MR. LIU CHENGGAN’S TRAIN OF THOUGHT BEFORE AND AFTER DONATING JIAYE TANG TO THE ZHEJIANG LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT

Jiaye Tang is a modern library, which was built by Mr. Liu Chenggan, an authority on old and rare books and a collector, beginning in 1924 at his hometown of Nanxun Township, Huzhou City. In 1951, Mr. Liu donated this library to the Zhejiang Library. The author of this paper describes the survival of the former Qing Dynasty, Mr. Liu’s train of thought that led to his generous donation of the Jiaye Tang to the Zhejiang Library, and to understand the “developing new China’s social cultural work” through further study of the archives and the letters of Mr. Liu Chenggan in his own handwriting. This paper also discusses Mr. Liu’s basic idea of the donation and the reasons for donating to the Zhejiang Library because of other factors, such as (1) his family’s tradition of giving to charities; (2) the owner’s open mentality of book collection; (3) an original relationship with the Zhejiang Library; (4) his deep love for his native hometown; (5) to have a special friendship with Mr. Zhang Zongxiang, director of the Zhejiang Library at that time.

KEYWORDS

Jiaye Tang Library Liu Chenggan Culture of Book Collection

On November 19, 1951, Mr. Liu Chenggan wrote the donation letter, which will stand forever in Chinese library history. In the letter he said: “To whom it may concern, Chenggan spends all his time concentrating on culture, searching out ancient and rare works, and builds the Jiaye Tang Library in hometown-Nanxun, which held more than one hundred thousand of books, and provided for specialized scholars to make reference and research. During that period, the Jiaye Tang Library was broken by the Japanese invaders, and parts of the collection were lost. Chenggan was old then, and stayed in Shanghai, still had no time to take care of the library even after the triumph of the Anti-Japanese War. Fortunately our People’s government appreciated cultural relics, and sent persons from the Zhejiang Library to tidy up and manage this library. What a positive thing that Chenggan’s whole desire was luckily deposited, and all the books and articles finally got their place. Therefore Chenggan was willing to donate the Jiaye Tang Library building,
the vacant area around it, all the books and the wood blocks for printing together with various facilities and equipment to the Zhejiang Library for permanent keeping, for the needs of developing new China’s social cultural work. Thanks to understand Chenggan’s enthusiasm for this donation and hope to get your positive reply of acceptance. For the books in Qiushu Studio, are all copies for reference, not belong to this library. Once they were in the Shanghai flat, but had to be transferred to Jiaye Tang when Chenggan’s sons sold out the flat in Shanghai. Chenggan asked that the self-printed books, lithography and letterpress printed books, inscription and rubbing, calligraphy and paintings were brought back, which could be reported to the government. Yours sincerely, Liu Chenggan. Nov. 19th, 1951”.

Obviously, Liu Chenggan’s politics are quite conservative. He was only 31 years old when the Qing Dynasty was overthrown, but his emotional ties to the survival of this past seems never to be released. For example, in the Jiaye Tang Library we can see “the list of donors in 1928”, “the list of donors in 1929”, which were delivered by “the Qing’s office in Tianjin”. On the lists, which recorded “how much money was donated to whom”, “who got a vertical-hung writing of Fu (福, Happy) and Shou (寿, Longevity)”, “who got a Scroll for Spring Festival”, “Tong Xi Han Yi Jing Qing - namely Liu Chenggan, was designated to receive the donations”. All the above showed that until the year of 1928 and 1929, Mr. Liu Chenggan was still ardently doing things for the last emperor - Puyi, and was well trusted by him. Making a comprehensive view of Mr. Liu Chenggan’s whole life, the examples that can manifest his emotional ties to the survival of the past are innumerable. However, how does Mr. Liu Chenggan come through the ideological struggle changing from preserving the previous regime to be a person who can generously turn his private treasure to be public, and donate “the extraction of his whole life’s mental exertion” – the Jiaye Library for “the developing of the new China’s social cultural work.”

On May 7, 1949, when the Chinese People’s Liberation Army was about to liberate the South Yangtze River Area, Comrade Zhou Enlai gave an order: “Giving special protection to the Jiaye Library to show the respect for culture.” In late June, as soon as Jiaxing was liberated, the county committee received Comrade Zhou Enlai’s instructions transferred from the Prefectural and the Provincial Party Committees, to the first company of Jiaxing’s independent battalion to Nanxun and to carry out the task of protecting the Jiaye Library. Mr. Liu Chenggan, living in Shanghai then, didn’t quite understand about that. On September 27, 1949, Mr. Liu Chenggan wrote a letter to Mr. Zhang Yuanji and told him that the Jiaye Library was taken over by the People’s Liberation Army, and asked him to transfer his request to the Government that he wanted the army withdraw from the Jiaye Library. On October 30, Mr. Zhang Yuanji’s reply arrived, “You should report to vice-mayor, Mr. Wei Que about the taken-over things. Jiaye Library is in Zhejiang’s territory, and it’s beyond the responsibility of Shanghai military administration area, so this thing should be reported to Zhejiang Provincial government for solving this problem. In my opinion, this thing is about the protection of culture,
and you can state it according to the facts, then asked to return it back, which could not be turned down." Mr. Liu Chenggan could not understand the Communist Party and the People’s Army’s intention of protecting the cultural inheritance during the war. Since the 1930s, although the Jiaye Tang Library survived the war, it was occupied continually by army’s of Japanese invaders and Kuomintang. As the owner of the Jiaye Tang Library, Mr. Liu Chenggan could only sign over the building: “Since the Anti-Japanese War till now, the building was taken over by one army and another, it’s nearly impossible to get in and have a look. The Jiaye Tang Library is lost to its owner.”

We do not know whether Liu Chenggan followed Mr. Zhang Yuanji’s advice to make a report regarding the situation of the Jiaye Tang Library to the Zhejiang Provincial People’s Government. But on March 27, 1951, Mr. Liu Chenggan received a letter from Mr. Wang Datie, vice curator of the Jiaxing Library, and he received the information that the Jiaxing Prefectural Government office commissioners had designated the Jiaxing Library to sort and to make an inventory of the Jiaye Tang Library’s collection. Then, Mr. Liu Chenggan changed his mind about asking the army to withdraw instead of requiring the government to purchase his library. In the letter to Mr. Liu Chenggan, Mr. Wang Datie told Mr. Liu Chenggan about the present situation of the Jiaye Library, and he also asked Mr. Liu for the keys to the bookcases, the situation of the rare books and the Yongle Dadian, and the quantity of titles and the catalogues of the collection. On April 3, Mr. Liu Chenggan replied to Mr. Wang’s letter and said: “It’s really satisfied my wish that Mr. Wang was appointed to manage the checking work. I’m over seventy, and my family possessions are all used up. What I’m worried about is means of support in my future days. If the library can be bought by the government, my whole life’s mental-exertion would not be wasted.”

Mr. Liu Chenggan also wrote letters to Mr. Tan Zhenglin-Chairman of the Zhejiang Provincial People’s Government, to the Jiaxing Prefectural Government office of commissioner, and to Mr. Zhang Yuanji, Mr. Zhang Zongxiang, Mr. Mao Chunxiang, etc. The contents of these letters may be generalized to the following three main points: firstly, he complained that “he was at the end of his resources,” and using the Qu’s Tieqintongjian Library in Changshu as an example he asked the government to purchase the library in Jiaye Tang for conservation. Secondly, he was willing to donate all the wood blocks for printing to the government. Thirdly, he requested the return of the copies in the Qiushu Studio, the self-printed books, stone rubbing inscriptions, calligraphy and paintings.

However, Mr. Zhang Yuanji indicated in his reply letter to Mr. Liu Chenggan on October 22: “Though the library of Qu’s in Changshu could be taken as an example, the purchasing was because of the fact that the books in Tieqintongjian Library had won universal praise few decades. The rare books collection in your library may weigh the same as in the Tieqintongjian Library, but there was no catalogue of the books for reference, even if the government was willing to purchase. Furthermore, the provincial government hadn’t arranged the budget for the pur-
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chase, if it was forced to add the budget by central government, which was not in accordance with the present governmental system.”

At that time, there really was not any bibliography that could completely show the storage status of the Jiaye Tang Library. In the history of the Jiaye Tang Library, Mr. Miao Quansun, Mr. Wu Changshou, and Mr. Dongkang had been compiling the Jiaye Tang Library’s early or late Chronical Records, but unfortunately all of which had not been finalized. Mr. Zhou Zimei and Mr. Shi Yunqiu compiled the Library Book Catalogue in Jiaye Tang, Catalogue of the Rare Books of Ming’s Edition in Jiaye Tang when they were in the Jiaye Tang Library. But in the course from prosperity to decadence, the Jiaye Tang Library nearly lost all its precious rare books. Therefore, the catalogues also lost their functionality for retrieval. No one knew how many books were in the Jiaye Library. So Mr. Wang Datie asked Mr. Liu Chenggan in his letter: “Whether the good editions of ancient and rare books, and the Yongle Dadian were still in the Jiaye Library? How many titles of books are there? And what’s the catalogue of all these books.” Mr. Zheng Zhendu, who was the chief of the Cultural Heritage Bureau in the Cultural Ministry, knew about the missing materials from the Jiaye library, since he had been associated with Mr. Liu Chenggan several times in the Literature Conservation Association from April, 1940 to April, 1941. He had visited Mr. Liu’s house in Shanghai, where he also had browsed thousands of titles of rare books, which were transferred from Nanxun’s Jiaye Tang Library. At last, on behalf of the National Central Library, he purchased over 1,200 titles of the Ming’s edition and 36 titles of transcriptions. Nevertheless he also did not have any idea of the missing materials situation of Liu’s other library collection. Even Mr. Liu Chenggan himself was unaware of his own library. In 1937, Mr. Shi Yunqiu transferred parts of the Jiaye Tang’s books to the third floor of Liu’s house at No. 203, Nanxun, to protect them from the Japanese bombardment. But what were these books and how many, Mr. Liu Chenggan did not know. When Mr. Shi Yunqiu passed away, it remained a secret to Mr. Liu. What is more, Mr. Liu Chenggan had not been able to return to his hometown, Nanxun, since the beginning of the Anti-Japanese War. He could not tell how heavy the losses were when the Library encountered so many wars. For example, he insisted on trying to reclaim the calligraphy and paintings, but they had already disappeared long ago. In such a situation, the government did not know how to evaluate the library and how to price it. Mr. Liu Chenggan admitted that in 1950, the Central People’s Government really had sent someone to Shanghai to contact him about the purchasing of the library. But the transaction turned out to be unsuccessful for the reason that there was no catalogue of the books for reference, even if the government was willing to purchase them.

In late April, 1951, the Zhejiang Provincial Cultural and Educational Department designated the Zhejiang Library together with the Jiaxing Library to help Mr. Liu manage the Jiaye Library. One thing had happened during this period. Mr. Liu Chenggan’s hoped for request for purchasing the library became a soap bubble. That is the so-called “First Book” event. The workers found a strange thing
when they were sorting the library collections, almost all the first volumes or the last volumes in every set of the books was missing. In their working report, they considered that: “Mr. Liu Chenggan had a premeditated activity”, “To make every set books in complete so that it will be useless”. In the age of “Taking class struggle as the key link”, the result of this action could be easily understood. On October 5, the Culture Ministry issued a document: “All the books in Nanxun Liu’s Jiaye Library should be taken over by the People’s Government. The requested thing of purchase could be ignored. Being the former owner of the library, Mr. Liu Chenggan destroyed the books on purpose, should be informed formally by the local government and not to do such kind of things. If being found have any serious cases, he should be sent to the local people’s court according to the law. For the hidden book collection, which should be found out.” As a matter of fact, early on April 3, in the letter to Mr. Wang Datie, Mr. Liu Chenggan had told him that parts of his library books were transferred to his own house to avoid the Japanese bombardment, and asked the workers to bring them together, but he really did not know the detailed list of these transferred books. Although Mr. Wang Datie had reported this matter to the Jiaxing Prefectural Government office commissioner, the work was not carried out, and no one connected these transferred books with the “First Book” event, thus the injustice to Mr. Liu Chenggan was not redressed.

According to the archive in the Zhejiang Library, the Culture Ministry’s established guideline for disposal of the Jiaye Tang has been, “Persuade the owner to donate” since July, 1951. On March 28, the Zhejiang Library delivered a report to the Zhejiang Provincial Cultural and Educational Department to warrant and obtain the library relics of Liu’s library in Nanxun and Fuyan Xia’s library. In this report, the library in Jiaye Tang was treated as a landowner’s library, and confiscation was requested and obtained. On July 19, 1951, the Zhejiang Provincial Cultural and Educational Department issued document no. 14580 to the Zhejiang Library: “According to the Central People’s Government Culture Ministry’s no.131 document, the reply to your request is as follows: in accordance with prescription of the 2nd article, 2nd chapter in the Agrarian Reform Act., and the supplementary explanation of the last section, 4th article of the Report on the Questions of Agrarian Reform given by Vice-Chairman Mr. Liu Shaoqi on June 14, 1950, Liu’s library shouldn’t be confiscated, but taken over and helping manage by Zhejiang Library together with Jiaxing Library, and then waited for the chance to persuade the owner to donate. Hereby informed, wish you to deal with it discreetly.” Considering the decision “waiting for the chance to persuade him to donate after taking over”, there seems to be some hope, but “taking over by the government, ignoring the purchase” is definitely confirmed.

Certainly, Mr. Liu Chenggan was not able to have knowledge of the contents of the Culture Ministry’s document, but Mr. Zhang Yuanji’s letter really reminded him that: there was no way to purchase. Moreover, there was a historical tendency to turn the private into the public. Like the streams flow into the sea, donating the private collection to the State was the history current at that time. Taking the
Tieqintongjian Library as an example, on January 11, 1950, Mr. Zheng Zhenduo wrote a letter to praise Mr. Qu Jicang, Mr. Qu Xuhe, and Mr. Qu Fengqi: “I feel quite delighted to be able to your house and read your books. Your Tieqintongjian library, has been handed it down for five generations, and came across over one hundred years. It was indeed the most complete treasury of the private library at home. You gentlemen, turning the private to be the public, donated 52 titles of 1816 volumes of the Song’s, Yuan’s, and Ming’s editions and transcriptions to the Central People’s Government. I really appreciate your such admirable activity. Your enthusiasm of protecting the culture and trusting the government, should be seen and admired by all the people in the world. Hereby express my deep thanks.”

Considering the situation, Mr. Liu Chenggan decided to take the historic step. It is not an easy thing for one person to donate his whole life’s work to the State and the People. The pressing situation was an external reason. However, the internal cause seems to be a more important factor. When we analyze Mr. Liu Chenggan’s fundamental train of thought regarding the donation to the Zhejiang Library for “developing new China’s social cultural work,” especially the following points can not be ignored.

Firstly, Mr. Liu’s family had the tradition of gladly giving to charities. Mr. Liu Chenggan’s grandfather, Mr. Liu Yong had always engaged himself in disaster relief and been doing good deeds since he became rich. He enjoyed a good reputation in his hometown, Nanxun, and became famous throughout the country, just like a philanthropist in the late Qing dynasty. Mr. Liu Chenggan’s father, Mr. Liu Jinzao and Mr. Liu Chenggan himself, were rich people and were enthusiastic about charity. Being generous, doing good deeds, and requiting society are the traditions of Liu’s three generations. The arches, in memory of Mr. Liu’s family’s almsdeeds are still at the front of Liu’s family temple in Nanxun’s Xiaolianzhuang. Although the arches were set up by Imperial decree, it affirmed from another side the contribution of Mr. Liu’s family to society.

Secondly, Mr. Liu Chenggan was a master great book collector. As the top leader of bibliophiles in recent history, Mr. Liu Chenggan knew full well that knowledge is public and of the world, and was well aware of the current history of collected books being used by society after the foundation of the public library could not be held up. Therefore, anyone, no matter public or private, who was in need of doing research, found the doors of the Jiaye Library always open. Nevertheless, Mr. Liu Chenggan spent a great deal of money to carve and print rare ancient Chinese books, in order to make many copies for the use of scholars. He never carved and printed books for the purpose of making a profit. In fact sometimes he would not even sell his books. For example, once Mr. Lu Xun called him to buy a copy, but his request was in vain. However, Liu was quite generous when it came to giving to libraries and scholars. As a result, Mr. Liu Chenggan got the name of “Sha Gongzi.”

Thirdly, Mr. Liu Chenggan had a deep affection for his hometown. In 1911, Mr. Liu Chenggan moved to Shanghai with his family, but in 1920, he still chose
his hometown, Nanxun, as the place for building the Jiaye Library. He collected, carved and printed ancient books, especially the valuable local literature, which expressed his affection to his hometown. His relationship with the Zhejiang Library, can be traced to the 1920s when he provided financing to help Wenlange supplement the Sikuquanshu. In 1936, the Zhejiang Library held an exhibition of Zhejiang Literature, which got Mr. Liu Chenggan’s great support. He provided the manuscripts, the books with collations, transcriptions with a total 48 titles. He was one of the private book-collectors, who provided the largest collection. In 1951, right before donating the Jiaye Tang Library, Mr. Zheng Zhenduo had a discussion with Mr. Wang Yeqiu, who was the vice-minister of the Eastern Culture Ministry about that, and they had the idea of taking over of the Jiaye Library for the Nanjing Library. But Mr. Liu Chenggan finally donated the library to the Zhejiang Library, since Zhejiang was his home.

Fourthly, Mr. Liu Chenggan had a deep friendship with Mr. Zhang Zongxiang (curator of the Zhejiang Library). Based on Lengseng Zibian Nianpu (A chronical of Mr. Zhang Zongxiang’s life), in 1927, Mr. Zhang Zongxiang “lived in Shanghai, doing transcribing and proof reading work, he got Mr. Liu Chenggan’s book of Zui Wei Lu, which was written by Mr. Zha Dongshan, then he knew that this book was written on the base of Zhuang’s Ming Shi. Unfortunately, Zui Wei Lu was broken and diverted, so he collated it and transcribed. In 1929, Mr. Zhang Zongxiang was invited by Mr. Liu Chenggan to help and compile the geography records of Huangqingxu Wenxian Tongkao.” Mr. Liu Chenggan was fond of being acquainted with experts and scholars, and having such an old friend as Mr. Zhang Zongxiang for decades. Therefore, he could not be more pleased than to donate to the Zhejiang Library.

Hereby I have to point out that Mr. Liu Chenggan’s donation of the Jiaye Library to the Zhejiang Library had his own consideration in mind. He wanted to get back the duplicate books, his self-printed books, lithographs and lead letter printed books, inscriptions and rubbings, and calligraphy and paintings. According to the letter, which Mr Liu Chenggan wrote to the Zhejiang Library on August 25, 1957, “I’m quite prudent on the matter of donating, and associated with you by letter, requested to return back the duplicated books and self-printed books and got your confirmed reply. So I formally wrote the donating letter, and stated seriously again to return the books.” We cannot find any related letters of association and reply in the present files in the Zhejiang Library, but the response must be real. Regrettably, the promise Mr. Liu Chenggan formerly got from the Zhejiang Library finally came to nothing.
REFERENCES

1. The original files are kept in the archives of the Zhejiang Library. Hereinafter without authorship, is the same as above.
2. The letter from Mr. Liu Chenggan written to the Zhejiang Library on August 25, 1957.
6. The letter Liu Chenggan wrote to Zhang Zongxiang on July 26, 1951.
7. The original files are kept in the Jiaying Library.
8. The general report of checking the collections in the Jiaying Library by Mao Chunxiang and so on. October 17, 1951.
   (Author’s note: there is no year indicated in this letter. According to The Letters of Zhang Yuanji, he put this letter in the year of 1949 by speculating the writings “thirty eight years”, but that is wrong. For the event that the Jiaying regional office of commissioner send some person to Jiaye Tang happened in March, 1951, and Mr. Liu Chenggan was informed about this thing by the Mei Wang Datie during that period.)
10. The original files are kept in the Jiaying Library.
12. The no. 21096 secret telegram sent in 1951 by the Zhejiang Provincial Cultural and Educational Department.
13. The no. 14580 secret document issued in 1951 by the Zhejiang Provincial Cultural and Educational Department.
17. The reply letter to Liu Chenggan by the Zhejiang Library on November 28, 1951.

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