

Collectors and Museum Construction in Modern China

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Abstract—Since China entered the modern times after the Opium War, China's museum construction has been gradually established and grown up under the influence of western countries. From the private museum “Nantong Museum” originally funded by the Chinese to many large-scale modern museums funded by the government, the donations and funds provided by many folk collectors, in addition to national policy and fund support, are also the important force for the development and construction of museums. Those collectors are not only collectors of cultural relics but also builders of museums. Taking the collectors who have made important contributions to the development of Chinese museums in modern times as the research objects, this paper discusses them and the museum construction in China.

Keywords—modern times; collectors; museums; construction

I. INTRODUCTION

With the continuous development of China's economy, cultural industry is also showing a growth trend, and the vigorous development of cultural industry is not only reflected in the continuous increase in the number of museums funded by the state, but also in the ever-increasing number of museums initiated by the folk people. “Nantong Museum”, which was founded by the famous educator, industrialist and collector Zhang Jian and is the first museum funded by Chinese people, is a private museum. Since then, the museum industry in China has gradually developed. It can be seen from the history of the development of Chinese museums that since the founding of Nantong Museum in 1905, folk collectors have played an important role in the construction of museums. They either donate their collections or invest in museum construction, becoming considerable museum builders.

II. MODERN COLLECTORS AND EARLY MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION

After the Opium War, the Western artillery fire opened the door of China governed by Qing government who avoided having contacts with other countries; followed by, a group of advanced intellectuals who “opened their eyes to the world” began to learn from the West. They either traveled and studied abroad or made visits abroad, and were exposed to many modern science and culture. Museum as a new thing in the West was also spread to China at this time. In 1905, Nantong Museum was constructed under the fund from Zhang Jian, mainly displayed his own collections, and

is the first museum founded by Chinese people. After that, Duan Fang, the Governor of Jiangnan and Jiangxi regions, founded the Dow Museum based on his private collections. Those cases are just the initial explorations of Chinese people on museum, but it is so precisely because of the active pioneering of the predecessors that China's museum industry began to emerge and gradually develop. Although China's museum was still in its infancy at that time, the early museum founders were “crossing the river by feeling the stones”, laid a good foundation for the development of museum industry in China, and accumulated valuable experiences.

III. MODERN COLLECTORS AND STATE-OWNED MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION

Since modern times, many talented collectors have come forth, such as Rong Geng, Qian Jingtang, Hong Murong, etc. They are not only famous collectors, but also well-known scholars. Many of them engaged in collecting not only for their love, but also for protecting China's historical and cultural artistic treasures; they went around here and there and actively repurchased back the lost cultural relics from overseas. They not only donated their own collections of cultural relics, but also went deep into the folks, and recovered a large number of cultural relics from the waste recycling station, etc., which largely avoided the loss of national treasures. As for the ownership of those cultural relics, it is just as Zhang Shucheng said, “the problem of ownership of cultural relics was not properly solved in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal old China; however nowadays, it is a time of prosperity and peace, ‘the cultural relics can be preserved for long term only by the state’”. Those collectors are not only saying this, but also doing in this way.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, descendants of the famous collector Pang Yuanji either donated or sold his collections of cultural relics such as paintings and calligraphies to many local cultural relics institutions, such as the paintings and calligraphies of Wang Mian, Dong Qichang, Ren Renfa, Zhou Chen, Ni Zan, Qian Xuan, Qiu Ying, Tang Yin, Wen Zhengming, Dai Jin, etc., and the Ke Si Lian Tang Ru Ya Tu (缙丝莲塘乳鸭图) painted by Zhu Kerou (North Song Dynasty) currently collected in Shanghai Museum. The Nanjing Museum totally accepted 257 kinds of and 257 pieces of cultural relics donated by Pang Yuanji's descendants; among which, there are many works of Zhao Ji, Xia Gui, Huang Gongwang, Ni Zan, Shen

Zhou, Qiu Ying, Wen Zhengming and others. In addition to the paintings of Xuzhai flown overseas, most cultural relics collected by Pang Yuanji collected in the Palace Museum, Nanjing Museum, Shanghai Museum, Suzhou Museum and other major museums. [1]

Similar to Pang Yuanji, Ye Gongchuo and his family also supported the museum undertakings in China very much. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, Pang Yuanji had donated more than 3,000 copies of ancient books collected by him to Shanghai Hezhong Library. After the founding of New China, they even successively donated their collections to major cultural relic institutions; among them, 38 pieces of the collections are collected in the Palace Museum. The epigraphy specialist Rong Geng also donated his collections of calligraphies and paintings, bronzes, rare books and the only gold book "Luan Shu Fou (隶书缶)" to the country.

The well-known patriots and couple Zhang Boju and Pan Su are also praised far and wide in the collection circle. They successively donated a large number of their collections of calligraphies and famous paintings to many cultural and museum institutions, including Lu Ji's printed copy "Ping Fu Tie (平复帖)", Zhang Ziqian's painting "You Chun Tu (游春图)", Zhao Ji's painting "Xue Jiang Gui Zhao Tu (雪江归棹图)" and the like which can be called the treasures in the history of Chinese art, as well as excellent calligraphies and paintings of Li Bai, Du Mu, Fan Zhongyan, Cai Xiang, Huang Tingjian and others. In 1972, he was hired as a librarian of the Central Literature and History Museum. From 1962 to 1966, he served as the deputy researcher and associate director of Jilin Museum. During this period, he donated his collection of (South Song Dynasty) Yang Jieyu's scroll painting "Bai Hua Tu (百花图)" and another more than 30 pieces of treasures to Jilin Museum [2], which greatly enriched the collections and exhibitions in the museum.

The famous collection connoisseur Zhang Shucheng successively donated 455 pieces of various fine cultural relics to Tianjin Art Museum, including the (Song Dynasty) Fan Kuan's painting "Xue Ye Han Lin Tu (雪夜寒林图)", (Yuan Dynasty) Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy "Luo Shen Fu (洛神赋)", (Ming Dynasty) Qiu Ying's painting "Tao Yuan Xian Jing Tu (桃源仙境图)" and so on.

Numismatologist Luo Bozhao not only donated all the ancient money he collected to National Museum of China, but also actively collected ancient money and again donated the collected ancient money to Shanghai Museum. The money types such as Xin Bi Shi Yi Zhu (新币十一铢), Tian Sheng Tie Mu (天圣铁母), Shao Sheng Bei Shi (绍圣背施), Jing Kang Zhe Er (靖康折二), "Min Yong Long Tong Bao (闽永隆通宝)" iron coins, and "Tian Ce Fu Bao (天策府宝)" golden copper coins donated by him are all rare treasures. After he passed away, his descendants followed his will and donated his collection of ancient money to Shanghai Museum and Sichuan Museum. The well-known painting and calligraphy appraisal collector Qian Jingtang also successively donated a large number of famous paintings and calligraphies from his collection to the cultural and museum units in Zhejiang, Shanghai, Nanjing and Guangdong.

IV. MODERN COLLECTORS AND NON-STATE-OWNED MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China's museum undertaking had been constantly developing; by the end of 2016, there had been 4,873 registered museums nationwide, including 1,297 non-state-owned museums, accounting for 26.6%, equivalent to one in every four museums. [3] According to clause 3, Article 2 of the latest "Management Measures for Museums", "Museums established by using or mainly using non-state-owned cultural relics, specimens, materials and other assets are non-state-owned museums". The non-state-owned museums defined here are the so-called private museums. From the perspective of the investors, such museums are not funded by the state; from the perspective of affiliation relation; such museums are not part of the national system and cultural relics system. With the continuous development of museum undertaking in China, non-state-owned museums nationwide have been increasing in quantity, and are becoming a force to be reckoned with in the Chinese museum system. With the in-depth development of reform and opening up, a large number of cultural relic collectors have emerged in China's collection circle, including founders of many famous private museums. Those collectors have also made contribution to China's cultural relic conservation.

In 1991, the first large-scale private modern art museum in China, Yanhuang Art Museum, was officially completed and opened to the public. This Museum was funded by the famous painter and collector Huang Zhou. In order to build the museum, Huang Zhou donated more than a thousand pieces of ancient artifacts, paintings and calligraphies collected by him. Up to 2013, the museum had collected more than 6,000 pieces of calligraphies and paintings, porcelains, (Ming Dynasty) furniture, stationery accessories and contemporary works of art, including (Ming Dynasty) Dai Jin's painting "Xue Ye Fang Dai Tu (雪夜访戴图)", Wen Zhengming's calligraphy "Running Script", Tang Yin's painting "Flowers", and held many themes of exhibitions such as "Going Into Dunhuang" and "Original Tracing - Exhibition of Ancient Landscape Painting Copies". In 1996, Ma Weidu founded the first private museum in New China, Guanfu Museum of Classical Art, and the construction of non-state-owned museums in China started again. Zhao Tailai, a British overseas Chinese, has engaged in collecting for dozens of years and has accumulated a large number of cultural relics such as calligraphies and paintings and ceramics. Over the years, he has successively donated more than 60,000 pieces of cultural relics to the motherland, with a total price of more than 800 million Yuan. Later, he established the Xinghe Zhaotailai Wenbo Art Museum to better display his collections.

Kaiyuan Museum of Hunan Province (formerly, the Kaiyuan Collection House of Hunan Province) was founded by the famous collector and entrepreneur Huang Binrong. Huang Binrong made great contribution to the collection of horizontal inscribed board. Over the years, he has worked tirelessly and rushed all over the country, spent huge time and energy to find and rescue the ancient plaques that are on the verge of disappearing. At the same time, he also collected

more than 30,000 pieces of ancient cultural relics including silverware and furnitures. With the continuous expansion in the number of cultural relics, Huang Binrong began to prepare for the establishment of the museum, hoping to show those precious cultural heritages to the public. To this end, he first founded the Kaiyuan Antiques Collection House, and later founded the Kaiyuan Collection House of Hunan Province in Changsha. In September 2010, Kaiyuan Museum of Hunan Province was officially founded. This is the largest non-state-owned museum in Hunan Province approved by Hunan Provincial Administration of Cultural Heritage and Department of Civil Affairs of Hunan Province. Less than a year after opening, Kaiyuan Museum had been selected as one of China's Top Ten Private Museums by the First China Private Museum Sustainable Development Forum. The reason why the museum can achieve such a huge achievement in such a short period of time largely lies in the exquisite collection in the museum in addition to the careful management of Mr. Huang Binrong. As of 2003, there had been 18 sets of national first-level cultural relics, 41 sets of national second-level cultural relics, 502 sets of national third-level cultural relics, and 3,830 sets of general cultural relics.

Known as the first person rescuing Chinese folk culture, Wang Yongchao invested nearly 300 million Yuan in collecting and rescuing more than 30,000 pieces of folk cultural relics such as folk houses, stone carvings, brick carvings and wood carvings, and collected a large number of intangible cultural heritages in the Guanzhong region. His collections of thousands of stone-carving hitching posts and forty sets of (Ming and Qing Dynasties) folk houses even witnessed the thousands of years of history of Guanzhong region, have profound cultural values and are known as the "terracotta warriors on the ground" and "national cultural gene warehouse and specimen library", and "the world's spectacle treasures." In order to better protect and integrate those precious folk cultural resources, Wang Yongchao founded the Guanzhong Folk Art Museum and personally constructed China's folk culture.

In addition, the Huaxia History Museum created by Chinese outstanding appraiser Hong Murong, the Xinghe Zhaotailai Wenbo Art Museum founded by Zhao Tailai, and the Yue Culture Museum in Zhejiang and so on are outstanding representatives of China's non-state-owned museums. For the love for Chinese traditional culture and art, those collectors spent a lot of time and money in the collection activities. As the number of cultural relics in their collections constantly expands, some of them began to prepare for the establishment of museums, hoping to show those precious collections to people to serve the society in addition to for the purpose of collecting their collections. To this end, those collectors became an important force in the construction of private museums. Those non-state-owned museums not only bear the responsibility of protecting traditional Chinese cultural art, but also actively carry out rich and diverse activities such as exchange exhibitions, cultural education and academic exchange forums. Some museums also established close ties with schools and became traditional Chinese cultural education bases.

Chinese collectors mainly made the following three aspects of contribution to the construction of museums: first, providing museums with their own collections of artworks, such as Zhang Boju, Luo Bozhao, Wang Shixiang and et al; second, funding for and participating in the construction of museums, such as the Xi'an Qujiang Art Museum funded by Hong Kong enterprises, the Luoyang Jinshi Wenzhi Museum created by Zhu Xiaojie and Zhu Xiaohui, the Datang Xishi Museum funded by Jiaxin Group; third, funding for and participating in the construction of museums and taking their own collections as the major exhibits, such as the Guanfu Museum created by Ma Weidu, Jianchuan museum created by Fan Jianchuan, Huaxia History Museum created by Hong Murong and Xinghe Zhaotailai Wenbo Art Museum established by Zhao Tailai.

V. CONCLUSION

Since the establishment of the first non-state-owned museum in modern China, its development and construction have always been inseparable from the folk collectors. The collections of those collectors not only preserved a large number of artifacts, inscriptions, calligraphies and paintings, rare books of ancient books, and so on, such as the Great Yu Tripod, Xiping Shijing, "Luo Shen Fu Tu", "Ping Fu Tie" and other ancient treasures. Many of the collectors collect cultural relics not only for their hobbies, but also in strong patriotic emotions. They made every endeavor and rushed around to protect China's cultural heritages. It is precisely because of the unremitting efforts of those benevolent people that more cultural relics were not destroyed or lost overseas in the war. In addition to repurchasing back cultural relics, they also recorded the cultural relics for research and inheritance, and their contribution to Chinese cultural relics was enormous.

Those collectors had rich and diverse collections; and they were not selfish, and even rushed around in times of national crisis to save cultural relics on the verge of peril. After the founding of New China, they even selflessly contributed their collections to museum construction. Just as Zhang Boju said, "my collections may not be always owned by me; it is hoped to get them survived always and passed down to generation and generation". The patriotism and selfless dedication quality of those collectors are the most precious treasures in the collection circle. Modern collectors of China have also inherited the outstanding qualities of the older generation, and got their collections either donated to the country or shown to the public, providing the public with valuable historical and cultural wealth.

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