

# A Review of the Researches on Liu Guyu

Xiaoning Wang

School of Historical Culture and Tourism  
Xi'an University  
Xi'an, China 710065

**Abstract**—Liu Guyu, a great Confucian in late Qing Dynasty, is always concerned and respected by people due to his historical influence on the social, economic, educational and cultural fields of development in Shaanxi and even the Northwest of China. The academic circles have always been studying his thoughts and practical activities and have obtained fruitful achievements. On the basis of combing the existing research achievements, this paper analyzes the characteristics of researches on Liu Guyu and points out the focus of future researches on him, in order to enrich the researches on Liu Guyu and explore the historical wisdom bred in Liu Guyu's thought.

**Keywords**—Guanzhong School; Liu Guyu; educational thought; contribution

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the process of social transformation in the modern society of Shaanxi, the role of intellectuals represented by Liu Guyu was continuously concerned by the academic circles. Especially since the 1980s, the academic circles have carried out various researches on Liu Guyu's thoughts and practical activities, and fully revealed Liu Guyu's historical contribution and influence on the development of social economy, education and cultural undertakings in Shaanxi and even the Northwest China. However, the existing research results mostly focus on one aspect of Liu Guyu's thought or practice, and lack a systematic research. Based on the existing research results, this paper analyzes the characteristics of researches on Liu Guyu and explores the focus of future research related, in order to help making further systematic researches on Liu Guyu.

## II. LIU GUYU AS A GREAT CONFUCIAN

As a Confucian, Liu Guyu not only inherited the Guanzhong School in local culture of the Northwest of China, but also made innovation on Guanzhong School to some extent.

### A. To the Development of Guanzhong School

Scholars Wu Zhanjiang and Yin Shengnan<sup>1</sup> pointed out that Liu Guyu is the enlightener and leader of the modernization of ideological and cultural culture in the

Shaanxi-Gansu region. The transformation of his thought has the commonality of his contemporaries, and also has the characteristics of the local scholars different from scholars in Southeast China. The same as scholars in the Southeast of China, the local scholars were also exploring for cultural transformation in confronting with the strong political, military, and cultural challenges from foreign countries in order to save the national crisis of China. The difference is that in the process of ideological transformation, Liu Guyu absorbed more from the traditional practical science thoughts and the "practical use" spirit of Guanzhong cultural academic tradition rather than measuring and "cutting" traditional culture in a Western theory such as evolutionism. Liu Guyu's thoughts can also be regarded as a transformation and leap of practical science and Guanzhong School in the process of coping with Western challenges.

Zhao Xinbo<sup>2</sup> believes that Guanzhong School pursues to be practical and advocates practical use. This kind of proposition has become the code of conduct for scholars to settle down and get on with their pursuit. Liu Guyu studied in Guanzhong Academy in his early years and studied under Huang Pengnian. He was deeply enlightened and influenced by the thought of Guanzhong School, and devoted himself to the practice of saving the country through education and industry and commerce, reflecting the responsibility and duties of scholars. Through extensive social practice, his thoughts of experience was further consolidated and deepened, which has had a profound impact on the development and inheritance of modern thought of Guanzhong School. Liu Guyu always practiced the spirit of Guanzhong School, pursuing for practice, in the position of a poor scholar. This noble sense should become a monument standing at the beginning of the modern history of Shaanxi and even China, for the future generations to admire and introspect.

Zhang Yong<sup>3</sup> wrote that Liu Guyu was an important figure in the Shaanxi-Gansu reform movement and ideological enlightenment during the late Qing Dynasty. He inherited the Confucian tradition of Guanzhong School and conducted a series of educational and social practices. Liu Guyu advocated the idea of strengthening the country and educating the people, taking learning as the policy, and

<sup>1</sup> Wu Zhanjiang, Yin Shengnan. Traditional Resources and Modern Transformation — Speaking from Liu Guyu. Journal of Xianyang Normal University. No. 6, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Zhao Xinbo. Study on Liu Guyu's Thoughts of Practical Use from the Perspective of Guan School. Human world. No. 10, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Zhang Yong. Liu Guyu's Country Feelings and Educational Practice. Journal of Xianyang Normal University. No. 6, 2017.

promoting all the people to learn, and promoting practical learning and abandoning virtual learning, so that he became the forerunner and practitioner of the reform movement in the northwest region at that time.

Scholar Wei Dong<sup>4</sup> believed that Liu Guyu agreed to incorporate Wang Zheng into the "Guanzhong School Volume", which was an innovative breakthrough from the concept of Guanzhong School in the opinion of Guanzhong School historians since Feng Congwu on the basis of actual conditions of Guanzhong School at that times and reflected his effort made to both respect tradition and try to make innovation on the basis of actual status. This provides a new meaning direction for redefining the connotation of Guanzhong School in the times and keeping on describe the history of Guanzhong School after neo-Confucianism (a Confucian school of idealist philosophy of the Song and Ming Dynasties) gradually lost the mainstream ideological status: namely, the understanding of Guanzhong School in the times of post-neo-Confucianism should break through the traditional understanding of "Guanzhong School is neo-Confucianism in Guanzhong region", practically recognize the way of Confucius and Mencius, inherit the spirit of traditional Guanzhong School, especially regard the academics relevant to Zhang Zai's theory, vein of thoughts and style of study as the specific manifestation of Guanzhong School in modern times.

#### B. The Terminator of Guanzhong School

Wu Zhanjiang<sup>5</sup> believes that Guanzhong School is a neo-Confucianism in Guanzhong region as initiated by Zhang Zai and experienced the establishment in Song Dynasty, the maintenance in Yuan and Ming Dynasties, and the expansion in Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the ending in Qing Dynasty. Li Erqu developed Guanzhong School to a new era when science was combined with practice mutually. Under the impetus of the spirit of practical learning, Liu Guyu actively studied and publicized new learning, thus ended the Guanzhong School. Lin Lechang<sup>6</sup> clearly stated that the realization of Guanzhong School's modern transformation meant the ending of Guanzhong School. Hereby, Liu Guyu, the person who realized the modern transformation of Guanzhong School in Qing Dynasty, should be selected as the representative of the terminators of Guanzhong School.

Xiao Farong<sup>7</sup> pointed out that Liu Guyu was a key figure in the process of modern transformation of Guanzhong School and affirmed that Liu Guyu had an important position and influence in the development history of Guanzhong culture in modern times. He believed that Liu Guyu always

encouraged himself based on was statecraft and was thus highly praised by the intellectual circles of late Qing Dynasty. The edification of Guanzhong School's cultural traditions, the help of teachers and friends, the stimulation of the state crisis, and the pursuit of learning for saving the country and are all important reasons for the formation of Liu Guyu's statecraft. Driven by the belief of putting statecraft into practice and learning for saving the country, Liu Guyu actively devoted himself to the practice of saving the country through education and engaging in industry. He dedicated his entire life to the progressive cause of Shaanxi and even the whole northwest of China.

### III. LIU GUYU AS AN EDUCATIONIST

Liu Guyu was a famous great statecraft Confucian and also a patriotic educator in Shaanxi and even the entire northwest of China in modern times. As a scholar, Liu Guyu put his studies into practical use, engaged in education for decades, and made outstanding contributions to the development of education in Shaanxi and even in the northwest of China. The main focus of the academic circles is to make multi-dimensional and multi-level researches on Liu Guyu's educational thoughts and practical activities.

#### A. Liu Guyu's Educational Thought

Liang Di<sup>8</sup> pointed out that, as a famous educator in modern China, Liu Guyu took education as the main way to carry out social reform with the hope to seek for the way to save the country. Being formed in the special historical background, Liu Guyu's educational thought always focused on patriotism, insisted that education should be popularized among ordinary people in order to improve people's quality, and also advocated practical learning in opposite to Chinese traditional virtual learning. This thought generated great influence during the transition of Chinese society from the traditional period to the modern era. In particular, Liu Guyu took the initiative in Shaanxi and cultivated a large number of patriots and academic talents, and made great contribution to the modernization of China.

As Chen Shize<sup>9</sup> emphasized, Liu Guyu as a leading figure in promoting modern education in Shaanxi advocated running school to save the country. He took practical education and all-people education as the core educational thought, put education into practice by establishing educational institutions, and posed a deep and longlasting influence and important role in the education in Guanzhong region in modern era.

Lv Xiaozu<sup>10</sup> combed the education and publishing undertakings that Liu Guyu engaged in throughout his life, especially his major teaching schools "Jingan Academy" and

<sup>4</sup> Wei Dong. The Meaning Orientation of Liu Guyu and Wang Zheng's Study of Neo-Confucianism Developed in Central Shaanxi Area A preliminary discussion of the development and trend of the concept of Guanxue in the post neo-Confucianism era. Journal of Xianyang Normal University. No. 1, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Zhao Jihui, Zhao Fujie. Zhang Zai's Guan School and Realology. Xi'an Map Publishing House. 2000, p431.

<sup>6</sup> Lin Lechang. Zhang Zai's Science and Literature Exploration. People's Publishing House. 2016, p158.

<sup>7</sup> Xiao Farong. The Elementary Research on the thought of Liu Guyu's Saving Country and People. Xidu Forum. Vol. 19, 2017 (A).

<sup>8</sup> Liang Di. Discussion on Liu Guyu's Educational Thoughts. Journal of Shaanxi Xueqian Normal University. No. 5, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Chen Shize, Zhang Xudong, Wang Hao. The Influence and Role of Liu Guyu's "Education of Practical Science and Education for All People" on the Education in Guanzhong Region. China Educational Technology & Equipment. No. 3, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Lv Xiaozu. Biography of Liu Guyu. Journal of Xianyang Teachers College, No. 5, 2000.

"Weijing Academy", and his practice of being recruited as general teacher of the Lanzhou University in his later years, and pointed out that Liu Guyu made contribution to the development and prosperity of Shaanxi's publishing industry.

Ding Huaizhi<sup>11</sup> believed that Liu Guyu's educational thought is mainly embodied in his teaching reform practice. His spirit of advocating for practical learning was both reflected in the teaching form, content and method, and the reform of management system. This spirit is precisely what to be learnt by today's educators.

Zhou Peizhen believed that Liu Guyu drew from the Western modern educational views, reformed traditional education, advocated practical learning, practical use of knowledge and saving the country through education, and emphasized the popularization of rural education to comprehensively improve the quality of national culture during his 30 years of teaching in Guanzhong and Lanzhou. On the basis of grasping the specific historical period of modern social transformation, this paper discusses Liu Guyu's educational thoughts from the aspects of educational teleology, functional theory and value theory.<sup>12</sup> Liu Guyu taught in Gansu Language Higher School and other schools. His open-minded greater education view and educational thoughts which integrates politics and religion, combines Chinese and Western, and combines school education and social education, had a far-reaching influence on the undeveloped society and education in Gansu.<sup>13</sup>

#### B. Women Education Thought

Xiao Farong<sup>14</sup> pointed out that Liu Guyu was a famous great statecraft Confucian and patriotic educator in Shaanxi and even the entire northwest of China in modern times. In the practice of education, he paid enough attention to women's education. He believed that women's education was not rised in the west and introduced to China but be an inherent education mode in China. It was emphasized that women's education and social development are closely related to the education of young children. He also put forward his own conceptions on the selection of women education teachers, teaching content and tuitions. Although his practice in women's education finally failed, he always insisted on the ideal of making Chinese people literate. His multi-level elucidation of the importance of women's education and his efforts made to run school for women's education had played a leading role in the modern women's education in Shaanxi, and thus could be called the pioneer in the exploration of modern women's education in Shaanxi.

#### C. Social Education Thought

Mao Hongfang<sup>15</sup> revealed the educational wisdom and practical knowledge that Liu Guyu condensed in his educational practice, from perspectives of the formation of Liu Guyu's educational thoughts, the determination of his educational ideas, the generation of his educational concept, and the practice of his educational behavior. Zhou Peizhen<sup>16</sup> held that Liu Guyu's social education thoughts include the political and religious thoughts of the integration of politics and religion, the social education thoughts of influencing the people and forming moral customs, and the thoughts of women's education and military education, with the hope of saving the country by revitalizing social education. This is worthy of recognition.

#### IV. THE REFORM LEADER LIU GUYU

During the Reform Movement of 1898 led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, with respect to the leader of the enlightenment of thoughts, there was a saying of "Kang in the South and Liu in the North" in China. Liu Zhiyuan<sup>17</sup> believed that Liu Guyu, who was known as the "Liu in the North", had engaged in education for more than 30 years, and cultivated more than 1,000 patriotic talents having modern scientific knowledge such as Yu Youren, Zhang Jiluan and Li Yizhi, for promoting the independence and prosperity of China. Those talents had made tremendous contributions to the liberation of Chinese people. Zhang Chi<sup>18</sup> maintained that Liu Guyu was a unique bourgeois reformist different from Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. He lived in countryside, did not pin his hope on the emperor, but practically propagated reform thought and cultivated reform talents, run schools, influenced the people and changed the customs, and also responded to and supported the Reform Movement, and thus was worthy of being called a leader of the reform in countryside. Hence, there is no wonder that people compared him to Kang Youwei and hence the saying of "Kang in the South and Liu in the North". Although Liu Guyu was in a humble position and his popularity was far less than that of Kang Youwei and others, "Kang in the South and Liu in the North" (one was a leader in the court and the other one was in countryside) precisely comprehensively represented the two aspects of bourgeois reformist. Thereby, Liu Guyu deserved to be titled like this.

Meanwhile, Li Hu<sup>19</sup> thought that "Kang in the South and Liu in the North" referred to the two figures' academic status and influence before the Reform Movement, rather than their political status in the Reform Movement, and in the Reform

<sup>11</sup> Ding Huaizhi. Liu Gu-yu's Teaching Reform. Journal of Xianyang Normal University. No. 3, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Zhou Peizhen. Liu Guyu's Educational Thoughts. Journal of Northwest Normal University (Social Sciences). No. 6, 1994.

<sup>13</sup> Zhou Peizhen. Liu Guyu and Gansu Language Higher School. The Silk Road. No. 3, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Xiao Farong, Shi Liqin. On Liu Gu-yu Thought on Women's Education, Tangdu Journal, No. 3, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Mao Hongfang. Retrospect and Revelation: The Formation of Liu Guyu's Personal Education Philosophy. Science and Technology Guide. No. 29, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Zhou Peizhen. Liu Guyu's Theory of Social Education Thoughts. Gansu Social Sciences. No. 3, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Liu Zhiyuan. Thinking about Liu Guyu's Patriotic Education Thoughts. Lantai World", No. 5, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Zhang Chi. Liu Guyu: The Little-known Leader of the Rural Reformers. Reference for Middle School Teaching. No. 10, 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Li Hu. Several Questions on Liu Guyu's Evaluation. Journal of Xianyang Teachers College, No. 10, 1995.

Movement, Liu Guyu cannot be spoken in the same breath with Kang Youwei.

## V. OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS OF LIU GUYU

### A. *Liu Guyu's Economic Thought*

Wu Zhanjiang and et al<sup>20</sup> believed that Liu Guyu systematically summed up and criticized the traditional economic thoughts and comprehensively corrected Confucianism's thought of emphasizing agriculture and restricting commerce from the aspects of the relationship between benevolence and consume goods and justice, and the relationship between rationality and desire, and proposed an economic idea with modern significance, in the second half of the 19th century. Hence, Liu Guyu deserved to have a place in the history of modern economic thought.

### B. *For the Modern Book Publishing Undertakings in Shaanxi*

Bai Junli<sup>21</sup> pointed out that Liu Guyu's main contribution to the book business in the late Qing Dynasty was to increase the literature and books, to publish books, to preserve and introduce Chinese and foreign natural science books and periodicals, to write a lot of valuable literature materials, to vigorously promote science and technology, and to cultivate the country for the country. The talents of a large number of pillars directly or indirectly promote the development of the library business.

### C. *For the Modern Journalism in Shaanxi*

Liang Jingxu<sup>22</sup> believed that the "Shiwuzhai Record" created by Liu Guyu was the first newspaper emerged in modern Shaanxi and was also the first journal in modern China. This is worthy of recording no matter in the modern history of Shaanxi and in the history of Chinese journalism. This Record actively spread the progressive ideological trend of the reform movement, cultivated a large number of reform fighters for Shaanxi and Reform Movement of 1898 led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, such as participants of the Reform Movement, Chen Tao, Zhang Pengyi, and Xiao Zhongxiu, and actively promoted the development of progressive trend in Shaanxi and even the entire China. At the same time, Liu Guyu also cultivated a large number of outstanding journalism talents for Shaanxi and even the entire China, while organizing students to create the Record.

## VI. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCHES ON LIU GUYU

In general, the academic circles' researches on Liu Guyu present the following characteristics:

There are already research achievements, and many points to be concerned by scholars. For the researches on Liu Guyu's thoughts, people paid more attention to his educational thoughts. The research on educational thought mainly focuses on the formation, content, historical influence and significance of Liu Guyu's educational thought. The research achievements not only highlight Liu Guyu's concern and practice on new learning, but also pay attention to manifesting the idea of saving the country from the practice of education and teaching. It fully demonstrates the richness and timeliness of Liu Guyu's educational thoughts. At the same time, some scholars also made researches on Liu Guyu's family tree and his lineage. There was no biography about Liu Guyu in the "History of Qing Dynasty". Hence, studying Liu Guyu's family tree has become a reliable way to understand Liu Guyu. Fan Xuye<sup>23</sup> pointed out that there are two kinds of Liu Guyu's family tree at present, but none of them clearly reflected the lineage of Liu Guyu, and there are many errors. He compared the family lineage and family tree as provided by Liu Guyu in the Shaanxi Township Test Papers, and corrected relevant errors. Liu Xiaohua<sup>24</sup> and et al pointed out that there was a complete set of Liu Guyu's epitaph, which was detailed and complete and had very high historical value. They cut off the sentence and punctuated the original text of the epitaph and then published it. This provided historical basis for the study of Liu Guyu in the academic circles.

All the research results are brought together, highlighting the long duration of researches on Liu Guyu and the variety of the research achievements. Scholars have made researches on Liu Guyu since 1980s. And according to the retrieved results on CNKI, there have already been fruitful research achievements. As far as the form of achievement is concerned, they are not only published on monographs but also published on magazine, journal and academic thesis. At present, there are nine related works that can be retrieved and sixty-six journal articles. There are also several academic dissertations. All the achievements show Liu Guyu's outstanding contributions in the modern northwest region of China in different forms.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Although the academic circles have carried out multi-dimensional and multi-level researches on Liu Guyu, and obtained fruitful achievement, it is still necessary and possible to make in-depth researches on Liu Guyu's contribution to modern Shaanxi and even the northwest region of China, for example to make research on Liu Guyu's academy educational thought. Liu Guyu graduated from Guanzhong Academy. After leaving the Academy and failed to pass an imperial examination, Liu Guyu swore to engage in educational activities. His main practical activity was to teach in academy. Liu Guyu successively taught in academies in Xi'an, Weinan, Sanyuan, Jingyang and

<sup>20</sup> Wu Zhanjiang, Wang Guiqiao. A Review of Liu Guyu's Economic Thoughts. Journal of Xidian University. No. 3, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Bai Junli. Liu Guyu's Contribution to the Book Industry in Late Qing Dynasty. Shushan Journal. No. 3, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Liang Jingxu. Liu Guyu and "Shiwuzhai Record". Friends of Journal. No. 4, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> Fan Xuye. Textual Research on Liu Gu-yu's Family Tree and His Lineage. Journal of Xianyang Normal University. No. 3, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Liu Xiaohua, Li Jinghuan. Consideration of Liu Guyu's Epitaph and His Life. Relics and Museology. No.6, 1999.



Lanzhou. Especially during his period of taking charge of the Jingyang Weijing Academy and Chongshi Academy, under the instruction of his educational ideology of strict management system and practical use of knowledge, Weijing Academy and Chongshi Academy occupied the leading position in Guanzhong region at that time, and titled in the same level as Guanzhong Academy. During his teaching in Gansu University Hall, he continued his academic idea of putting knowledge into practical use, which is not only very beneficial to cultural education in Northwest China and also buried reform seeds for the Northwest China to an in-depth and extensive extent.<sup>25</sup> His rich educational thoughts and practical activities are to be continuously collected and sorted out.

Another example is Liu Guyu's educational management thought. Liu Guyu paid great attention to self management of students. The famous journalist Zhang Jiluan once was a student of Liu Guyu. When talking about Liu Guyu's management on students, he said that nowadays school autonomy is emphasized and has already been implemented by Liu Guyu. Students are divided into two classes according to their age, and one person is selected each day to manage class affairs. In the great lecture twice a month, the older students will be selected to receive learners outside the academy, and the younger students will be responsible for tapping the watchman's clapper and summoning all students. Zhang Jiluan once was responsible for knocking on the watchman's clapper. Although watchman's clapper is tapped outdoor and it is cold outdoor, the fun brought by it can rarely be experienced. After many years, it is still fresh in his memory.<sup>26</sup> This kind of management method letting older student to lead younger students is an embodiment of the concept of mutual help between teacher and teachers as advocated by Liu Guyu. In daily management, students write "record" every day; the record includes the time of getting up every day, the time of rest in the evening, the books read (including Chinese and foreign languages), the part that he read to, the problems that he encountered in reading, the newspapers that he looked and whether the content is relevant to China, the persons that he encountered and their talking content and so on. The record will be handed over to teacher for review and be handed over to supervisor of the academy for review at the end of each month. The results of review will be announced and punishment and award will be determined accordingly.<sup>27</sup> This kind of record is not only a way of self management of students but also to let students think and realize self realization in the record. Liu Guyu's academic thought and education management thought have great reference to today's school management and student education.

<sup>25</sup> Editorial Committee of "Selected Notes on Liu Guyu's Educational Papers. Selected Notes on Liu Guyu's Educational Papers. Shaanxi People's Publishing House. 1988. Preface. p1.

<sup>26</sup> The editorial office of Shaanxi Education Journal. Selected Materials of Shaanxi Education Journal (B). Shaanxi People's Publishing House. 1988, p2.

<sup>27</sup> Tang Zhijun, Chen Zuen, Tang Renze. Education in Wuxu Period. Shanghai Educational Publishing House. 2007, p375.

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