

Past and Future of the Study on Kong Lineage Archives

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Abstract

Kong lineage archives are the valuable historical materials to study Chinese traditional feudal society, especially the Chinese history during the Ming-Qing period. It has been 60 years since the discovery of Kong lineage archives in 1956 and the studies about them have been more than one century. This paper will make a review of the studies on Kong lineage archives during the past 60 years, and summarize and reveal the previous scholars' ideas, research directions and methods, and point out limitations of previous study, and finally discuss the future of Kong lineage archives study.

Key words: Kong lineage archives; The Ming and the Qing period; Confucius lands; Confucius family

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INTRODUCTION

Kong lineage archives are the manorial archives of Confucius' lineage, which was formed from 1534 (the 13th year of Emperor Jiajing of Ming Dynasty) to 1948 and is now preserved in the Confucius Mansion of Qufu,

Shandong, China. The Kong lineage archives include tables and memorials to the throne, records of actual events in the courts and meetings, official correspondence, family rules and genealogy, land contracts and account books, letters, tickets, notice and instructions, etc. in terms of clan, society, politics, religion, economy, law, architecture and education, etc. Kong lineage archives are probably the most extensive extant on any lineage (Huang, 1979). They are the valuable historical archives to study Chinese traditional society. It has been 60 years since the discovery of Kong lineage archives in 1956 and the studies about them have been more than one century. This paper will make a review of the studies on Kong lineage archives during the past 60 years, and summarize and reveal the previous scholars' ideas, research directions and methods, and point out limitations of previous study, and finally discuss the future of Kong lineage archives study.

1. COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON KONG LINEAGE ARCHIVES

In terms of comprehensive study on Kong lineage archives, Yang (1964) is the earliest scholar who studied Kong lineage archives and made remarkable achievements. In his book *The Study of Chinese Ancient Society and Thoughts*, he made detailed analysis of the Confucius family from 9 aspects, especially from the perspective of the feudal production relation between landlord and tenant in the process of land operation of Chinese traditional society. Under Yang's supervision, his colleagues continued to make deep study on the Kong lineage archives. Two books: *The Study of Confucius Mansion—the model of large feudal aristocratic landlord* by He et al. (1981) and *The Confucius Landlord Mansion* by Qi (1982) are the most influential research achievements.

2. KONG LINEAGE ARCHIVES AND THE STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC HISTORY DURING THE MING AND THE QING PERIOD

In the past 60 years, many scholars studied the economic history during the Ming and Qing period by investigating the Confucius family and some scholars studied the social life of the Confucius family.

2.1 Confucius Land System and Tenancy Relationship

The scholars who specialize in the social economic history paid much attention to the land system and tenant relations of the Confucius lands. The scholars in the mainland tended to explain the change of economic structure of the Chinese traditional society and expose the reactionary nature of the landlord class by studying the origin, category, distribution, characteristics, management of the tenancy and the rent, exploitation in Confucius land, etc. However, Taiwan scholar Lai (2010) challenged the traditional academic idea. She thought the higher land rent of the Confucius land should not be called exploitation and the higher rent was caused by the tools offered by Confucius landlords and there was no extra forced labor and other rent burdens in the Confucius' manors.

In terms of the changes of tenancy relationship during the Ming and the Qing period, most scholars think that the changes are caused by the development of commodity economy. Some scholars think the Confucius land in that period practiced the system of "one piece of land having two owners", that is, two parties might hold property rights to the same piece of land. The system resulted from the inequality of the rent system and offered a reasonable means for the tenants to evade rent (Yang, 2013).

2.2 The Yield of the Confucius Lands

Since 90s of the 20th century, the focus of the study of economic history shifted from production relation to productive force, esp. on the study of the yield of the land. Huang (1990) inferred the yield of the Confucius land by using the crop rent records in Kong lineage archives and estimated unit yield of crops in southwestern Shandong. Guo (1995) estimated the average and highest unit yield of wheat, sorghum, corn, pea, etc. But some scholars thought their estimation is too high. For example, Li (1993) corrected the Huang's estimating method and standard and lowered his estimation by 20 jin. Different from the mainland scholars who tried to give a specific yield, American scholar, Zhao (2001) paid more attention to the change of the unit yield during Ming-Qing period. His study shows that there was considerable decline of land rent in Confucius Manors since Emperor Shunzhi of Qing

Dynasty, and the recession of land productivity or decrease of the unit yield was common phenomena.

2.3 THE Management and Dealing of Confucius Lands

Based on the tenancy contracts of the Confucius lands, Yang Guozhen is the first to study the social and economic change during Ming and Qing dynasties by using Kong lineage archives. Yang (1986) made profound research on the dealing of the Confucius' sacrificing and private lands, the form and content of tenancy contracts of Confucius lands. He pointed out that buying sacrificing and private lands in the form of contract reflected the change of landlord class in the late feudal society and private landlord's impact on the aristocratic landlord economy. The division of tenant class showed that the change of ordinary landlord and the division of land right had penetrated into the tenant relations. By studying the land contracts of Kong lineage archives, Liu (2008) pointed out that the omission of buyer's name, the date and amount of money, etc. in the contracts had the function of evading tax and avoiding risks.

2.4 The Study on the Social Life of the Confucius Family

In terms of the study on the social life of the Confucius family by using Kong lineage archives, current studies focus on the discussion of daily consumption and entertainment activities. He's book (1981) and Qi's book (1982) investigated the clothing, food, living, entertainment, funeral and spiritual life and revealed the parasitism, extravagance and self-sufficiency of the Confucius family life. Lin (1978) made detailed investigation on the concrete consumption structure in the Confucius family and thought that the consumption mainly included sacrifice, maintenance, paying tributes, bribe and living consumption. Zhang (1985) investigated the type, source and quantity of food in the Confucius family, the materials and making of some famous Confucius dishes, the Confucius diet and the system of cooking labor. Zhao (1989, 1992, 2007) made research on ceremonial activities, such as sacrifice, banquet and diet, the features of banquet, the kinds of food, cooking and banquet management system, etc.. In terms of entertainment activities in the Confucius family, Lu and Zhao (1986) investigated Kong Lingyi's (Confucius' grandson of 75th generation) opera and entertainment life and activities, expense and developmental history of theatrical troupe of Confucius family. Xu (2000) pointed out that the Confucius theatrical troupe and Duke Yansheng's love for traditional opera had great influence on Kong Shangren's (Confucius' grandson of 64th generation) writing *Peach Blossom Fan* in the form of opera.

3. KONG LINEAGE ARCHIVES AND THE STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT DURING THE MING AND QING PERIOD

Most of the studies of the political history in early years were made under the background of praising peasant uprisings and emphasizing class struggle, therefore the academic studies at that time focused on the social nature, class relation and the mass revolt. Likewise, the study on Kong lineage archives during the China's "cultural revolution" departed from the normal way of academic study and made strong political propaganda.

3.1 The Study on the Relationship Between the Confucius Family and Imperial Power

The study on the relationship between the Confucius family and imperial power or local authority is an important aspect of the study of the political history. He's book (1981) made special discussion on the relation between the Confucius family and the central government of Qing Dynasty and pointed out that Duke Yan Sheng's and Confucius thoughts are the tools for Ming and Qing rulers to maintain and consolidate their control. The emperors of Ming and Qing Dynasties took the superior policy and gave political and economic privileges to the Confucius family, and the Confucius family actively ingratiated the feudal regime to safeguard its privileges. When the Confucius family and imperial or local authority conflicted, the Confucius family would be attacked by the latter. Lin (1984) made discussion on some cases of the political and economic superiorities given by the emperors of Ming and Qing Dynasties to the Confucius family and thought that compared with Ming Dynasty, the policy of respecting and upholding Confucius adopted by Qing Dynasty had stronger political means than economic reward. Kong (1986) investigated the history of the Confucius Temple and pointed out that the building process of Confucius Temple showed that the feudal rulers respected the Confucius thoughts. Differing from most scholars, a few scholars focused on the negative effect of the feudal emperors' pilgrimage at Qufu and thought that only the government officials and gentry could get benefits from those activities, while the ordinary people suffered (Guo Songyi, 2006).

3.2 The Academic Activities of the Confucius Family

In terms of the academic activities of the Confucius family, Luo and Liang (1987) made discussions on the location, process and nature of the 24 academies controlled by the Confucius family and showed their great value in the study of academy system history. Chen (2013) investigated the Confucius scholars' academic activities during Qing Dynasty and thought that the Confucius family, land and official system had positive influence on the feudal society. Zhao (2001) investigated the cultural activities of the

Confucius family in the late Qing Dynasty and pointed out that though the educational and living way of the Confucius family had changed to some extent, the later generations of Confucius maintained family benefits, advocated Confucius doctrines and obeyed family instructions and laws in the traditional ways as their ancestors. Zhang's (2007) study pointed out that because of the political oppression of the feudal rulers, Kong Guangsen's (Confucius' grandson of the 69th generation) academic thought was greatly influenced by the imperial authority.

4. KONG LINEAGE ARCHIVES AND THE HISTORY OF LINEAGE LAW DURING THE MING AND THE QING PERIOD

The studies on the history of lineage law focus on the following three aspects: the power of Confucius family law, Confucius inheritance system and Confucius family rules and instructions.

4.1 the Power of the Confucius Family Law

He's book (1981) makes special discussion on the kinship organization of Confucius family, the family control and exploitation of the family members by Dukes Yansheng. Based on the Confucius family tree, some scholars made discussion on the formation and development of Confucius family, the level, structure and economic basis of Confucius family power, the control and economic exploitation of the family members (Bao, 1975; Zhou, 1995). It is generally believed that the Confucius family is a model of feudal family law society. Zhu (1987) pointed out that all the Confucius branch families subordinated to the head family and the Confucius family law had strong binding effect. Yuan (2013) makes further discussion on the administrative body of Confucius family, the composition, types and enforcement of family law. Some scholars investigated the positive effects of Confucius family law in the civil judicial mediation and preventing crimes (Zeng, 2009; Zhao, 2005; Hu, 2007; Xian, 2012; Wang, 2003), while some scholars noticed the negative effects of Confucius family law in damaging independence of the local judiciary (Yuan, 2005). Recently, The jurisdiction of Confucius family law has been studied in micro ways (Xu, 2004; Shii, 2008).

4.2 Inheritance System of the Confucius Family

In terms of the inheritance system of Confucius family, Xing (1995, 2012) thought that Confucius inheritance system takes the form of pyramid. He also investigates the qualifications and rights of the successor, women's family property right, distribution of property in the Confucius family. Yuan (1998) discussed inheritance system of the noble titles and thinks that the inheritance of titles in Confucius family is based on the inheriting principles of feudal kinship law. Li (2005) makes specific study on the disputes of ancestral inheritance in Confucius family.

4.3 Confucius Family Rules and Instructions

Some scholars investigated the content, features and function of Confucius family instructions and rules. Among them, some think the Confucius family rules can make the family members obey feudal national laws, maintain “three principles and five virtues” and guarantee the tax exploitation of feudal government (Zhang, 1989). And other scholars noticed the value and significance of Confucius family rules in creating and maintaining good family tradition.

5. LIMITATIONS OF PREVIOUS STUDIES ON KONG LINEAGE ARCHIVES

The academic study on Kong lineage archives has obtained great achievements, but there are some deficiencies. First, the basis of the study on Kong lineage archives is weak, the current situation is not so optimistic. This is shown by the inadequate academic achievements, narrow research field, old research direction and project, single research methods and simple and old research perspective and problem awareness, etc.. Second, there are disagreements on some basic problems in the academic circle. Kong lineage archives should be developed and used in new ways. Third, some existing research conclusions of the academic circle are superficial and even biased and need to be further studied. Many current studies are restricted to prove certain event, or object or phenomenon by using Kong lineage archives, but some issues, such as the causes of existence, operating system, the process and historical influence, etc. have not been analyzed deeply.

6. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE STUDY OF KONG LINEAGE ARCHIVES

The studies on the Kong lineage archives in the future should hold open, global and international concept, strengthen cross-discipline cooperative study and comparative study of different regions. On the one hand, it is important and emergent to strengthen communication and dialogue with, borrow the research methods and experience of other disciplines and learn about their problem awareness and research dynamics. The study on Kong lineage archives should actively take in, digest and develop the analytic tools from law, sociology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, communication, economics and folklore, etc.. On the other hand, comparative study between Kong lineage archives and other official and folk archives of other regions should be made so as to broaden the academic horizon, expand the research content, extend the research direction and widen research perspectives. In addition, the foreign academic research theories, methods and perspectives can accelerate the academic study on the

Kong lineage archives. In the global world, the study on Kong lineage archives should strengthen view-exchange, research and discussion, and communication with foreign countries. To make the study of Kong lineage archives become “the 4th Kong”, which can match with “the three Kongs” (the Confucius Mansion, the Confucius Temple, and the Confucius Cemetery), should be the new impetus for the future study.

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