

West Lake Academy of Hangzhou in Yuan Dynasty and Reference to Contemporary Higher Education

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Abstract: At present, many Chinese colleges and universities are not accurate in their school-running orientation, their advantages and characteristics are not distinct, and even some private colleges and universities are not running well, resulting in the loss of students and the shortage of teaching funds. In order to solve the problems of the ambiguous direction of running a school and the instability of its teaching in contemporary higher education, this paper studies the history of running a school in the West Lake Academy, which is the first academy in the history of Hangzhou City. It is of great referential significance for contemporary higher education to summarize the successful experience and advantages of the West Lake Academy.

1. Introduction

The formation of school-running characteristics needs the accumulation of history, which is not summed up by a few pen-holders, nor can it be formed in a short time ^[1]. Since the Southern Song Dynasty, Hangzhou began to flourish because of being the capital, and became the political, economic and cultural center of the country. Education also developed in Hangzhou. The rulers of the Yuan Dynasty realized the importance of the rule of culture, began to respect Confucianism and canonized Confucius as the "King of the great sage and the propaganda of Literature", following the Song Dynasty system and making some improvements, such as popularizing schools. There were many schools in every county, no matter how far away in the Yuan Dynasty. Common children could be widely educated, and finally the development of national education had reached a new peak. In the Yuan Dynasty, the academy education played an important role, which was an important part of the national education system of the Yuan Dynasty, its development scale surpassed that of the Tang and Song dynasties. The success of the West Lake Academy in Hangzhou is of great significance to the contemporary university education.

2. History of the Establishment of the Academy

The West Lake Academy in Hangzhou in the Yuan Dynasty was formerly the Imperial College in the Southern Song Dynasty. It was the highest academy and the Highest Educational Administration in the Southern Song Dynasty, and before that it was the former residence of the famous General Yue Fei. The Southern Song Imperial College was founded in 1142, and abolished after the fall of Southern Song Dynasty. In 1294, The West Lake Academy was built by Provincial Judge Xu Yan on the site of the Imperial College in the Southern Song Dynasty ^[2]. The overall architectural layout of the newly-built academy was Front Temple and Rear School ^[3]. When was West Lake College built? The historical record is mixed. Tang Binglong of the Yuan Dynasty said it was in 1286; Huang Ji and Chen Ji thought it was in 1291; Chen Bi and Gong Shi-tai recorded that was the year of 1294. From this we can conclude that the West Lake Academy was built in 1294, Xu Yan took office in the same year. The government offices were built in 1291.

In a word, West Lake Academy used to be the Imperial College in the Southern Song Dynasty. It

was damaged, repaired and rebuilt in the Yuan Dynasty. It was the largest academy in Zhejiang province^[4]. During Ming Dynasty, it was changed into Renhe County School in 1378, which lasted 84 years.

3. Land and Property of the Academy

In the Yuan Dynasty, the funds for running schools in the South mainly came from land property. West Lake Academy was located in the south of the Yangtze River, in the early days of the academy, Zhu Qingzong donated 275 acres of land. In 1296, West Lake Academy received another more than 521 acres of donated land from Bureaucrat Qu. In 1319, the West Lake Academy purchased 11 hectares and 29 acres of farmland, 21 acres of mountains and 11 houses. The following year, Zhou, an official, persuaded wealthy merchants to donate money to finance the academy. He sold the rest of the academy's exquisite printed editions. He also sold the academy's surplus grain stores. With the money, they bought two farms in Wucheng of Huzhou and Kunshan of Suzhou and got a total of about 11 hectares of 30 acres of land, which can be leased every year, with a yield of 380 kilos of rice. In addition, they bought 21 acres of mountain land and 12 rooms, and the academy can get a stable rent income every year. In 1321 the academy purchased 2 hectares and 57 acres of farmland. The West Lake Academy had much field such as farmland, mountain land, housing, and so on. Farm land is the most important part, with the rental of grain as school funds. In the middle of Yuan Dynasty, the West Lake Academy had sufficient funds to ensure the smooth running of the school. West Lake Academy had more than 2000 acres of farmland, mainly from donation or purchase, Farmland was distributed in Kunshan, Yixing, Wucheng, Renhe and other counties, mostly located in today's Hangjiahu Plain. Sufficient funds is a prerequisite for the success of the West Lake Academy. To run a school, we should follow the law of higher education, raise enough funds to ensure the normal operation of teaching^[5].

4. Engraving Books and Collection

In the Song Dynasty, The technology of woodblock printing had been matured and Hangzhou became one of the three major printing centers in China, Ye Mengde of the Northern Song Dynasty said, "Today, the printing of books is done best in Hangzhou, that is better in Chengdu, and Fujian is next to it." After entering the Yuan Dynasty, Hangzhou is still one of the national book engraving centers. In the Yuan Dynasty, most of the academies were located in the south of the Yangtze River. Gu Yanwu of the Qing Dynasty commented on the Song and Yuan Academies, saying: "All the books were engraved in the academies, and were edited by Confucian Scholars. Therefore, the engraved books of the academy had three advantages: First, the president of the academy concentrated on the engraving and proofreading; Second, they pursued excellence and did not cut corners; Third, the engraved plates were kept in the academy, not in the government, so they were easy to print". Although the record of "all printed in the academy" overstated, but at least that could reflect the block-printing important status of the Yuan Dynasty Academies. The West Lake Academy was one of the best academies in the Yuan Dynasty, especially famous for its printing books.

The West Lake Academy had natural advantages in engraving books. Besides being located in Hangzhou, the central city of printing industry in China, it also had more than 200,000 pieces of old board of the Highest Educational Administration of the Southern Song Dynasty. The printing plates of the West Lake Academy were beautifully designed, the books were engraved with exquisite, so the market was welcomed and got the court's attention, and the order of the engraved books came in succession. For example, in the year of 1327, The West Wake Academy printed 348 volumes of the Wenxian Tongkao; in the year of 1342, 70 volumes of the Guochao Wenlei and 3 volumes of the catalogue were printed; and in the year of 1363, 28 volumes of the Jintuo Collection and 30 volumes of the sequel were printed.

The original meaning of the academy was where the collection of books, The West Lake Academy in the Yuan Dynasty is not only proficient in block-printing, but also a rich collection of

books known. According to the records of the rearrangement of the bibliography tablet of the West Lake Academy in Yuan Dynasty, in the beginning of the reign of Emperor Taiding, the books of the West Lake Academy were mainly arranged into four categories: classics, history, hundred schools of thought and collected works. In a short, Hangzhou was one of the printing centers in the Yuan Dynasty, and the West Lake Academy participated in the engraving, with innate advantages, the preservation of the Southern Song Dynasty Imperial College Board more than 200,000. The most influential books printed by the academy were the Wenxian Tongkao and Guochao Wenlei. The West Lake Academy has a rich collection of books, and its bibliographic compilation is scientific and reasonable.

5. Enlightenment on Running a School

Internationally, universities are generally divided into three basic types: Academic Research University, Professional and Applied Universities or Colleges, and Vocational and Technical Colleges. This classification framework is mainly based on the types of talent cultivation, which is helpful to guide the development of classification and running characteristics of colleges and universities, rather than disorderly competition and running convergence^[6]. As for any university, the discipline characteristic is its most distinct symbol, and it is the premise and the foundation which the university relies on for existence and the development. Colleges and universities should base themselves on their dominant disciplines and make themselves stronger and bigger in the dominant field.^[7] The academy of classical learning in the Yuan Dynasty was a beneficial supplement to the local government school. The West Lake Academy in Hangzhou was a local school mainly run by the local people, both public and private. It is famous for its exquisite engraving and rich collection of books. In addition to its daily educational activities, it also carries out cultural and academic activities centered on book collection and engraving, which makes an important contribution to the preservation and dissemination of cultural classics. The success of the West Lake Academy is firstly that the academy has a fixed income, and is often supported by external government and private, and has strong economic strength and sufficient funds for running a school. Secondly, it is supported by the local officials of Zhejiang province. The third reason is that the successive presidents of the West Lake Academy are well-educated and well-managed enough to be qualified for this academic undertaking.

The success of the West Lake Academy in Hangzhou in Yuan Dynasty has great reference significance to the teaching management of contemporary higher education. One of the lessons drawn from it is that running a school should seek for accurate advantage, its position should be clear. The West Lake Academy is not good at teaching quality, but is known for its block-printed books and collections, which fully excavates its predecessor and regional advantages. Contemporary university education should base itself on the present, combine its own advantages and local resources, develop its own characteristics and level. The second lesson is that there should be sufficient funds for running a school. Education is a cause that needs more capital investment, so we must have abundant capital to ensure the smooth operation of teaching. To obtain sufficient funds for running a school, we need to invest extensively and act according to the law of market value. At the same time, we should make good use of all the school-running policies, to win the care and support of the local authorities, and actively seek to encourage rich businessmen to donate financial aid. Lesson three, senior scholars should be invited to serve as teaching supervisors and professors should run the school. As the saying goes, a well-known teacher can make many good students, and a learned scholar can understand the importance of education and teaching, can understand the importance of respecting teachers and emphasis on education, can set an example by example, strict requirements, rigorously study, can improve the quality of teaching, and promote the development of academic career. The successful experience of West Lake Academy enlightens us that we should renew our ideas, break away from conventional thinking, make use of local resources, and create our own characteristics and brand according to the social market demand^[8].

6. Conclusion

After conquering the south of the Yangtze River, the Yuan Dynasty government began to attach importance to education and encouraged to set up academies. The West Lake Academy of Hangzhou was founded in 1294, finally ended in 1378, which was the earliest academy in Hangzhou city history. The West Lake Academy was formerly the Imperial College and the Supreme Educational Authority in the Southern Song Dynasty, and before that was the former residence of famous General Yue Fei. The West Lake Academy was built in the style of "Front Temple and Rear School", and the local officials supported the construction of the academy. It was the largest academy in Zhejiang Province in the Yuan Dynasty.

The West Lake Academy, with more than 2,000 acres of land in Hangjiahu Plain, had a good income from this farmland property, which ensured the smooth running of the Academy with sufficient funds. It was because of such a prominent background, the West Lake Academy engaged in engraving had obvious innate advantages, it had more than 200,000 pieces of old board of the Highest Educational Administration in the Southern Song Dynasty. The West Lake Academy was good at block-printing, and the plate-making design was exquisite. There were many engraved famous books such as Wenxian Tongkao, Guochao Wenlei and so on. At the same time, the West Lake Academy was well-known for its rich collection of books. The West Lake Academy is very successful in running a school, which is of great significance to contemporary university education. We should learn from the West Lake Academy and draw some lessons. First, we should find out the own advantages and local positioning of running a school; Second, we should raise sufficient funds for running a school; Third, we should implement the practice of professors running a school, let the professionals lead the university education work. Therefore, local colleges and universities should face the social demand, find the orientation of running a school correctly, concentrate the resources of running a school, and make it bigger and stronger in the advantageous field.

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