

The Inspiration of Private Secretary Institution of Qing Dynasty for Modern Secretary Institution Reformation in China

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Abstract: This article set out to analyze the characters of private secretary in Qing dynasty, Shiye. Through analyzing the characteristics of Shiye, this research compared the characteristics of Shiye and modern secretary institution in order to get the effective suggestions for modern China secretary institution. Results showed that Shiye's most distinctive characteristics were that they were not the officials and that they provided the efficient and professional advices to the officials who employed them. The modern governmental secretary institution in China is featured with that the secretary is the official and would be promoted easily. The Shiye's characteristics provided some positive and meaningful inspirations for modern secretary institution reformation.

Keywords: private secretary; modern secretary institution; Shiye; Qing dynasty, China.

INTRODUCTION

In current China media, the reports about the corruption of government secretaries are numerous, besides, such reports are attractive. From 2014 to 2015, there were 28 secretary-generals in China governments were found to be corrupted and punished [1]. The secretaries beside the leader in government is easily corrupted [2]. The corruption of the secretary does huge harm to social stability and national economy.

In order to analyze the problems of the current secretary institution, it is necessary to compare the current secretary institution and the previous secretary institution. The secretary institution in modern China originated from the period of the Republic of China with the features influenced greatly by the western secretary institution. However, if one investigates the secretary phenomena in modern China, one would find that the secretary institution in modern China has some similar characteristics with that of the Qing dynasty. Apparently, it is easy to understand that the modern secretary institution in China has intimate relationship with that in Qing dynasty, because the current institution is necessary to rooted in traditional institution. So it is meaningful to compare the secretary institution and modern secretary institution in China.

A considerable materials about secretary institution and secretary teaching in high schools have been published. Much of the previous research is about the sole research about the modern secretary institution or ancient secretary phenomena in China. However, the

comparison study of the current secretary institution and previous secretary institution is rare.

Qing dynasty is the last feudal dynasty in China, so the analysis of the secretary institution of it would be informative to modern secretary institution. One famous group of secretaries, Shiye, in Qing dynasty, exerted profound influenced in history of China at that times. To be definite, Shiye was a sort of private secretary of officials, especially the ministers, in that times. Among Shiye group, the most famous Shiye were those came from Shaoxing, Zhejinag province. They were so vital to the governments in Qing dynasty that someone believed that the government would not be called as the government without Shaoxing Shiye.

In this paper, we argue that the current secretary institution in China has intimate relationship with previous secretary institution in China, especially Shiye group, although the modern secretary institution seemingly mainly derived from the introduction of western secretary institution. However, the modern secretary institution also has many different characteristics from those of Qing dynasty. In the condition that many problems happened in secretary groups in recent years, it is meaningful to analyze the characteristics of Shiye institution and find the advantages and shortcomings in order to learn lessons from Shiye institution. This research sheds new light on the understanding of current secretary institution in contemporary China.

The first section of this paper will analyze the secretary institution in Qing dynasty. It will then go on to analyze the characteristics of current secretary institution in China. In the next section, the paper will discuss the advantages and shortcomings of Shiye institution in Qing dynasty and its inspirations for reformation of Secretary institution in modern China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A great deal of previous research into the secretary institution has focused on the routine works of secretary. During the past 15 years, much more academic information has been available in CNKI(China National Knowledge Infrastructure). When discuss on the ancient secretary vocation, many research materials have been focused on the origin and development of secretary vocation. Among those researches, the study about Shiye, Chinese name for secretary vocation in Qing dynasty, is most phenomenal. The vocation morality of Shiye is meaningful for modern secretary teaching [3]. The paper *The Comparison between the Functions of Shiye in Qing Dynasty and Modern Secretary* [4] is a valuable research about the secretary study, because it tried to compare the characteristics of secretary vocation in Qing dynasty and the current secretary vocation. However, the paper only listed the functions of Shiye and current secretary vocation, but not gave a detailed analysis of the inheritance of current secretary vocation from Shiye vocation.

Beside the paper discussed the inspiration of Shiye for secretary, there are some other papers specialized in Shiye phenomenon itself, for example, the paper *The Shaoxing Shiye Beside the Political VIP in Modern Times* [5], *About Shaoxing Shiye* [6]. These papers provided the valuable information for the current research.

The secretary vocation has been extensively studied. There are numerous researches about secretary vocation in China. Searching researching material about secretary vocation in CNKI, one would find more than 400 thousand articles. From the data, we can realize the importance of secretary for China. However, it can rarely find the article analyzing the lineage of ancient secretary vocation in current vocation. Most of the articles about secretary vocation research belong to biography, Chinese literature, politics and education.

One of the most influential research about the secretary vocation comestible from Xun Lei [7]. His doctoral degree thesis demonstrated that the government secretary is the power elites in modern China and the phenomenon is rational. Contrary to his research, many previous research argued that the secretary should not interfere the power. Nonetheless, Xun Lei's doctoral thesis *Study on the Mishu Power Elites in Modern China Politics* [7] indicated that the

government secretaries are the power elites in modern China with detailed account. Although his work sheds a new light on the insight into the government secretary vocation in modern China, it has not given a detailed study about the forming of the situation based on the study on ancient secretary vocation institution. But above all, his work provided valuable information for the current research.

The researches mentioned above provide important basis of this research. However, the previous researches would focus on one aspect of secretary vocation. There are rarely the comparison between modern secretary vocation and Qing dynasty secretary vocation.

The secretary vocation in Qing dynasty

The secretary vocation in Qing dynasty can be divided into two sorts: the secretary as the officials and Shiye. The former is the secretary in the governments. One typical example is the 36 secretaries in Capital Privy Council, who assisted the emperor control the army all over the country [8]. The latter are the secretaries belonged to the ministers. They are not officials because the law in Qing dynasty ruled that such secretaries who called Shiye should not be the officials. However, Shiye played an important role in the political activities.

The relationship between Shiye and ministers who employed them is not leader-member relation generally. The relationship between them was more like the friends [9]. In the festivals, the ministers would dropped in the Shiyes' houses with gifts. Such relationship means that to some extent, they were in equal and private relationship, although Shiyes accepted the salary from the ministers.

The relationship between Shiye and ministers who employed them is unique. For one reason is that Shiye was not belonged to the official circles, however, they involved in the political activities. Especially their works determined the career of the ministers. Another reason is that, as the friendship of the ministers, they were employed by the ministers. So such they were different from the modern secretaries in government and the private secretaries.

There were different Shiyes in Qing dynasty. They can be divided into the secretaries who wrote the memorial to the throne, the secretaries who focused on promotion of the ministers, the law secretaries, the finance secretaries, the documentation secretaries, the calligraphy secretaries etc. [10].

The secretaries who wrote the memorial to the throne got the most attention from the ministers. One reason is that the officials would forfeit their careers because of misuse of the language in Qing dynasty,

which is notorious for its literary inquisition. Another reason is that the ministers could easily get the favor from the bosses if the memorial was of good rhetoric. So the ministers would spend much money to employ excellent secretaries.

There were famous Shiyes in both Qing dynasty and modern times. For example, Shao Yuanchong, Sun Yat-sen's Shiye, who had been the judge, editor in chief, the committee member of the central government, was a famous Shiye in history [5]. Li Hongzhang, the famous political figure in modern times, also had his critical Shiye, who is Lou Chunfan. Lou Chunfan was proficient in law. With the proficiency, he assisted Li Hongzhang to make many strategies, and got famous [5].

Shaoxing Shiye group are the most famous Shiyes in Qing dynasty. The first Shaoxing Shiye was generally regarded as Wu Sidao, who was minister Tian Wenjing's Shiye [11]. Most of Shaoxing Shiyes were the ones who did not pass the national competition examination and therefore they learned the law. Generally Shaoxing Shiyes could be divided into two sorts: the secretaries who focused on law and the finance secretaries. But in the senior governments, Shaoxing Shiye could be divided into the secretaries who wrote the memorial to the throne, the calligraphy secretaries, the finance secretaries and the secretaries who focused on law [11].

Shaoxing Shiyes were played critical role in modern history of China. Many of them were familiar to with the law, and on the other hand, they were good at rhetoric. Both the techniques were critical to the promotion of their employers. So in modern China, they exerted great influences, which were both positive and negative [11].

Although Shaoxing Shiyes were critical in modern China, however, most of them were not promoted according to their achievement. Most of them lived in the miserable condition. The important decisions in history were not made by them. But above all, they exerted extreme influence on the decisions of the ministers. Especially, they works was critical to the promotion of the ministers.

Although Shiye can be divided into different sorts, the secretaries who wrote the memorial to the throne were the most import ones, that means the relationship between the ministers and throne was the most important to the ministers. That is easy to be understood as the promotion and the stable career of the ministers were most important. If the ministers got the excellent Shiyes, they would be promoted easily with the assistance of the Shiyes. When Zeng Guofan, a famous political figure in modern history of China, wrote one report to the throne, he wrote "we failed when we

fought every times." One of his Shiyes noticed the sentence and suggested Zeng Guofan should correct the sentence as "we fought when we failed every times." It is easily to be recognized that the later sentence implied the more positive meanings, and that would had more possibility to please the throne. One minister contributed one ink stick, on which inscribed the words *Wan Shou Wu Jiang*, which meant "long living", to the throne. One of his Shiye suggested the minister should not contribute it to the throne and that later prevented the death penal of the minister. The reason is that China ink stick should be abraded for using. The word *Jiang* was the first word to be abraded. When this word disappeared because of abrasion. The left words *Wan Shou Wu* meant "die soon". So if the throne had received the ink stick and used it, he would be extremely angry and bring death penalty to the minister. The above cases exemplified the important assistance of Shiyes for the ministers.

It is interesting that the important relationship between the ministers and emperors was about the documentation, and in the process, Shiye was critical. Some famous Shiyes were even known by the emperors. For example, when Yongzheng Emperor in Qing dynasty read the report from minister Tian Wenjing, he wrote the words on the report : "I am fine. Hi, how are you? Mr. Wu" Yongzheng Emperor knew the reports from Minister Tian Wenjing was written by Wu Sidao, Tian Wenjing's Shiye. Ever since Minister Tian Wenjing knew that Wu Sidao got attention from Yongzheng Emperor, he almost relied on Wu Sidao everything in politics.

Although Wu Sidao was so famous that he was known by the emperor, he did not became the official in Qing dynasty. That phenomenon in Qing dynasty was popular. The phenomenon was caused by the strict law that Shiye should not be the official. Since Shiye should not be the official, they could not get the salary from the government. The ministers would spend their own money to employ Shiye. The officials in Qing dynasty would get much salary compared to many previous. But other money, such as the bribe, could be got by the ministers, for employing Shiyes [12].

Characteristics of Shiye in Qing dynasty

In order to discuss the comparison between of Shiye and modern secretary, it is necessary to summarize the characteristics of Shiye in Qing dynasty.

The first characteristic of Shiye is that Shiye is important for the documentation draft. Documentation process is one of the main works of Shiye. The documentation process in that times was mainly about the documentation draft. The documentation draft could generally be divided into two sorts: the formal official business documentation and the social engagement documentation in official circle [13]. The

documentation draft was critical for the ministers, the employers of Shiyes. So the fundamental principle of documentation draft was based on the benefits of their employers. In the process, the advantage of Shiye was that they were familiar with the law, because many of Shiye studied law after they failed in the national competition examination for official career. It was easy for Shiye to handle the law problems, which could be encountered frequently in the documentation draft, especially in the court verdict draft [13].

It can be found that Shiye was involved in the social engagement in official circles. That was different from the function of modern secretaries to some extent. The documentation of social engagement was often drafted by Shiye. Such documentation about social engagement required refined and proficient rhetoric. The background of this is that in Qing dynasty, the social engagement in official circle was featured with the communication letters with delicate rhetoric. Shiye in that times should draft such documentations with proficiency. Although the ministers had passed the national competition examination, they would not be as proficient as Shiye in drafting such documentations.

The format of documentation was important for Shiye, especially the documentation drafted for the formal official business required not only rhetoric, but also the strict format. That was similar to the modern document writing of secretaries.

The paperwork management of Shiye is also similar to the work of modern secretaries. For this work, there was one special Shiye, register Shiye. Register Shiye not only registered and classified the documentations, but also urged the documentation process [13].

From the description above, we would find that works of Shiye had both similarities to and differences from modern secretaries' works. In the formal official business documentations process, Shiye's work is similar to modern secretaries' work, which included the official business documentation draft and documentation register. In the private business and social engagement in official circle, Shiye was different from the modern secretaries' duties ruled in the policy.

Shiye's involvement in the daily life of his employer is based on the fact that Shiye was not the official but the friend in the regard of many people. Beside, the relationship between them is employer-employee relationship. So as the employer, the minister could order Shiye to do many works.

Although Shiye was not the official, they could act as the official with the empowerment of the minister. That is an interesting feature of Shiye in Qing dynasty. The shrewd of Shiye and the trust of the minister would

be the cause of that phenomenon. For example, Wu Sidao, Minister Tian Wenjing's Shiye, wrote the report to throne in the condition that Tian Wenjing did not know the content of the report. His report made Tian Wenjing promoted soon. Most of Shiyes lived in a poor life, except of some famous Shiyes. The unknown Shiyes could not be promoted to be officials, nonetheless, the famous Shiyes were reluctant to be the official, because to be a famous Shiye could earn more and live safer than official [14].

Shiye's function in Qing dynasty are more than the duties of modern secretary. Beside the documentation process, they could administrate economy, be the representative in trial, be the brain truster to give advice to the employer [4]. In this perspective, we can find that Shiye in Qing dynasty would had more comprehensive function than the duties of modern secretary that mentioned in policy.

Modern secretary institution's characteristics

According to the official description, modern secretary institution in China has some familiar characteristics with those of Shiye. According to the official description, secretary is the one who mainly processes documentations. The other duties of secretary is to assist the leader to copy with the routine works, but such duties are mainly confined as the office works.

It would find that modern secretary has some similar characteristics with those of Shiye in Qing dynasty. The duties of Shiye in Qing dynasty are similar to those of the secretary in modern times.

One qualified official secretary in government should have enough capacity to write good article, and that is the most important requirement for a modern secretary. In government, the communication between different institutions relies on documentations. In other words, the documentation becomes the veins of communication in government. So the secretary should have the qualified writing abilities. On the other hand, there are numerous meetings in government, in which the leaders would read the articles when they talks. So the secretary should prepare many articles for the leader, especially in the time around spring festival, when the meetings become more (Yang Min. 2010). The leader relies on such secretary so much even that the secretary who is good at writing would not get promoted easily, because if he or she is promoted, there would no such secretary to write the articles for leader [15].

The other function of modern secretary is to assist the leader to copy with the routine works. The routine works include providing important information, accommodating the guests and even opening the car door, handling the tea pot and newspaper for the leader. That would be very complicated and trivial. Someone

divided the secretaries into two sorts: the first sort are the secretaries who write the articles for the leaders; and the second sorts is the secretaries who cope with the trivial matters for the leader. The later sort of the secretaries would have more intimate relationship with leader.

The main duties of modern secretaries are the duties mentioned above. There would be some other duties of secretaries, such as help the leader to copy with the trivial private matters. But those duties would not be the main duties of secretaries.

From the description above, we would find that the duties of modern secretary are similar to those of the Shiye in Qing dynasty. From this view point, we can say that modern secretary institution have the similar lineage with the private secretary, Shiye, in Qing dynasty.

There would be many complaints from secretaries. According to the survey, the most ordeals of secretary are coordinating the different relationships(47%), writing the speeches for leaders(44%), working for the private matters of the leader(9%) [15].

Even as the duties of secretary would be trivial and complicated, there are numerous clerks want to be secretaries. The reasons is that they can get more social respect and have more social resources.

Secretaries in governments would get prompt promotion or be involved in the corruption of the leaders. Ever since 18th National People's Congress until 2015, there was one third of the punished corrupted high rank officials above provincial and ministerial-level had been the secretaries [16]. So it would find that phenomenon is different from Shiye's situation in Qing dynasty. Shiye at that time almost have no opportunities to be promoted, but on the other hand, they would also could not be entangled in and punished by the corruption of the officials they serviced.

The relationship between secretary and leader is the superior and subordinate relationship [15]. Such relationship is different from the relationship between the officials and Shiye. This situation is determined by the government position of secretary. His or her position is official but not the employees of the officials. The salary of secretary comes from the government but not from their superior.

Although the secretary is official in government, most of the time he or she has no authority to many matters, because he or she should follow the order of the leader. One official who had been the secretary concluded that the secretary had thoughts but no opinions, had achievement but no one recognized him

or her, and the others regarded the secretary had the power but no important position, had the intentions but no corresponding requirements, had both the ability and good temperance [15].

When they get promoted after service as the secretaries, things will be different. Although the promotion of the secretaries is rebuked by many researchers [17], the promotion of secretary is recognized and has been eligible for many years [7]. Even in the eyes of many people, the secretary position is the cradle for cultivating the leader and cadre.

Some researchers assert that the secretaries are clerks but not the officials, however, in practice, they are actually officials and hold the important positions. The secretaries are commonly enrolled through state civil service examination, which is of fierce competition. The position of secretary is important is that he or she would influence the decisions of the leader, since he or she is close to the leader, and because of that, he or she would be promoted easily.

The most serious problem faced with the secretary position is corruption. Some researchers believes that the corruption is because of the power of the secretary. The power of secretary is because of that the secretary shares or misuses the power of the leader [18]. The corruption of secretary is also because of the future promotion of secretary. Because that the secretary would be easily promoted, many bribers would corrupt the secretary in order to obtain the profiteering in the future.

The inspiration of Shiye in Qing dynasty for modern secretary institution

Compared with Shiye in Qing dynasty, the most serious problem faced with the modern secretary institution is corruption, although the corruption happens in not only the secretary group, but also some other groups. In the background that China government fights with corruption, the corruption of secretary is distinctive.

The corruption of Shiye in Qing dynasty was not a serious problem, and that would be inspiring for China government's endeavor of anticorruption. The rare corruption of Shiye in Qing dynasty has the following reasons:

First, Shiye in that time had no power to be corrupted. They were not officials, and even their salaries came from the officials who employed them, but not the governments. Besides, they could not be promoted easily to be officials. So they had no opportunities to be corrupted.

Second, Shiye seldom interfered with the official power in practice. They mainly function as the advisers

of the officials. So there was no misusing of the power by Shiye. But in modern secretary institutions, the secretary functions not only as the servant but also the adviser of the leader, and the results is that the secretary would misuse the power obtained from the leader.

Third, the most advantage of Shiye in governmental practice is the function of advisor, and that provided significant assistance for the governmental administration. The officials elected through national competition examination were less because Qing dynasty cut down the number of such officials. The limited number of officials could not functioned well in administration, since their knowledge was not extensive because of the national competition examination. So Shiye became active in the assistance of administration. There were two climaxes of Shiye's employment: one was in Yongzheng period of Qing dynasty, and the other was in the period from 1840 until the revolution of 1911[19].

Shiye's knowledge was complementary to that of the officials. For example, when the examinees could not pass the national competition examination, they would then divert to learn law so as to become Shiye. The officials were commonly elected from the examinees who passed the national competition examination, which focused on investigating the master of the Confucian classics and literary knowledge. The law secretary, as one kind of Shiye in Qing dynasty, represented the trend of the professionalism of law, therefore it embodied the need of social development [20].

It would find that the Shiye institution not only provided the professional advices to government, but also prevented the corruption of Shiye group. That is inspiring to the modern secretary institution. In contemporary times, there would be many sudden and new problems, which cannot solved by the government itself. To enroll more secretaries to copy with those problems is also unrealistic, for that the secretaries would not be professional at such problems. On the other hand, enrolling so many secretaries to copy with all the problems would be extremely costly for the governments. To employ more staff, such as the researchers in the university, who are professional at such problems would be feasible and rational to solve such problems. Not only they will provide the effective advices, but also there will not be so much corresponding corruption.

Compared with modern secretary institution, the shortcoming of Shiye institution in Qing dynasty is that Qing dynasty prevented the Shiye to be promoted in most of the cases. That caused the professional staff have no power to administrate effectively and the unprofessional officials stay in the unsuitable positions. Such shortcoming exist more or less in the modern

government institution, in that the officials in China contemporary governments are mainly elected from the civil service examination. After working as the ordinary clerks in government for a period, they would be empowered as the leaders, although they would not have the professional knowledge background in the spheres they administrate in. Modern secretary institution should notice such shortcoming and overcome it.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to compare the characteristics of secretaries in Qing dynasty and modern China. The results of this comparison show that Shiye in Qing dynasty has some similar functions to modern government secretary, such as documentation process, the plotting and administration. However, compared to the modern secretary, Shiye in Qing dynasty provided the more effective advices for the employers of them, and on the other hand, they were independent from the government in the aspects of the salary and identity, therefore the corruption of them was avoid to a large extent. The institution of Shiye in Qing dynasty also had some shortcomings. The most serious is that Shiye could not be promoted commonly, and that restricted their positive functions in the administration. An implication of this is the possibility that the modern secretary institution reformation should absorb the advantageous experience and overcome its own shortcomings. These findings provided important insight into the characteristics of modern secretary institution and extended our knowledge of secretary institution in Qing dynasty. It is also meaningful in the adjusting of curriculums of secretary major of high school for the diversified knowledge and better service in the future. One strength of this research is that it reflected on modern secretary institution in the perspective of secretary institution in Qing dynasty.

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