

Comparative Approach to the Historical Limitations and Lack of External Institutional Guarantee for Ancient Chinese Academies

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Abstract: As a physical educational institution, ancient Chinese academies have existed in history for thousands of years, like medieval universities in Europe, with its spiritual source as well as "highlight period" of development. However, in the revolutionary tides of modern era, they had different destinies: one to extinction, the other to revival. Thinking deeply and comparing the different historical destinies, we have found at least two main reasons: first, the increasingly utilitarian and narrow schools in knowledge production and development of the world, with the lack of the new knowledge in different disciplines due to the dominant role of humanities and the limited functions of education; second, lack of basic external system guarantee for ancient Chinese academies in the long-term autocratic imperial living environment and historical conditions, which cannot realize the freedom of thought and teaching, or provide a secure life.

Keywords: Ancient Chinese academies; Medieval universities; Development and evolution; Historical limitations; Lack of institutional guarantee

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1. Introduction

As a relatively advanced physical education institution in the ancient time, ancient Chinese academies, like European medieval universities, have experienced a long development and evolution process of thousands of years. In history, they were like organic life bodies, with their accumulated rich spiritual nourishment and certain "highlight" periods, and even met with similar survival crises. But in modern times, Ancient Chinese academies came to the crossroad, either turning into the so-called "new" western school, or disappearing in the campaign against old customs, cultures or traditions; while the medieval universities around the world became the symbols of modern civilization and the model of higher education. Is this a joke , or the doomed ends for noble or humble people?

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2. Theoretical Framework

(1) The spiritual tracing of ancient Chinese academies and Medieval Universities

It is generally believed that ancient Chinese academies were originally produced in the middle and late Tang Dynasty, and evolved from individual study houses and government academies that sorted out cultural books. From the perspective of its emergence path, the dual nature of the folk nature from the individual study house and the official nature as the government cultural academies appeared in the early days. It could not only accept the folk students, giving them considerable freedom of thought, but also could obtain the recognition of the government, and could participate in the imperial examination.

The evolution path from individual study to academy (or called "folk academy") continues the private learning spirit of the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period due to the "decline of official study". In the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, they wrote books, gave lectures, with "a hundred schools of thoughts", which broke the official academic monopoly and became a new academic atmosphere and the spiritual source of folk academies. In the Tang Dynasty, due to the Rebellion of An Lushan and Shi Siming, the official learning system declined, and the folk academies began to appear, yet at the beginning, with a very small number (only 5), which were basically in the natural growth stage. At this time, the academy showed a state of transition from the study to the academy, i.e., gradually evolving from a place of personal study and reading to a place of gathering students for lectures, academic communication and exchanges. The leap from study to academy is of great significance, and it is regarded as the precedent of modern university education, with ideological independence and freedom of lecture.

Another evolution path of academies is the transformation from the government department (yamen) of sorting out cultural classics (or called "government-run academies"). The famous Lizheng and Jixian academies in history were in the nature of the government, that is, from the institutions of the government to organize books and classics. Among them, there were such academic lecturers at the levels of Xueshi, Zhixueshi, Shijiangxueshi, Xiuzhuan, Jiaoli, Zhishu, Jiaoshu, Kanshu, etc. Their main responsibilities were mainly academic services. Although there were no specific government titles, they should "prepare consultants" and provide management functions, in a sense, similar to today's "think tank". As the Six Canon of the Tang Dynasty said: "Jixiang Academy takes care of the ancient and modern classics, to establish the grand codes of the state, and as advisers to respond. In the case of books being not found, or the talents being undiscovered, they followed the order and responded to the needs. They had the plan to apply to when, the work is feasible in the generation, compared with their talent and tested their academic. All accepted the order to write a collection of articles, the school management and classics, the end of the month into the class inside, the end of the year into the test outside." (Zhang, n.d.).

According to the research of relevant scholars, there were about 70 academies from the Rebellion of the Tang Dynasty and the beginning to the initial stage of the Five Dynasties. In addition to the 7 academies of unknown people, the other 63 can be known about their origin (Deng, 2004). Among the 63 academies, 8 were built by the imperial court, two by local academies, and the others were private or private official assistance academies. It can be said that the civil society was the main founder of the academies during this period, which was not only the result of the decline of official studies, but also reflected the lack of government intervention and the strong atmosphere of private study, which laid the gene of free discussion and lecturing.

If the ancient Chinese academies were divided into folk academies and government-run academies in nature, then the early medieval universities were different from "student universities" and "teacher universities". Student universities, represented by the University of Polonia in Italy, were more common in southern Europe at that time. Similar guild student associations were in charge of university affairs. Key matters such as the selection of professors, the amount of tuition, the semester term and the number of teaching hours were all decided by student associations. With the typical example of the University of Paris in France, it was popular in Western and Northern

Europe in the late Middle Ages. It was not controlled by the student society, and the important affairs of the school were decided by the faculty. From the perspective of the generation of these two types of universities, although the students originated in the first and the second types of university, the University of Polonia and the University of Paris were called the "mother of universities" in Europe because they belong to two categories. Especially with the passage of time, the university of students gradually declined, while the University influenced it rapidly. The University of Paris became the model or mainstream model of medieval universities.

However, either the student university or the teacher university, it was not different from the association of the teachers and students taking the oath to establish the relationship with the association; within the university, the teachers and students formulated and implemented the association constitution, independently enrolled new members to join the association, and elected spokesman or head (the president) among the members.

(2) The "highlight" period of ancient Chinese academies and medieval universities

According to the relevant records and descriptions of historical books, the author thinks that the "highlight" period of ancient Chinese academies should belong to the Song Dynasties in history, especially the Southern Song Dynasty. This inference is not only due to the prosperity of the number of academies in the Song Dynasty (perhaps not necessarily the most in absolute terms), but more importantly, the publicity of the academy spirit. The mutiny of Zhao Kuangyin, Emperor Taizu of the Song Dynasty, ended the chaotic situation of the martial people in the late Tang Dynasty. Since Song Taizu was born in turbulent times as a domineering military commander, he was always alert to guard against other commanders, and think stability of the country depends on the prosperity of culture and education; and that with music, everything is orderly; thus vigorously implementing the policy of "vitalizing literacy and restraining militancy", which had far-reaching influence on song dynasty. The Song Dynasty once became the most prosperous cultural era in Chinese history. The famous "Qingli Educational Reform" in the history of academies took place in this period and was known as the "golden age of scholars", while some Japanese scholars called it "the modern world of East Asia".

In the Song Dynasty, an important symbol of cultural and educational prosperity was the quick rise of academies. According to the History of Chinese Academies, the maximum number of academies reached more than 300 in the Song Dynasty (Deng,2004). The academy of the Song Dynasty became one of the most beautiful scenery in China's cultural and educational undertakings. "Three scholars of the early Song Dynasty", Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, "Two Chengs", Zhu Xi, Lu Jiuyuan and other Neo-Confucianism masters all presided over or studied in the academy. The temporary talent and academic prosperity were unprecedented since the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. What is particularly commendable is that the teachers and students within and between academies give lectures, and different schools of thoughts contended with one another. The famous "Goose Lake Conference" was the Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan schools, who had huge differences within Confucianism in the Southern Song Dynasty. They had an open and fierce debate on their respective philosophical views, and first opened the academy meeting, which was often discussed by later generations (Li, 2005). If we do not consider their differences from modern universities in terms of the discipline system, the true spirit of academies is to some extent even more open and inclusive than today's universities.

From the perspective of development, European medieval universities ushered in their "highlight" period around the 15th century. Due to the active participation of external forces, the number of universities during this period increased significantly, once reaching more than 80. The prosperity of medieval university has attracted famous scholars and numerous students, who gathered in from all directions around the university. Although it advocated scholasticism and tried to reconcile the contradiction between faith and reason, it just opened the way for the development of reason. They even held their own scepter as a symbol of their authority. In addition, in the medieval universities in this period, the curriculum was not fixed, according to the social needs of text, law, medicine, liberal education and professional training; and the arts, law, medicine; a relatively mature degree system gradually

established, with students finishing university courses, passing the examination, and getting "master" and "doctoral" degrees. These characteristics of teaching, system and degree have a far-reaching influence and become the direct source of modern western universities. Their cultural spirit and educational characteristics are deeply imprinted on all levels of modern western universities. By 1500, more than 60 medieval universities were still active in Europe, except for those that died dead (Zhang, 2014). However, with the exception of a few universities in Paris and Oxford, which had a large number, most medieval universities had only over 10 professors and 100 students.

(3) The decline and fall of ancient Chinese academies and the rebirth of medieval universities

The development of ancient Chinese academies to the late Qing Dynasty, with the opening of China, the influx of western ideology and culture, and the ancient Chinese academies were greatly impacted, gradually withdrawing from the stage of history in the wave of "western learning gradually to the east", and died out. The demise of ancient Chinese academies is closely related to the decline of Chinese culture in the same period.

First, it stems from the increasing rigidity and final abolition of the imperial examination system, and the overall trend of private studies declined and even died out. Ancient Chinese academies flourished and were lost in the imperial examinations. The imperial examination continued to the end of the Qing Dynasty, the form became increasingly rigid, the content of the examination was old, the ideological imprisonment of people became more severe, and the disadvantages became more and more obvious. The final abolition was inevitable. In 1905, the Qing government officially abolished the imperial examination and set up new schools, and began the modern educational reform. The academies that had existed for thousands of years gradually faded from the stage of history. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the state promoted the public movement in education, which was marked by the criticism of the film *Wu Xun Zhuan*, and the development of private schools was seriously limited. Especially with the completion of the socialist transformation, the whole society in China was characterized by "big commune and its public ownership", and some of the ancient Chinese academies as the carriers of private schools basically died out.

Secondly, the popularity of the idea of "learning from the West" and the popularization of modern education forced the transformation of ancient Chinese academies. The "Westernization Movement" in the late Qing Dynasty, beginning in the 1860s, opened the prelude to China's study of western modernization. The conflict and collision between Chinese and Western cultures brought a huge impact to the traditional culture and education, and the New Culture Movement beginning in 1915 has dealt a heavy blow to the traditional culture and education. In this process, the ancient Chinese academies, as the carrier part of the official studies, were gradually transformed into new schools, and the teaching contents were also changed from the "Four Books and Five Classics" to the modern thought and scientific and technological knowledge as the main body.

Ancient Chinese academies have experienced thousands of years from their rise, development, prosperity to their gradual extinction, with ups and downs, but what always remains unchanged is that the ancient Chinese people have been adhering to the educational tradition of worshipping culture and education.

In the process of entering the modern times, the medieval universities were also faced with the crisis of survival and the "ice age" in the history of the university development. In the medieval university, on the other hand, the autonomy tradition formed in the long-term development, in the face of the rise of modern nation state, the rapid development of capitalist economy and the wave of industrial revolution, instead of actively responding to the needs of national state and economic and social development, to make due contributions to the society, they stuck to the "ivory tower" coldly, entertainment, constantly from secular life, thus being unable to escape the fate of being marginalized.

However, the medieval university, instead of being annihilated in the torrent of history, got its new life, not only withstanding the test of history, but becoming the model of the world university through the transformation and with its long history of development, autonomy of the school tradition and free academic spirit to regain the new

life, in the development of the times. Just as the University of Paris has been revived, medieval universities like Oxford and Cambridge are still firmly at the top of the world's first-class university rankings.

3. Conclusions

After thousands of years, ancient Chinese academies have declined in the tide of generations in the world, and have failed to glow like medieval universities. Through comparison and in-depth reflection, efforts to explore the hidden reasons behind its historical development, have an important reference and enlightenment significance.

(1) The historical limitations of ancient Chinese academies

Historically, the ancient Chinese scholars' pursuit of knowledge is utilitarian, with the dominance of humanistic knowledge, which failed to differentiate the new form and systematic knowledge, and increasingly single limitations the academy education function have made the development of ancient Chinese academy difficult, with narrower road forward, finally into the "dead end".

First of all, ancient Chinese academies have been integrated with the preservation, dissemination and development of knowledge since their inception. As the carrier and spiritual sustenance of knowledge, they undoubtedly carried people's yearning and pursuit of knowledge at that time in the era of "all things are inferior, only reading is high". However, when learning (academic, art, etc.) was done for knowledge (academic, art, etc.), knowledge (academic, art, etc.) no longer became the purpose, but rather into the means of "making a living". For scholars, learning was done in order to become "officials", which became a utilitarian life goal, seeking for power. The destruction of knowledge, an ideal which historically stood in the same place as the governance represented by the monarchy, destroyed the dignity of knowledge. Once knowledge loses its due dignity, it means that the academy spirit shrinks and dwaves, and it is difficult to lead the development and progress of Chinese society. In the west, as the Palace of knowledge, medieval university, from promoting "knowledge is power" to practice "knowledge changes destiny", to today's era of knowledge economy, they have realized in the interaction with society and beyond, from the "ivory tower" to "power station", becoming the center of modern society.

Secondly, the knowledge taught by ancient Chinese academies was mainly humanistic knowledge, especially in the later period of Neo-Confucianism, when the moral tendency of knowledge became more dominant, and the academy education was further narrow into moral teaching, thus the saying "The world is clear with all sorts of knowledge; the worldly wisdom is clear with all sorts of study". So, ancient Chinese academies not only failed to differentiate the new knowledge from systematic science and experimental methods, even the knowledge of science and technology ancient China had long been taking the lead in the world was dismissed as "diabolic tricks and wicked craft", so as to have no place in the academy education, thus being unable to lead the trend or to become part of rationalism and scientific and technological progress of the world. Rationalism and the pursuit of scientific and technological progress are the growing spirit of medieval universities in the process of continuous evolution.

(2) Lack of the institutions in ancient Chinese academies

From the perspective of external institutional guarantee, the ideological system of ancient Chinese autocratic imperial power, the suppression of scholars, and the corresponding relief and guarantee of necessary rights have always made it difficult for ancient Chinese academies to obtain stable and long-term survival and development conditions.

Since the ancient Chinese academies lived under the imperial environment, "everything and everyone were under the imperial control", so they were unable to establish the corresponding necessary rights relief and protection system. Therefore, it is difficult for ancient Chinese academies to serve as an institutional entity to provide

a place for scholars to settle down, being not only unable to protect scholars, but also difficult to control their own destiny. The fate of Donglin Academy in the late Ming Dynasty is a proof (Shen & Zhang, 2010).

4. Declarations

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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