

# The Operation Of Power During The Compilation Of Genealogical Texts -Take Lishe Village As An Example

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## **Abstract**

*This paper investigates the genealogical texts and compiling activities of the family “Xue” and “Tang” in Lishe Village, and focuses on the following questions: What is the common process of compiling genealogical texts? How does power being operated in the process of compiling genealogical texts? Compared with traditional clan, how is clan consciousness awakened after “Economic Reform and Open Up?” It is found that the genealogical compilation in southern Jiangsu province after the “Economic Reform and Open Up” briefly aroused clan consciousness and became more patterned, specialized and marketized. However, it is a challenge to select the lead author, so sometimes it is necessary to rely on outsiders, who are professional in compiling genealogy, to lead the genealogical work. This will inevitably lead to the mismatches between decision-making and actual work in terms of the right of speech and their respective economic and prestige interests in genealogical compilation. The author compares the traditional and modern genealogical compilation mode, and finds that the underlying thoughts are similar, both of which are the desire to display authority.*

**Key Words:** *genealogical texts, clans, the operation of power, clan consciousness*

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## **I. Introduction**

### **Research Origin**

The clan is the basic unit of traditional Chinese society, which is an expression of external power besides political authority. Fei Xiaotong emphasized the role of “family” on the clan and believed that the clan was an extension of the family and a “differential mode of association”<sup>1</sup> in which kinship unfolded outward like ripples. According to Feng Erkang’s theory, the traditional Chinese clan organization, based on the patriarchy, is a kind of spontaneous organization activities.<sup>2</sup> As a community of “little tradition”, the concept of clan derives to a certain extent from the “great tradition” of the Zhou Dynasty in sacrificial ancestral temple system and hierarchical enfeoffment of “Tianzi” (the son of heaven). The patriarchal structure of “Dazong” and “Xiaozong” symbolized the supreme legal power of the emperor of Zhou,<sup>3</sup> and strictly followed the lineal primogeniture system as well as the power of the vassal title when they conferred and honored their ancestors. The patriarchal system of the

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<sup>1</sup> Fei Xiaotong. *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, University of California Press (1992)

<sup>2</sup> Qian Hang. *An Introduction to Chinese Clans Studies*, Fudan University Press (2009), p. 8

<sup>3</sup> Qian Hang. *The Genealogical Study of the Clan*, Fudan University Press (2011), p. 239

folk clan is similar to the political system of Zhou, which is the lineal primogeniture system. According to Redfield's theory, the "great traditions" of political authority and the "little traditions" of folk clans interpenetrate and influence each other.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars generally regard the Zhou Dynasty as the beginning of the study of Chinese clans as the Zhou Dynasty was the earliest in history to record the "Sanli"<sup>2</sup> and enfeoffment system. The clan of Zhou Dynasty was a social structure under the enfeoffment system, which to some extent penetrated from the upper class to the lower class under the influence of political authority. Since the clan organizations of other social classes did not have a long development history of tracing the ancestors, there was no typical ancestral temple system. The manifestation of the clan in Qin and Han dynasties was the management by the clan leader and the mutual assistance within the clan.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the patriarchal activities like ancestor worship, "Shouzu,"<sup>4</sup> and genealogy compiling became more common. During this period, the patriarchal activity moved down to the lower classes; particularly, the sacrifice and ritual ceremonies are more common.<sup>5</sup> In the Sui and Tang dynasties, the basic organizational structure of clans had been formed, including the unique recording methods of each clan, such as "Jiamiao"<sup>6</sup> and genealogical texts, but the clans were still interacting and gaming with the state power. After the establishment of the Song Dynasty, in order to prevent the re-emergence of regional divisions, the imperial court prohibited the establishment of "Jiamiao," but later gave allowance again.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the clan system in Song Dynasty was gradually perfected. Zhu Xi's "Jiali" describes the foundation of clan organization in detail: setting up ancestral temples, performing grave sacrifices and setting up sacrificed fields, which deepens clan consciousness on the basis of clan sacrifice and material security.<sup>8</sup> The Ming and Qing dynasties were the active periods of clan construction practice: the families in southern China built ancestral temples in their villages. In the late Qing Dynasty, the clan carried out clan contract directly or indirectly devised clan norms according to the concept of the clan contract.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, genealogical texts were compiled more frequently, forming a tradition of revision every few decades. With the gradual improvement of the genealogy, the scale of the clan expanded, and a more extensive clan community was formed.<sup>10</sup>

The production of genealogical texts is an external expression of the clan's self-identification, and it arouses the consciousness of clan community. The compilation of genealogical texts not only aims to educate the descendants of the clan and preserve the traditions, but also represents the authority and the discourse power: people consciously create genealogy and use the concept of clan to demonstrate the authority of the family.<sup>11</sup> The compilation of genealogical texts is a retrospective process:<sup>12</sup> People satisfy the idea of "Panfu"<sup>13</sup> while looking

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Redfield. *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization*, University of Chicago Press (1956)

<sup>2</sup> Sanli: the ceremony of sacrificing the heaven, the earth, and the ancestral temple

<sup>3</sup> Chang Jianhua. "The Stages and Characteristics of the Evolution of Chinese Clans," *Social Sciences in China*, 2022

<sup>4</sup> Shouzu: the unity of clansman based on the close and distant relationship

<sup>5</sup> Feng Erkang. *History of Chinese Clans*, Shanghai People's Publishing House (2009), p. 98

<sup>6</sup> Jiamiao: the ancestral temple for sacrificing ancestors

<sup>7</sup> Liu Yaping. "A Brief Study on the 'Jiamiao' System in the Song Dynasty," *Journal of Lanzhou University (Social Science Edition)*, 2009

<sup>8</sup> Ji Xueli. "Study on the Rites Thoughts and Practice of Zhu Xi's 'Jiali' from the Perspective of Family Clans," Qingdao University, 2022

<sup>9</sup> Feng Erkang. *History of Chinese Clans*, Shanghai People's Publishing House (2009), p. 235

<sup>10</sup> Feng Erkang. *History of Chinese Clans*, Shanghai People's Publishing House (2009), p. 261

<sup>11</sup> Yu Haiyan. "Study on the Compilation on Jiangsu's Genealogical Texts during Republic of China Era," Yangzhou University, 2016, pp. 141-143

<sup>12</sup> Segawa Masahisa. *Zupu*, Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House (1999), pp. 4-12

<sup>13</sup> Panfu: People excessively trace the political, social and cultural eminence of the previous dynasties that may not related to the same family.

for the past, thus justifying the eminent of the clans. For example, the family of Li in Lutun claimed that the ancestor of their family was Li Wenming, Zhu Yuanzhang (Emperor of Ming Dynasty) sister's son, but in fact it was not true given the various historical records.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the academic community still has regrets about the study of Chinese clans, especially in the era of the "Cultural Revolution", when the impact of political forces made people's identity of clans appear to be fractured, and the concept of clans gradually dissolved. At the end of the 20th century, the concept of clan community has gradually disintegrated and ceased to exist in Chinese citizens. In the 21st century, however, some families are in a race to rekindle the old genealogical texts. The awakening of the newly emerging clan consciousness represents the modern transformation of the compilation of genealogical texts.

This research paper intends to discuss the genealogical activities in southern Jiangsu, focusing specifically on the compilation of genealogical texts of the "Xue" family in Lishe Village. In the past, southern Jiangsu was the place where Wuyue culture developed, although not the birthplace of traditional Central Plains culture. However, in the Tang and Song Dynasties, a large number of people immigrated from the north. Relying on the superior natural environment and convenient transportation, Southern Jiangsu gradually became the economic center at that time. Today, Southern Jiangsu is still the center of economic development in China. Located in the center of the Yangtze River Delta along the southeast coast, it composes five cities: Nanjing, Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou and Zhenjiang. The main terrain of Southern Jiangsu is plain, especially the vast Taihu Plain, with few hills but dense water network (the Yangtze River and the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal are the main trunk). Most of the villages were built along the river, with people living and cultivating farmland. Each village had its own river, which eventually led to the main canal road to transport goods. In southern Jiangsu, the clan culture is more tenacious, the concept of clan is more common, and the record of clan activities is more complete.

The author belongs to the Xue clan in Lishe village in terms of blood relationship, and often hears the elders in the family telling about the past events that happened in the clan. Therefore, the author came to Lishe Village, a typical traditional village in Southern Jiangsu Province, to investigate the process of the compilation of Xue's genealogical texts. During the research period, although the genealogical work had been completed, the key witnesses of all parties were still in the village, making the study more complete.

## **II. Literature Review**

Chinese and foreign scholars explained the significance and reasonability of contemporary clan community and genealogical texts from different perspectives. Lin Yaohua regarded the clan as a kind of kinship organization based on the Rule of Genealogy to explain the social structure, and considered the clan as an independent unit and organizational principle of Chinese society.<sup>2</sup> Friedman introduced the concept of "sacrificial property," and regarded the clan as a complex functional group. He emphasized the importance of economy to the clan, and it can affect the social prestige, which could further affect the stratification of political power and economic wealth of the clan members.<sup>3</sup> Francis L.K. Hsu believed that the clan is the primary group in China, which takes the father-child relationship as the core and forms a structure with strong cohesion and interpersonal relationship.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wu Jun & Yang Qiuping. "An Analysis of 'Panfu,' Legitimacy, and Social Construction of Southwest Guizhou in the Ming and Qing Dynasties," 2017

<sup>2</sup> Lin Yaohua. *The Golden Wing: A Family Chronicle*, SDX Joint Publishing Company (2015)

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Freedman. *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China*, University of London, Athlone Press (1965)

<sup>4</sup> Francis L.K. Hsu. *Clan, Caste, and Club*, Literary Licensing (2012)

After the “reform and opening up,” the academic community has a revival of attention on clans’ study. Zhou Daming believed that the revival of clans has its inherent inevitability: the formation of clans is based on the common origin of natural lineage relations, which is an objective existence. Meanwhile, the policy relaxation after the “reform and opening up” promotes the development of rural economy and also enables people to live more closely to each other.<sup>1</sup> He Shuisheng pointed out that the spontaneous behavior was the main reason for the compilation of genealogical texts in China in the past 30 years, and the discourse power in contemporary China was greatly reduced, mainly reflected in the fact that every family could compile their own genealogical texts. In terms of the content of the genealogical texts, “the old is abandoned and the new is carried out” to meet the requirements of the new era.<sup>2</sup> Jiang Guohe pointed out that the revision of the genealogical texts in the new era has innovations, mainly integrating the elements of modern concepts of social organization (social equality, human rights and democracy). At the same time, the genealogical texts began to be market-oriented and aimed to pursue the material conditions.<sup>3</sup> Zhou Yu mainly analyzed the phenomenon of “genealogy craze” and believed that the revival of clans was only a temporary return, mainly because the weakening of the state’s management of grass-roots villages after the 1980s, which led to the dependence of individual families on clans. Furthermore, the genealogical texts was more open, democratic, realistic, and socially significant.<sup>4</sup> He Qiang further describes the awakening of clan consciousness: the current environment provides the possibility for the revival of clan. Under the joint promotion of clan memory and elite activities, the revival of clan phenomenon has become a reality.<sup>5</sup> Chen Xingguai believed that the modern clan revival is based on a certain number of people with cultural knowledge, and the elite within the clan is the leader of clan revival activities.<sup>6</sup> Huang Xiaopeng referred to Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic power to discuss that the clan association uses the means of identity reproduction, cultural reproduction and power reproduction to construct the realistic order within the clan. The challenges encountered in the process of compiling genealogical texts reflect the social disorganization problems in the transition from traditional society to modern society.<sup>7</sup>

Speaking of the contemporary clan consciousness and genealogy compilation, scholars believe that the contemporary clan consciousness is different from the traditional clan consciousness, and the continuation of the genealogical text’s compilation, leading by the elite clansman, conforms to the mainstream ideology of today’s society. The author believes that there are some differences between the contemporary genealogy and the traditional genealogy in terms of the basic forms, but their inner essence and ideology are similar, both of which are the pursuit of power and the desire for dignity of the clan or family. This study will combine the compilation of traditional genealogy and modern genealogy to find the connection between the tradition and contemporary and will focus on the power structure and the struggle for discourse power in the process of contemporary genealogy compilation.

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<sup>1</sup> Zhou Daming. *Clan and Society in Contemporary Southern China*, Heilongjiang People’s Publishing House (2003), pp. 19-29

<sup>2</sup> He Shuisheng. “Research on the Innovation of Genealogy Compilation in Contemporary China,” Ningbo University, 2022

<sup>3</sup> Jiang Tianhe. “Study on Contemporary Rural Genealogy,” Fujian Normal University, 2004

<sup>4</sup> Zhou Yu. “A Study on the Phenomenon of Genealogy Revision in Contemporary Clans – Taking Western Fujian Province as an example,” Xiamen University, 2009

<sup>5</sup> He Qiang. “Reconstruction of Contemporary Clan Identity – An Observation Centered on the Yao Family in Pushi,” Hunan Normal University, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Chen Xingguai. “Analysis on the Causes of the Revival of Han Clan in Rural China: A Case Study of the Songgai Luo Family in Yongchuan, Chongqing,” Tianfu Xinlun, 2016

<sup>7</sup> Huang Xiaopeng. “Symbolic Power and Order Production – Genealogy Construction and Practice in the Transition Period,” Wuhan University, 2020

## **Research Mentality and Technique**

The author travelled to Lishe Village, referring to the Genealogy of Xue's Family (a total of 23 volumes) and using the oral interview method to collect more than 30 people of samples. Before the interview, the author first went over the general contents of each volume of the Genealogy of Xue's Family, familiarized with Lishe Village through the local records of Yuqi Town, and made a general understanding of the relevant information. The interviews were specifically conducted using a semi-structured interview method, and audio recordings were made with the consent of the respondents. The author prepared the questions and outlines for the interviews in advance, and extended the relevant issues in depth according to the specific circumstances during the interview. After the interview, according to the method of data collation of oral history,<sup>1</sup> the author recorded and sorted out the materials against the recordings, summarized the important information from the interviewees' dictation, and finally formed the dictation transcript of each interviewer and the biography of key figures for subsequent information comparison and verification. The author also compares the oral materials obtained from the interview with the key contents recorded in the Genealogy of Xue's Family.

## **III. Background Information**

### **Overview of Lishe Village**

If we want to know more about the compilation of genealogy of the Xue family, it is necessary to have an overview of the Lishe village where the Xue family lived for more than 600 years. Lishe Village belongs to Yuqi Town, Huishan District, Wuxi City, and locates at the border of Wuxi and Changzhou City. The Wumu Canal runs from north to south, with "Tang Jiabang" and "Xue Jiabang" being the inland rivers in the village. According to the information provided by Liu, the Deputy Secretary of Lishe Village, there are more than 3,000 people in Lishe Village, with more than 1,000 households<sup>2</sup> and more than 1,500 permanent residents. As the aging population of the village (60 years old or above) reaches 35%,<sup>3</sup> most of the residents are seniors. The total area of Lishe Village is 3.7<sup>4</sup> square kilometers. The village relies on industry, and the main source of income is leasing of industrial land. Overall, Lishe Village is relatively developed, but it ranks lower than other villages in Yuqi Town, mainly because the small area of industrial land, and the enterprises in the village mainly focus on traditional mechanical processing and handicraft industry. Since the 1990s, Lishe began to develop private industries, but in the future, cultural tourism industry may be mainly built in the form of the protection of historical and cultural villages, so as to drive economic development.

Lishe Village was awarded the title of "Chinese Historical and Cultural Village" in 2010 and was selected as one of the first batch of traditional villages in Jiangsu Province in 2020. This is mainly due to the profound cultural heritage of Lishe Village and a large number of talented people from all walks of life. It included the famous Chinese economists Sun Yefang (Xue Eguo) and Xue Muqiao. In addition, there are other outstanding talents such as Xue Yuqun, Xue Yusheng and Qin Boyi, academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, industrialist Xue Mingjian, miniaturist Xue Foying, and famous painter Qin Guliu.

The big families of Lishe Village are Xue, Lv and Tang, so there is a folk saying, "Lv in the back lane, Xue in the middle street, and Tang in the front lane." In addition, there are Shi, Qiang, Tang and other families in

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<sup>1</sup> Donald A. Ritchie. *Doing Oral History*, Oxford University Press (2019)

<sup>2</sup> Yuqi Town Compilation Committee. *Yuqi Town Records*, Jiangsu People's Publishing House (2005), p. 74

<sup>3</sup> Deputy Secretary Liu, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>4</sup> Another version is 3.4 square kilometers.

Lishe Village. Lishe Village was originally called “Lv She (吕舍)” because most of the people who settled there were from Lv family; it was later changed to “Li She (礼舍)” as more people from families of Tang, Xue and Qiang moved in. Before the “Great Cultural Revolution,” Yuqi was founded as a people’s commune, which was renamed “Yuqi Commune” after the “Great Cultural Revolution.” Lishe was then a subordinate village called “Dongfeng Production Brigade,” because at that time the secretary was from the Lv family, so he later changed the village name to “Lv She Production Brigade.” Years later when the secretary was from the Xue family, he changed the name of the village to “Li She Village.” The change of name from “Lv She” to “Li She” is a huge progress, which means that Lishe Village is more inclusive to different clan groups.

### **The Origin of the Genealogy**

The Genealogy of Xue Family was first compiled in the year of 1721 (Xin-Chou year of Kangxi Emperor), and then revised 5 times, namely, 1803 (Gui-hai year of Jiaqing Emperor), 1829 (Ji-chou year of Daoguang Emperor), 1871 (Xinwei year of Tongzhi Emperor), 1927 (Dingmao year of the Republic of China) and 2012.<sup>1</sup>

It is recorded in the genealogical text that as early as Yongle of the Ming Dynasty (1403-1424), Xue Ju, the Hu Ben Wei and the general of Zhen Fu, left with illness and returned to his hometown in Chengjiang, Jiangyin County. Later, he came to visit his father-in-law Wang Ben in Yang Xiang of Lv She (current Lishe Village). He deeply loved this place and moved to live here. Since then, the Xue family settled here and became a prominent clan in the area, with a population of more than 1,000 people<sup>2</sup> by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, the director of history of Qingcheng in Wuxi County was inherited by the Xue family, and even Yuqi and Fengzhuang were subject to the Lishe County. According to the book *Jiangnan Ancient Town Lishe*, in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, there were 192 people of Xue's family being officials, including Fengzhi, Fengzheng, Xiu Zhilang, Wu Xinlang, Yun Qiwei and other official posts. In the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, a large number of industrialists such as Xue Mingjian emerged. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, there were Sun Yefang (Xue Eguo), Xue Muqiao, Xue Yusheng, Xue Yuqun and other leading figures, scholars, generals and entrepreneurs in various academic communities.<sup>3</sup>

After 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are only a few hundred people living in Lishe Village. Many people are scattered all over the country and even around the world, including Shanghai, Suzhou, Nanjing and Beijing; US, Taiwan, Hong Kong, France, etc.

It has been more than 80 years since the fifth revision in the year of 1927. During this period, major events such as the “Japanese War of Aggression Against China” and the “Cultural Revolution” made the revision work impossible. Finally, in 2009, the village secretary, Xue Guorong, willing to preserve the tradition of Xue family and inspire future generations, discussed the idea with some of the seniors.<sup>4</sup> From then on, preparations began, and a committee was set up to raise money for the work. The senior members of the group collected, interviewed and sorted out data, and contacted newspapers in Shanghai and Wuxi for publicity. Due to the destruction of clan culture by the “Cultural Revolution,” most of the old genealogical texts have been lost and

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *The Genealogy of Xue Family*

<sup>2</sup> Yuqi Town Compilation Committee. *Yuqi Town Records*, Jiangsu People’s Publishing House (2005), p. 716

<sup>3</sup> Zhang Jianqing. *Jiangnan Ancient Town Lishe*, Gu Wu Xuan Publishing House (2008)

<sup>4</sup> Xue Guorong, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, afternoon, 2023, telephone interview

destroyed. Fortunately, there was a whole set of surviving genealogies kept in wooden boxes, through which the clansmen can continue the compilation activity. Finally, in 2012, the primary information was collected, and the genealogies were finally distributed, since then the committee was disbanded. According to the Genealogy of Xue's Family, a total of 408,600 RMB<sup>1</sup> was raised in the end, and 227 sets of genealogies were distributed.<sup>2</sup>

### **Interview Method and Process**

The author came to Lishe Village, Yuqi Town, with Lei Xiaofan, a doctoral student from Nanjing Normal University. The interviews were mainly conducted in the homes of the interviewees in Lishe Village and the Village Committee of Lishe Village. The interviewees were mainly introduced by Xue Xuefen (the author's great-aunt) and Lv Guoxing (the former chief editor of the Compilation Committee), and more than 30 interview samples were collected. The interview period was from February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 to March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, a total of 5 days, with more than 500 hours of interview records. At least one interview was conducted with each interviewee, including three return visits to Lv Guoxing, a key figure in this research.

The author divided the interviewees into four categories: Lv Guoxing (80 years old, former Chinese teacher of Lishe Middle School, hired as chief genealogical editor of Xue Family after retirement), who was actually the main author of the genealogical work; Other management members of the Genealogical Compilation Committee: Xue Guorong (Manager of Hengfa Doors and Windows Co., LTD., former Secretary of Lishe Village Committee, former director of Genealogical Compilation Committee), Xue Qin (71 years old, manager of Special Steel Pipe Factory, former secretary of Lishe Village, former honorary director of Genealogical Compilation Committee), Xue You (Director of Bofa Power Technology Co., LTD., former deputy director and finance of Genealogical Compilation Committee), Xue Gengsheng (67 years old, Factory director of East China Electric Cabinets Co., LTD., Former honorary deputy director and sponsor of the Genealogical Compilation Committee), Xue Hongliang (83 years old, former proofreader of the Genealogical Compilation Committee), Xue Weihua (72 years old, general affairs of the Genealogical Compilation Committee), Xue Dongxing (90 years old, former interpreter of the Genealogical Compilation Committee), and Xue Baofang (81 years old, owner of the ancestral hall key of the family of Xue, Interview and host of the Genealogical Compilation Committee), Xue Xiaoping (wife of Xue Xinglun (died) of the former Committee); Village leaders: Secretary Liu (42 years old, now Deputy Secretary of Lishe Village), Secretary Wang (former deputy director of the Village Committee, Deputy Secretary of the Village Committee); also, more than 20 villagers in Lishe Village.

In addition, the author also interviewed the core members of the Tang family Genealogical Compilation Team at that time, namely Tang Zhonghua (80 years old, the director of Zhenhua Iron Piston Factory, the initiator of the Genealogical Compilation Team), Tang Caihe (80 years old, assisted in the genealogy compilation), Xue Xuefen (the author's great-aunt, a member of the Genealogical Compilation Team).

Since Xue Guorong and Xue You were on a business trip, they were interviewed by telephone. Other interviewees were all present for interview.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the exchange rate in 2013, 408600 RMB was about 63000 dollars

<sup>2</sup> Calculated from *The Genealogy of Xue Family*

#### IV. The Compilation of Genealogical Texts

##### Previous Preparation

The compilation of genealogical texts requires a large quantity of preparatory work, mainly recruiting personnel and raising funds. The original idea to compile the genealogical texts came from Xue Guorong, who became the village secretary in 2004. Knowing that the *Genealogy of Xue Family* had not been compiled for more than 80 years, Xue Guorong wanted to carry on the tradition. In 2009, he found several elder clasmen in Yuqi to share his ideas and began preliminary preparations.<sup>1</sup>

Fund-raising is a complex mission, requiring the donations from the clasmen in order to support the compilation of genealogical texts. According to Xue Hongliang, many clasmen did not want to donate, so the compilation committee contacted small business owners in the clan. After knowing where they worked, the compilation committee visited them in person to persuade them in providing funds. The final fund for the revision was provided by local business owners, with a total of more than 300,000 RMB<sup>2</sup> (400,000 RMB in total, according to the *Genealogy of Xue Family*). Xue You made the biggest contribution by donated the most money.<sup>3</sup> Xue Dongxing offers a similar information: the clasmen who live in the village will provide some of the money, but most of the money will come from small business owners, and the government will not interfere in the process. He said that if there is a lack of funds, the committee would further collect funds from the clasmen according to the gap.<sup>4</sup> The author also found Xue Gengsheng, who was the main fund provider, for data comparison. According to Xue Gengsheng, he was the main investor, and he had experienced several rounds of investment. However, he did not actually participate in the compilation work, but only had a title on the Compilation Committee.<sup>5</sup> Xue You was also one of the main financial supporters but did not actually participate in the actual work.<sup>6</sup> The people mentioned above merely participated in the capital contribution process, but did not lead the financing work, so there is no specific implication.

Xue Qin was the former village secretary and honorary director of the Genealogical Compilation committee, responsible for persuading the clasmen to donate money. Her main job is to suggest on how to raise money, how to mobilize people, and how to persuade people to invest money. According to Xue Qin, the main funds for supporting the compilation activity came from the clasmen who owned companies or factories, and the clasmen who live in the village did not need to pay money, but only spent money to buy a set of genealogy collection at home.<sup>7</sup> In terms of the price of the genealogy, Xue Baofang remembered that it was about 700 RMB per set.<sup>8</sup> Xue Qin utilized her influence, which she had helped many business leaders as a village secretary in the past and she was the earliest to donate money, to persuade clasmen to donate money. She called on each family to donate 500 RMB and each factory to donate at least 10,000 RMB. In addition, some of the clasmen from Wuxi, Suzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, Jiangyin and other places volunteered to donate money, but there were also

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<sup>1</sup> Xue Guorong, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, afternoon, 2023, telephone interview

<sup>2</sup> According to the exchange rate in 2013, 300000 RMB was about 46000 dollars

<sup>3</sup> Xue Hongliang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Hongliang's house

<sup>4</sup> Xue Dongxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Dongxing's house

<sup>5</sup> Xue Gengsheng, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Gengsheng's house

<sup>6</sup> Xue You, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, afternoon, 2023, telephone interview

<sup>7</sup> Xue Qin, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Qin's house

<sup>8</sup> Xue Baofang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Baofang's house



many people living abroad who were reluctant to donate money. After completing part of the family tree, there was still a gap in funds and a second round of fundraising was needed to raise more money.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, the compilation activity requires the recruit of staff for management and actual writing work. As a professional skill, people with high education level and knowledge of practical compilation work are needed. There are no particular restrictions on membership of the committee, as long as the clansmen have time and are willing to help. As it is a comprehensive work, the compilation work requires a strict division of labor, similar to the operation mode in modern companies. According to the interview, the following roles are required: 1. Actual writing, based on the provided materials, responsible for compilation and writing, represented by Lv Guoxing and Xue Peifang; 2. Coordinating as a whole, being a leader and managing the compilation committee, represented by Xue Guorong; 3. Responsible for recruiting personnel and persuading people to donate money, represented by Xue Qin; 4. Oral interview to understand the seniority of each family in the clan, represented by Xue Dongxing and Xue Baofang; 5. Preparing drafts and basic information, represented by Xue Weihua; 6. Proofread after the completion of the genealogical texts, represented by Xue Hongliang and Xue Bochang.



The picture shows the members of the Genealogical Compilation Committee, from *The Genealogy of Xue Family*



The picture shows the main donors in the clan, from *The Genealogy of Xue Family*

<sup>1</sup> Xue Qin, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Qin's house

The main person who actually compiled the genealogy was Mr. Lv Guoxing, former Chinese teacher of Lishe Middle School. He said that at that time, many literate clansmen worked outside the village, and many were reluctant to participate in this activity, considering it to be too tiring. Actually, the committee eventually hired him to be the genealogist of the Xue family, mainly because his cultural background and his previous successful experience in compiling the Genealogy of Lv Family (his own clan).<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the most essential thing to do before the actual writing was to contact clansmen to provide relevant information. The task was particularly complicated, time-consuming and tortuous because most of the clansmen had already moved out of the village and people did not support the work. If the clansmen live nearby, the committee then sent staffs to visit them. If they live far away, the committee made phone calls, even internationally, which can cost thousands of RMB per month. According to Xue Qin, some people volunteered to provide the complete information about their families as they are so proud of their ancestors, telling glorious stories of their family members. However, there were also many clansmen resisting to discuss about their families: after the “Cultural Revolution,” people from landowning families reject the compilation of genealogy. As a result, in many cases, a single branch of the genealogy was broken. There were also some officials (now living in Sichuan) afraid that others would deliberately make trouble, so that they were resistant. On the other hand, Xue Qin said that most of the clansmen living in the village are cooperative, mainly because they are not required to raise money.<sup>2</sup>

At that time, Lv Guoxing also travelled to Suzhou with the committee to visit each branches of the clan, searching for useful information and taking notes. According to Lv Guoxing, they often encounter great resistances. For example, many clansmen believed that the committee were liars, so people refused to open the door when they arrived. As a result, they eventually gave up with no other solutions. Also, as a family now living in Yunnan province is descended from a landowner, battered by political strife, they refused to include their ancestors in the genealogical texts.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, Lv Guoxing said that before writing, they need to collect the materials (information in a sheet) made by clansmen living in the village, with each committee responsible for an area. The clansmen were required to hand in relevant materials, which can be written by themselves or written by someone else, in accordance with the unified form made by the committee. In the document, the clansmen should include information of: each family members’ birthday, educational background (school), work place, job title, major contributions, writings, political status; Name of the wife, birth date of the wife, ancestral home of the wife, relevant information of the wife’s father; The child’s name, the child’s birthday, the child’s education background. Although there is no final count of the number of materials received, Lv Guoxing and other committee members did their best to be meticulous and not miss any material.<sup>4</sup>

### **Compilation Process**

The actual writing work was mainly completed by Xue Peifang and Lv Guoxing. Because Xue Peifang is older and in poor health condition, we cannot conduct an interview with him, so Mr. Lv Guoxing was the main interviewee. In general, Lv Guoxing thinks the process of compiling the genealogy is complex, but he also enjoys

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<sup>1</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>2</sup> Xue Qin, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Qin’s house

<sup>3</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>4</sup> Lv Guoxing, second interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lv Guoxing’s house

it. He thinks he is doing something of merit and can be appreciated by others. Even after a new edition of the genealogy and the committee was disbanded, he continued to follow up spontaneously with additional information about each family.<sup>1</sup>

First of all, Lv Guoxing got the survived old genealogy (1927) from Xue Xinglun's home, and he went all over again to get to know the basic information. Because the old genealogy was from Qing Dynasty, many parts were rotten: If there is a break in the middle, it is called a "broken head genealogy" and can only be connected from the following generation.<sup>2</sup> According to Xue Xiaoping (her husband was Xue Xinglun, died), their family possessed the only well-preserved set of old genealogy in the village at that time, with a total of 20 volumes. In 2012, the committee borrowed the old genealogy from their home for reference.<sup>3</sup> Then Lv spent half a year copying 10 of the 20 volumes by hand to get a general idea of the content and get familiar with the famous people, because only he could read them clearly. At first, he could not understand some contents of the old genealogy. However, in this process, he used his previous knowledge of Chinese literature (especially ancient Chinese) to learn information about the genealogical texts by himself and look up new words in the dictionary, but he would not go to the library to refer to relevant reference books. Lv Guoxing said if there are some words that cannot be found, he has to ignore it to complete the next task.<sup>4</sup> Xue Weihua pointed out that she worked with Xue Peifang, Xue Bojian, Xue Xinglun, Xue Dongxing, Xue Borong, Xue Bochang in the family ancestral hall. Her job was mainly to write the draft and remember the seniority and which book, for example, the east, the middle and the west three houses, each person belonged to according to the old genealogy. When she encountered a word that she did not understand, she would first ask Lv Guoxing for help.<sup>5</sup>

Then, after collecting the information of the clansmen (see the previous preparation in 3.1 for details), Lv Guoxing discussed and checked with other three members of the committee (a total of 4 people) in the ancestral hall of Xue family: one of them took the old genealogy, one of them took the materials of the clansmen, one of them took the new genealogy (Xue: 2010, and continued to build the new music), and one of them took the manuscript. While one of them read, the others checked their parts and asked any questions at any time. Since there are some differences between the materials provided by the clansman and the new genealogy in content, the committee members need to make further additions and modifications.

When the genealogy list is finished, it needs to be shown to the clansmen for review. Lv Guoxing has encountered obstacles: there was criticism of the idea of women entering the genealogy, with some opposing the idea and others supporting it. In the end, because the opponents have their own rights, Lv Guoxing eventually wrote some of the women into the genealogical texts. In addition, Lv Guoxing had a disagreement with his leaders over whether to use simplified or traditional Chinese characters. Lv Guoxing suggested using simplified Chinese characters, because many people could not read traditional Chinese characters, and modern genealogy was for modern people to read. But there were leaders who wanted to continue to use the traditional Chinese characters,

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<sup>1</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>2</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>3</sup> Xue Xiaoping, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Xiaoping's house

<sup>4</sup> Lv Guoxing, second interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lv Guoxing's house

<sup>5</sup> Xue Weihua, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Weihua's house

mainly because they wanted to make their own decisions and unify with the previous version. Finally, Lv Guoxing's suggestion was adopted.

After the discussion, Lv Guoxing claimed that he was in charge of the final draft. This part of the work is mainly checking any problems in the genealogical texts, and the workload is extremely heavy. After the overall view, he would send the first draft of the genealogy to the printing factory in Changzhou. He would print a copy and continue to check. Then, four people need to further proofread, mark the corrections, and finally need to revise 4-5 drafts.<sup>1</sup> The information provided by Lv Guoxing is roughly consistent with that of Xue Hongliang: Xue Hongliang proposed that Xue Bochang, Xue Peifang, Xue Weihua and Xue Laoer and him started to proofread in 2011, and checked the text for 3 times, which lasted 3-4 months, and then went to Changzhou printing factory for printing work.<sup>2</sup> Xue Dongxing's description was different: after the new edition was finished, it was not given to them to proofread. Only Lv Guoxing needed to check and complete it.<sup>3</sup>

Problems may appear during the compilation work, such as misprinting someone's name and birth. Some clansmen who face such problems (such as making the wives' names wrong) would reflect on of the committee, but there is no way to make immediate changes to these cases because the genealogy have already been published and copied. Lv Guoxing can only take a piece of paper attached to the genealogy related content before the next revision.<sup>4</sup> Xue Dongxing also confirmed Lv Guoxing's description: if people find any mistakes in the following parts, they can ask Lv Guoxing to correct them and attach a note so that they can modify them next time.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, after the genealogy was completed, there was a large ceremony to distribute the genealogy to the families in the clan. Although Lv Guoxing did not attend the ceremony, Xue Qin told us the whole process. People set up a big stage in Lishe Yizhuang Primary School, where there are dragon dances, dancing and other activities. The clansmen of Xue gather together for dinner, with a lively scenery. Xue Yumin from Wuxi (former Deputy Secretary-General of the Standing Committee of the Wuxi People's Congress) also came to make a speech. Xue Qin, the vice president of the Compilation Committee, also sat on the stage and made a speech. Later, the Xue clan also built Xue's ancestral temple, where villagers would come to burn incense and worship their ancestors during the Spring Festival.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Operation of Power**

After getting familiar with the whole process of compiling a genealogy, we have the following questions: why did the clan of Xue invite Lv Guoxing to compile the genealogy? What was the attitude of the clansmen towards Lu Guoxing's work (from a different clan)? Did the compilation committee provide him with financial help during this process? Was it really only Lv Guoxing who did all the compilation work? If not, who was the main author: Xue Peifang, the general editor of the Committee, or Lv Guoxing, the invited editor? After interviews, we found that the story is complicated.

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<sup>1</sup> Lv Guoxing, second interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lv Guoxing's house

<sup>2</sup> Xue Hongliang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Hongliang's house

<sup>3</sup> Xue Dongxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Dongxing's house

<sup>4</sup> Lv Guoxing, second interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lv Guoxing's house

<sup>5</sup> Xue Dongxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Dongxing's house

<sup>6</sup> Xue Qin, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Qin's house

The author divides the power operation into the following parts: 1. the planning period, the power was concentrated in the compilation committee; 2. the compilation period, the power was delegated from the compilation committee to the actual editor Xue Peifang and Lv Guoxing (the discourse power was mainly concentrated on Xue Peifang); 3. the finalization period, the power was reconcentrated in the compilation committee.

1. the planning period. The power was concentrated in the compilation committee, which arranged the detailed plan of contacting clansmen, and Lv Guoxing followed them. Lu Guoxing stated that at that time, many clansmen were working in other places, and many were reluctant to compile the genealogy because they thought it was too tired to complete all the work. Lv Guoxing was the only one hired to compile the genealogy. He followed the committee to visit newspapers and museums to find relevant materials. After the acquiring the certificate issued by the village committee, Lv Guoxing visited Wuxi Daily, Jiefang Daily and other newspapers to find related files. As the compilation committee provided the expenses, he also went to Wuxi Archives and Wuxi Museum to find all related information of Lishe Village.<sup>1</sup>

2. the compilation period. The power was delegated to Xue Peifang and Lv Guoxing, but in fact, Xue Peifang was still the final decision maker and the leader. However, most clansmen had no objection about Lv, being an outsider, compiling the genealogy. Lv Guoxing recalled that the revision process was very tedious: for 2 years, he worked from 6 am to 6 pm every day, during which he had to revise the whole paper for 3-5 times, and he had to report the work progress to his leader regularly. Lv Guoxing had a hard time compiling the genealogy, even suffered from stomach illness due to his overwork.<sup>2</sup> Xue Weihua offered a more specific explanation: Lv Guoxing compiled the genealogy for nearly two years from 2011 to December 2012. She said Lv Guoxing did not trust others for compilation and dislike others to help him due to the quality issue. He devoted himself to the work from the early morning till late night with great diligence. She also revealed that although there was no requirement for Lv to complete the project within two years, Lv was still very serious about completing the task. In the process of compilation, it was actually up to him to decide exactly how to write, because others had neither any experience nor any background knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Xue Hongliang, Xue Baofang and other clansmen also believed that Lv Guoxing is a meticulous person who completed the work of high quality. Xue Hongliang pointed out that since the clans lived together in Lishe village, they learned that Lv's genealogy was very successful, so they asked Lv Guoxing (then the chief genealogy editor of Lv's genealogy) to compile Xue's genealogy as well, due to his experience. They did not think it was wrong to ask outsiders to revise the genealogy; instead, they thought Lv Guoxing was serious about the work and completed it with high quality. Xue Hongliang did not even revise much when proofreading.<sup>4</sup> Xue Weihua also explained the reason for inviting Lv Guoxing, which was roughly in line with Lv Guoxing's claim: because Lv's genealogy had been completed three years ago, someone recommended Lv Guoxing to compile Xue's genealogy as well, due to his experience and culture background. Furthermore, the clansmen of Xue generally did not think it was unsuitable for Lv to become the one who do the work. This was mainly because many clansmen had moved away, so there were nearly no clansmen who had cultural knowledge in Lishe Village. In addition, Lv Guoxing's family had a marriage relationship with the Xue clan, so he had a

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<sup>1</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>2</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>3</sup> Xue Weihua, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Weihua's house

<sup>4</sup> Xue Hongliang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Hongliang's house

general understanding of the Xue family.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Xue Baofang did not think it was inappropriate for Lv Guoxing to do the work but only appreciated for the high quality of the genealogy.<sup>2</sup> Xue Qin and Xue Guorong also stated that the reason for hiring Lv Guoxing was his experience in completing the Lv's genealogy and his professional skill (a former Chinese teacher) to compile the genealogy.<sup>3</sup>

However, we were curious that did Lv Guoxing do all the work alone? Who finished the genealogy since Lv Guoxing quit in the end? With these questions, we visited Lv Guoxing for the third time, and he further pointed out that Xue Peifang, a teacher from Yuqi Middle School, compiled the genealogy with him. Xue Peifang was a talented student who taught Chinese, art, dance, calligraphy and many other subjects in middle school. He used to work as a clerk in the army but later returned from the army to participate in rural construction, due to the judgement of the "Right,"<sup>4</sup> and he was often the director of major shows. Lv Guoxing claimed that Xue Peifang was more capable than he was. Xue Peifang was the honorary editor at the time, and he invited Lv to join him as he was 78 years old. However, according to Lv, Xue Peifang did not do participate in actual work. In fact, it was Lv Guoxing who did most of the work.<sup>5</sup>

To some extent, Lv Guoxing's words are believable, but we can find the nuance from Xue Qin's statement. Xue Qin stated that the genealogy was mainly written by Xue Peifang and Lv Guoxing, but the division of labor was very different from Lv Guoxing's narration. Xue Qin said that in the early stage, the material integration work was completed by the both of them. However, in the later stage, Xue Peifang was responsible for proofreading and printing for more than half a year. She pointed out that Xue Peifang had the power of decision-making, so to some extent, he was Lv Guoxing's leader. Xue Peifang was mainly responsible for organizing, working on materials, dealing with the printing house, and he had some knowledge of genealogy. On the other hand, Lv Guoxing was mainly responsible for the actual compilation work.<sup>6</sup> Xue Guorong also said that Xue Peifang and Lv Guoxing were mainly responsible for the compilation work, working together as partners. It was not the case that Lv Guoxing completed all the revision work alone. On one hand, Xue Peifang collected external and internal historical data of the genealogy. On the other hand, Lv Guoxing compiled and wrote the information on paper.<sup>7</sup> Xue You also admitted that Xue and Lv did most of the practical work. In addition, since Xue Peifang was older, Lv Guoxing did more practical work.<sup>8</sup>

3. the finalization period. The power returned to the actual leader in the committee, and Lv Guoxing had no actual power of discourse, even cannot use his own preface. According to Lv Guoxing, he wrote a version of preface, while officials in Nanjing (identified by the investigation as Xue Guoan, a former member of the Central Committee of the Democratic Revolution, a deputy to Nanjing's People's Congress and a deputy governor of Yuhuatai district) also wrote a short one without in earnest. Finally, Lv Guoxing's preface was split into two parts: one part was regarded as "preface;" the other part served as an afterword. As an outsider, he eventually recalled much of his work because the head of the committee claimed that the preface needed to be written by someone

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<sup>1</sup> Xue Weihua, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Weihua's house

<sup>2</sup> Xue Baofang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Baofang's house

<sup>3</sup> Xue Guorong, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, afternoon, 2023, telephone interview

<sup>4</sup> During the Cultural Revolution, the "Left" in China referred to the proletariat, and the "Right" referred to the bourgeoisie

<sup>5</sup> Lv Guoxing, third interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>6</sup> Xue Qin, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Qin's house

<sup>7</sup> Xue Guorong, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, afternoon, 2023, telephone interview

<sup>8</sup> Xue You, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, afternoon, 2023, telephone interview

who is prestigious. When the leader did not have time to write the preface, the committee asked Lv Guoxing to write it, but he deliberately argued that he did not have time, because he thought the leader would not use his preface in the end: “the leader does not believe in the ability of ordinary people.” Later, after reading the preface written by the leaders, Lv Guoxing thought that the quality was not good at all: “the leaders did not understand classical Chinese, only cobbling together the texts from the original preface.” However, Lv Guoxing could only reply perfunctorily, claiming that the “the writing is in good quality.” He repeatedly wrote a new version of preface very carefully, and finally did not ask for any compensation. Instead, the leader received 5,000 to 8,000 RMB. On this matter, Lv Guoxing had a calm attitude: “I prefer people who are down-to-earth but not those officials who are perfunctory.”<sup>1</sup>

Xue Qin also confirmed Lv Guoxing’s results, but the reason she provided was different: Lv Guoxing had different ideas with Xue Peifang in the later stage. He thought some parts were wrong, so he finally chose to quit and withdrew part of the material.<sup>2</sup> Xue Hongliang described the final result but did not know much about the process. He said that two people were responsible for the preface: first, Xue Peifang (a junior high school teacher) was invited to write it; later, he invited the mayor of Yuhuatai District of Nanjing (Xue Guoan) to write another part of the preface, as he was an old friend of Xue Guorong.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of the compensation for Lv Guoxing, there were differences between the narrations of clansmen, due to the fact that some people did not understand this matter. Lv Guoxing claimed that he was paid 15,000 RMB for two years of work on Xue’s genealogy.<sup>4</sup> Xue Hongliang pointed out that Lv Guoxing was being hired by the compilation committee, and Xue provided the salary to him once. Meanwhile, his series of travels were also reimbursed by the compilation committee.<sup>5</sup> Xue Qin and Xue Guorong also said that they offered Lv Guoxing a little salary. On the contrary, Xue Baofang pointed out that Lv was not paid for the work, which spanned nearly three years.<sup>6</sup> Personally, the author believes that Lv Guoxing was provided a certain amount of salary, but Xue Baofang has a bad memory, and was not familiar with the actual work of the committee.

Through the above narration, we found that Lv Guoxing was not the only person who did all the work. In fact, Xue Peifang and Lv Guoxing worked together, and Xue had a more dominant position and more decision-making power in discourse. In conclusion, we can make a bold conclusion: Xue was the decision maker in the genealogical revision, but did not do the actual work, whereas Lv, on the other hand, did more of the actual writing but did not have discourse power. This also shows the power gap in the genealogical compilation process: the actual editors did not have the right to make decisions, but the leaders who did not do practical work dominated in the work.

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<sup>1</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>2</sup> Xue Qin, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Qin’s house

<sup>3</sup> Xue Hongliang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Hongliang’s house

<sup>4</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee

<sup>5</sup> Xue Hongliang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Hongliang’s house

<sup>6</sup> Xue Baofang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Baofang’s house

## **V. Comparison of Genealogy, Take Xue and Tang as an example**

### **Overview**

In the previous section, we discussed about the compilation process of the genealogy and its power operation by viewing the Xue's Genealogy. However, only relying on a single genealogy in Southern Jiangsu cannot reveal the whole picture. The author also selected the clan of Tang in Lishe Village and its genealogy for in-depth discovery. This chapter mainly compares the genealogies of Xue and Tang and explores the common process of compiling a genealogy in Southern Jiangsu, as well as the operation of power.

### **Similarity**

Through the interviews, we found that there were similarities in the compilation process among the families of Lishe Village. According to Tang Zhonghua, the initiator of the Tang family genealogy, he went to Guangzhou on a business trip and saw there were many large families in Guangzhou compiling their genealogies. Influenced by them, he came back to Lishe Village and planned to compile their own genealogies. Later, the compilation of Tang Genealogy also drove other large families (Lv, Xue and Shi) in Lishe Village to edit genealogies.<sup>1</sup> Tang Caihe also said that the clan of Tang was the first family to compile the genealogy in Lishe Village. At that time, the clansmen who came back from Shanghai saw that the family was compiling genealogy, so they came back to convene everyone to work on the genealogy. Later, all the families of the Lishe Village began the compilation work.<sup>2</sup>

According to the description of Tang Zhonghua, the ancestors of the Tang family originated in Changzhou, and later gradually divided into two branches: The North now gathers in Lishe Village and the East lives in Hong Kong, represented by Henry Tang, Hong Kong's financial secretary. Knowing that the North Branch compiled their genealogy, the East also had compiled their version, now keeping in the National Library of China, Shanghai Municipal Library and even libraries in the United States.

The genealogy was compiled from 2004 to 2006. Tang Zhonghua organized a group for compilation, whose main job was to get in touch with the clansmen outside Lishe Village and write materials. There were six people in the group: Three people were mainly responsible for writing, each responsible for a single family (large family, middle family, small family). They relied on an old genealogy which came from a family in the village: they put the old genealogy, compiled before the Japanese War of Aggression, in a pigsty that survived from the destruction of the Cultural Revolution. A woman (the author's grandaunt) was responsible for contacting the clansman and keeping accounts. Another two people were responsible for contacting the people outside Lishe Village, mainly in Wuxi, Shanghai, and Suzhou. The group worked in the Tang Zhonghua's factory with 20 RMB of salary per day.

In the process of compilation, people volunteered to raise money, and eventually raised more than 140,000 RMB. Most people were very active in donating their money, but there were also a very small number of clansmen who behave badly and often say "strange words" that are not beneficial to the compilation work (they were opposed to the genealogy, thinking that the compilation of the genealogy is of no use, and some people even quarreled with their own families about the work).

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<sup>1</sup> Tang Zhonghua, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Zhenhua Ductile Iron Piston Factory

<sup>2</sup> Tang Caihe, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, beside Tang Jiabang



The contacting process was fairly complicated: if the distance is close, people have to send someone to look for the clansmen, and if the distance is far, people have to rely on international call, which costed several thousand RMB per month. Many clansmen come from France, the United States, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. They were very enthusiastic about the compilation work and actively contacted people overseas. When getting contact with the clansmen, some people did not cooperate as they thought the compilation committee were frauds who wanted to cheat money.

The final distribution ceremony was very grand with a total of 100 tables of banquet. Almost every family bought a genealogy (300 RMB per set), and the compilation team even specially sent a set of genealogy to the clansmen living in Hong Kong. Tang Zhonghua praised the quality of the genealogy, as the six members in the team have a certain level of education, three of them even acquired high school degrees. If there are mistakes in the genealogical texts, they can only be corrected next time, because it has already been published. A family said that there was a problem in the genealogical texts (their name was falsely written), but they later found out that the it was actually correct referring to the name in the old genealogy.<sup>1</sup> However, according to Lv Guoxing, the clansmen of Tang were unsatisfied with the genealogy at that time, because the genealogy, with many mistakes, was not repaired by literate personnel.<sup>2</sup>

From the above narration, we find that there are common procedures for genealogical compilation. Firstly, there are reasons for genealogical compilation, usually imitating other families; then, there is the preparation of genealogical work, which requires gathering the fees and contacting clansmen to provide useful information. This step is the most complicated, and the compilation committee may face many obstacles. Then, there is a series of preparatory work before the dispersion, including proofreading, printing, etc. Finally, there is the distribution ceremony, where people celebrate the publication of a genealogy together. Furthermore, follow-up feedback on various issues in the genealogical texts may also appear after the publication.

### **Difference**

In fact, the main difference between Xue and Tang's genealogy is that the clan of Xue hired an outside minor intellectual to complete the actual work, whereas Tang, on the other hand, relied entirely on the clansmen themselves. This is mainly due to the fact that most of the Xue people moved out of Lishe Village so there were no people who could actually participate in the genealogical work. In contrast, most of the Tang people were still clustered around Tangjiabang (in Lishe Village). Since most of the Tang people live in Lishe Village with a small number of clansmen, 140,000 RMB was eventually raised for the compilation of the genealogy.<sup>3</sup> Most of the Xue people, especially the prestigious people, lived outside the village. As a result, the bosses raised money twice and finally raised more than 400,000 RMB to continue the compilation of genealogy. For this point, the compilation work of Xue's genealogy cost more with a better fundraising work.

Lv Guoxing had previous experience in compilation: he knew exactly where the difficulties were and found the short cut during his compilation. Lv Guoxing wrote *Lv's Genealogy* in 2008, but he was not satisfied with his work: the first volume was converted from a handwritten manuscript to an electronic version, which required typing, but the staff made many mistakes due to his pursuit of efficiency. However, he added that

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<sup>1</sup> Tang Zhonghua, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Zhenhua Ductile Iron Piston Factory

<sup>2</sup> Lv Guoxing, second interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lv Guoxing's house

<sup>3</sup> Tang Zhonghua, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Zhenhua Ductile Iron Piston Factory

electronic scanning is now available due to the technological advancement, so the quality will definitely improve. On the other hand, the clan of Tang did not invite outsiders to compile their genealogy. Even if the team of 6 people did the actual compilation, it was not as successful as Lv Guoxing, who was mainly responsible for the actual work, and Xue Peifang when they compiled *Xue's Genealogy*. According to Lv Guoxing, the clansmen of Tang thought their genealogy was of low quality and with many flaws. However, to some extent, the low quality of the *Tang's Genealogy* was not surprising as Tang was the first clan to compile genealogy in Lishe Village.<sup>1</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

### Research Conclusion

Based on case study, this paper investigates the genealogical texts and compilation activities of the clan of Xue and Tang in Lishe Village, and probes into the following questions: First, what is the common process of the compilation work? Second, how was power operated in this process? Third, compared with the traditional clan, how is the clan consciousness aroused in the new era (after “Reform and Opening Up”)? After analysis, the following conclusions are reached.

First of all, from the above description about genealogical revision, the author found that the process of genealogical compilation in Southern Jiangsu in the new era is becoming more and more standardized: the early stage includes initiation and financing; the middle stage requires the contact with clansmen in different regions by human and financial resources; next, there are professionals who actually compile the genealogy and proofread it before publication; finally, the clansmen hold a distribution ceremony to celebrate the publication of the genealogy. In particular, the clan of Xue, the main research object of this paper, had to find outsiders for genealogical compilation as most of their family members had moved out of Lishe Village, leading to a shortage of talents in the village. This reflects the professionalization and marketization of genealogy in the new era, in which intellectuals from outside families are hired to compile the genealogy. To some extent, the active aid by many clansmen during the process of compilation reflects the awakening of clan consciousness. However, after the practice, the enthusiasm gradually waned and no one continued to hold clan activities. In fact, the author found that few people in the clan was willing to do the actual compilation work: most villagers were not familiar with the actual process of genealogies, and some even did not buy a set of genealogy. This indicates that there is a huge difference between the compilation of contemporary genealogy and the compilation of traditional genealogy, that is, due to the migration of clansmen, there is no doubt that it is much more difficult to contact with clansmen and seek for financial support.

Secondly, although to some extent, the clan or family consciousness had changed, but the intrinsic nature is still similar: the pursuit of glory and power. Today, the genealogical development is more of a competition, an imitation between families. Tang Zhonghua said that he was on a business trip to Guangzhou and noticed the wave of genealogical compilation among the families there. Later, he started their own clan's genealogical compilation and established the compilation team.<sup>2</sup> While inheriting family history and encouraging descendants, traditional clans also highlight their power. Clansmen took pride in writing their names in the genealogies: only those with successful political careers could be included, while the “scum” of the clan was purged (the “expulsion” phenomenon). Contemporary genealogies are also a search for dignity and power. After the establishment of

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<sup>1</sup> Lv Guoxing, second interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lv Guoxing's house

<sup>2</sup> Tang Zhonghua, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Zhenhua Ductile Iron Piston Factory

People's Republic of China, the clan consciousness gradually fades, and the clan ceremony no longer exists, but people's vanity and desire for power still exist. Modern clans seek for prestigious ancestors when they have a certain level of power and status: similar to the practice of "Panfu" in the past, the clans flaunt their prominence when competing with other families and seeking status in society. In conclusion, the author believes that even though the current ideology has changed with modern ideas, people still hold the same underlying thoughts and care about the same things. From this point of view, the author does not believe that the contemporary genealogy is distinctive from traditional genealogy, as the nature of power remains unchanged.

Furthermore, the complex power is operated in the process of compilation. Such a huge project requires sufficient financial support and even the official support from the government. In this context, selecting the members of the compilation committee, especially the chief editor, can be a challenge, and sometimes even has to rely on outside professionals to complete the actual compilation work. This will inevitably lead to the mismatches between decision-making and actual work in terms of the right of speech and their respective economic and prestige interests in genealogical compilation, particularly in the process of organization, information collection, and distribution and publication. In any era, there are different forms of expression of power, and in contemporary genealogies, power is more directly presented.

### **Postscript**

After the "Reform and Opening Up," China entered a new stage of development and was gradually influenced by the western modern thoughts. However, traditional Chinese ideas still existed (male superiority, Principle of Feudal Moral Conduct) and was common in the contemporary genealogies. In fact, the modern clans still consider whether to include women and sons-in-law in the genealogy. Xue Hongliang believes that women are gaining equal rights in the modern world, and he supports and pushes the plan to include women in the genealogy, including his own daughter.<sup>1</sup> Tang Caihe said that they took the initiative to promote the progress of the new era by adding their daughters and sons-in-law to the genealogical texts.<sup>2</sup> But at the same time, Lv Guoxing said there were different voices. In the ancient time, only men were eligible to enter the genealogy, but with the development of the new society and the ruling of the Communist Party of China, gender equality has gradually become the mainstream voice of society, and now women including daughters can be written in the genealogy. In fact, even in the current society, there are criticisms about whether women can enter the genealogy: some clansmen are very supportive of including women in the genealogy, but others are opposed to this practice, arguing that people should follow the tradition of our ancestors. Eventually, Lv Guoxing included some women into the genealogy based on the family's decision.<sup>3</sup> In addition, some genealogies prohibit the inclusion of son-in-law, which can be reflected in the supplementary genealogy, but with the development of the society, the son-in-law gradually can be written into the genealogy. The author believes that this is also a form of expression of social progress. Genealogies are compiled in accordance with the will of the clansmen, which is a rare behavior in the traditional clans: families also acquire the right to oppose women to be included in the genealogies.

In the 21st century, the Chinese citizens became well off with the development of material life. According to the statistics provided by "Bloomberg Terminal," from the 1990s to the early 21st century, China's real GDP

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<sup>1</sup> Xue Hongliang, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 28<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Xue Hongliang's house

<sup>2</sup> Tang Caihe, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, March 1<sup>st</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, beside Tang Jiabang

<sup>3</sup> Lv Guoxing, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, forenoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishu Village Committee

grew at the fastest rate, reaching an annual growth rate of 10%.<sup>1</sup> While the material life was guaranteed, people also pursue the quality of the spiritual life, which is reflected in the activity of compilation work. The national consciousness is unprecedentedly strong in the Chinese citizens with the arousal of the clan consciousness. In addition to the genealogies of Xue, Tang, Shi and other families in Lishe Village, many clans in Southern Jiangsu began to revive their clan culture and continue the compilation of genealogies. In August 2008, Wenlin Bao of Jiangyin completed the revision of genealogy, which was completed for one and a half years by 8 seniors over 60 years old. The posterity of Bao family also restored the ancestral temple in order to rebuild and inherit the “Bao culture.”<sup>2</sup> “The Genealogy Exhibition of Prestigious Families in Southern Jiangsu” was held in Changzhou City in April 2008, displaying the genealogy of hundreds of famous clans in Wujin and Changzhou.<sup>3</sup>

After the “War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression,” the founding of the People’s Republic of China, and “the Great Cultural Revolution,” the consciousness of clan gradually faded, and the compilation of genealogical texts suspended. Until the beginning of the 21st century, the compilation work has become a wave again, to some extent, arousing the clan consciousness: around 2008, clans started their compilation work successively as a competition. This cultural activity became a wave of New Era, aiming to reflect the family’s prominence. Liu, deputy secretary of Lishe Village, pointed out that the compilation work is a social fad: when a single clan starts the work spontaneously, others follow them immediately.<sup>4</sup> Whether the compilation work is a wave or a cultural ceremony, aiming to return to tradition, and whether it makes a long-term and profound influence of clan consciousness or it is merely a short awakening, still requires the reflection by the readers and the author.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics provided by “Bloomberg Terminal,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical\\_GDP\\_of\\_China#Annual\\_GDP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_GDP_of_China#Annual_GDP)

<sup>2</sup> China News, August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008, See <http://www.chinanews.com.cn/cul/news/2008/08-27/1362865.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> Sina News, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008, See <https://news.sina.com.cn/o/2008-03-19/105413598048s.shtml>

<sup>4</sup> Deputy Secretary Liu, interview by Xue Jingchen & Lei Xiaofan, February 27<sup>th</sup>, afternoon, 2023, oral interview in person, in Lishe Village Committee