the study of history is about human beings and human activities, which can't be replaced by other subjects.

It is necessary to regulate and manage the compilation of local history in an effort to ensure the objectivity and authority of local history records. However, the specific provisions should be formulated in accordance with the compilation rules of local history, and on the basis of the

inheritance of the tradition of history compilation, which should be practical, feasible and effective.

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