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Clarification on the Key Points, Value Evaluation and Reflection on Pi Xirui's 皮錫瑞 Historical View in *The History of Classical Learning* 經學歷史

——Take the golden era and the mid-decline era as an example

Yuanzhen Zhu

摘要

皮錫瑞建立的經學史觀，標舉的是以漢代學術、今文經為核心的歷史。在《經學歷史》中，他用「經學十期」向我們展現了經學遞變發展的邏輯，也告訴我們經學是一個時代發展的正指標，二者是相輔相成的關係。

本文從「極盛」與「中衰」兩個時期總結出了六個經學核心要點，前三者「重經術」、「明實修」、「輕利祿」偏向於統治者、仕人階級的角度；後三者「存大體」、「守師法」、「重顯門」側重於學者的研究層面。此六者對於當時的學術而言，有其價值與意義，此外，其在歷史的環境中的可實行性及影響因素也值得被納入考量。

起初，統治者「重視經術」，但後期因為「學術」與「功名利祿」相掛鉤，人數激增，教學質量下降，「經術之重」也日趨偏離；「明實修」、「輕利祿」也因受到政治因素、社會風氣的影響而無法實行；對於經學研究而言，正是因為漢末師法、家法混同雜糅，所以皮氏呼籲「守師法」、「重顯門」，而且古文家文字浩繁，故「存大體」有其實行的必要。但我們也應該瞭解，正是因為統治者重視經學，後世學生人數才會激增，家法逐步增多、繁雜而相互攻擊，鄭玄才遍注群經，統合今古文。在當時的背景下，雖然部分要點只是一種「理想化」的理論狀態，無法徹底施行，但是皮氏的觀點對我們今人仍有重要的啟示意義。

通過對皮錫瑞經學核心要義、價值判斷及經學史觀的釐清與反思，我們可以瞭解到，無論是看待人物還是事件，我們都應該將自身從中抽離出來，用客觀的態度，從多個角度進行評析（歷史環境、利弊得失等），避免以個人的意見對某事、某人產生偏見而影響其真實的價值。

1. Introduction

The historical view that Pi Xirui held is based on classical learning of Han Dynasty and the school of Jinwen classics 今文經. In *The History of Classical Learning* 經學歷史, he uses ‘Ten Periods of Classics 經學十期’ to show us the logic of the gradual development of classics, and also told us that classics is a positive indicator of development of an era, and the two are complementary. When an era is prosperous and at peace, the study of classics will be prosperous as well; if the study of classics declines, it has been questioned, challenged and defeated, which also reflects the falling of an era. Among the Ten Periods, the period from Emperor Yuan and Cheng 元帝、成帝 of the Han to the middle of the Eastern Han Dynasty is considered to be the ‘extremely prosperous era (the golden era) 極盛時代’, and after Emperor Huan and Ling 桓帝、靈帝 of Han Dynasty to the Jin Dynasty is called ‘the era of mid-decline 中衰時代’.

During these two periods, what is the key points of Classical Learning in Pi Xirui’s view? What is the value of these essentials, and what perspectives need to be viewed in order to be more comprehensive? These are the crucial points that this paper is going to clarify. Similarly, Pi’s views should neither be blindly worshipped nor completely denied, which should be further reflected in the context of the historical environment and the original purpose.

2. The key points of Classical Learning

The key points of Classical Learning in Pi Xirui’s view can be summarized into the following six points.

2.1 Put emphasis on Classical Learning 重經術

Since the beginning of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, the number of students has gradually increased. At the early stage, there were hundreds or thousands of people learning classics, and at the later stage, the number increased to 30,000. It was recorded as:

Emperor Wu set up fifty disciples for the doctoral officer, and the number increased to a hundred during the reign of Emperor Zhao... The disciples increased by 3,000 under Emperor Cheng’s governance... At the end of the Han Dynasty, the number of students of the Taixue

太學 reached 30,000, which was an unprecedented event in ancient times.¹

It seems to be a picture of prosperity in terms of learning, but it does not pay attention to the teaching quality. The number of students greatly exceeded that of teachers, making it impossible for teachers to fully impart what they have learned to students. The contents taught by the disciples were inevitably mixed with personal opinions, which went against the original intention of inheriting the classics.

In addition to the number of students, the teaching situation is also gradually declining. In the early period of Eastern Han Dynasty, Emperor Ming 漢明帝 himself set an example for people and performed rites and ceremonies in person. However, ‘In the period after Emperor An 漢安帝, doctoral officials’ mats had been moved to the side that they did not give lectures. 至安帝以後, 博士倚席不講.’² The decline of classics learning can be seen from this. Pi Xirui concluded that the reason for its decline lies in ‘not emphasizing classics 不重經術’:

There were many talents in Taixue in ancient times, but none of them were as many as in this era... The decline of Confucianism in the Han Dynasty was due to the lack of emphasis on classics. If classics had not been emphasised, the number of learners is large while studies cannot make great effect; the inner part has declined, but from the outside it looks prosperous... The reasons for the prosperity or fall of the Han Dynasty are all based on the prosperity and fall of classics.³

Pi hoped that future scholars can learn from this and avoid repeating the same mistakes. It also shows that he took ‘respecting the classics 尊經’ and ‘emphasising the classics 重經術’ as one of the key points of the Classical Learning.

2.2 Know the importance of practice 明實修

Pi Xirui mentions in *The History of Classical Learning*:

One of the conditions for employing officers of the Later Han Dynasty is that they must understand the principles of the classics and practice them. It is not only the words written by the candidates who take the test, but the in-depth examination of his practice.⁴

In view of the examples of Kuang Heng 匡衡, Zhang Yu 張禹, Kong Guang 孔光, and

¹ Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞, *Jingxue lishi* 經學歷史 (Taipei: Hanjing wenhua shiye youxian gongsi, 1983), p. 101. The original text is, ‘武帝為博士官置弟子五十人, ……昭帝增滿百人……漢末, 太學生諸生至三萬人, 為古來未有之盛事。’

² Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 113-114.

³ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 114. The original text is, ‘古來太學人才之多, 未有多於此者。……是漢儒風之衰, 由於經術不重。經術不重, 而人才徒侈其眾多; 實學已衰, 而外貌反似乎極盛。……觀漢之所以盛與所以衰, 皆由經學之盛衰為之樞紐。’

⁴ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 124. The original text is, ‘後漢取士必經明行修, 蓋非專重其文, 而必深考其行。’

Ma Gong 馬宮 in the former Han Dynasty, Emperor Guangwu 光武帝 recommended hermits, treated scholars with the courtesy of guests, and praised morality and righteous conduct. Pi Xirui believed that ‘to respect the classics, one must first respect those who can practice the principles of the classics.’⁵

In fact, the act of ‘advocating practice’ has gone through three processes, which are ‘not prospering 不興’, ‘prosperity 興盛’, and ‘decline 衰退’. Pi thought that the three highest ranking officials 三公 in the imperial court of ancient China of the Later Han Dynasty, such as Yuan An 袁安, Yang Zhen 楊震, Li Gu 李固 and Chen Fan 陳蕃, were very upright. When they are compared with the former Han people, they are very different. However, during the period of Emperor Huan and Ling 桓靈之間, there was no emphasis on practical cultivation, the politicization gradually deteriorated, and the rule of the imperial court gradually declined.

Therefore, we can know that ‘Know the importance of practice 明實修’ has a profound impact on the political situation of the country. If officials only understand the meaning of classics, but do not practice them, they are just talking about it without any practical effect. On the one hand, the people will lose trust in the country. As Confucius said, ‘Since ancient times, everyone has to face death, but if people do not trust the ruler, the country cannot be governed for a long time.’⁶ Confucius attached great importance to the people, and he believed that winning the people’s trust’ is more important than one’s life. On the other hand, ‘not attaching importance to practical cultivation 不重實修’ has no practical effective to help in the country’s government affairs, cannot save current affairs and solve problems, and the country will inevitably slowly go to ruin.

2.3 Not seek fame and wealth 輕名利

‘Not seek fame and wealth’ does not mean that it has nothing to do with ‘fame and wealth’, but it means that on the premise of ensuring one’s fullness, one should not pay too much attention to fame, fortune and salary, and change the original goal of ‘focusing on the research and inheritance of classics 以經學研究與傳承為核心’ to ‘pursuing fame and fortune 以追逐名利為核心’, under the control of the seeking of fame and fortune, the development of classics may go astray or generate many problems.

⁵ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 124. The original text is, ‘尊經必尊其能實行經義之人。’

⁶ He Yan 何晏 and Xing Bing 邢昺, *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), p. 180. The original text is, ‘自古皆有死，民無信不立。’

First, the scholars who are serving in the office had changed from ‘governing the country with classics 經義治國’ to ‘making friends as a career 交游為業’, and even abandoned their government affairs:

At that time, there were more than 20,000 officials, and there were only a few people who responded to the letter and discussed it. At that time, there were more than 400 people holding official positions below high-ranking officials and ministers, but fewer than ten people were able to write documents in person, most people only get paid but do not do work at all.⁷

Second, due to the guidance of fame and wealth, there were as many as a thousand students who followed the teacher. The students could not learn from the teacher themselves, but only learned from the teacher’s outstanding disciples. The gradual deviation of the ‘shifa 師法 (knowledge or technique handed down by one’s teacher)’ can be seen from this:

The prosperity of classical learning is due to fame and fortune... If the ruler wants to use academics to govern the people, there is no one who does not lead to fame and fortune and follows it... As a teacher can teach tens thousands of people, and it must be taught by his outstanding disciples, just like Zheng Kangcheng 鄭康成 (鄭玄) studied with Ma Jichang 馬季長 (馬融) for three years, but he has never met his teacher.⁸

Therefore, whether it is studying the classics or engaging in politics, one should follow the principle of ‘staying away from fame and wealth 遠利祿’. Otherwise, people will not be able to concentrate on studies, or will be restricted by benefits. Besides, people will not be able to look at things objectively and impartially, and they also cannot find correct and effective solutions based on the actual situation. Taking the history of this period as a mirror, it was precisely because of the influence of fame and fortune that the result deviates from the original purpose, and was presented in the form of ‘external prosperity and internal decline 外榮內枯’.

2.4 Grasp the general meaning 存大體

Pi Xirui quotes the book of *The history of the Han Dynasty* 漢書 and says: ‘One classic used one million words to explain, the reason and the drawbacks of the Han Dynasty’s rise and fall of classics originated from this. Scholars must understand the reasons for this.’⁹ Meng Jian 孟

⁷ Chen Shou 陳壽 and Pei Songzhi 裴松之, *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), p. 421. The original text is, ‘是時郎官及司徒領吏二萬餘人, 而應書與議者略無幾人。又是時朝堂公卿以下四百餘人, 其能操筆者未有十人, 多皆相從飽食而退。’

⁸ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 131-132. The original text is, ‘經學之盛由於祿利, ……在上者欲持一術以聳動天下, 未有不導以祿利而翕然從之者。……至一師能教千萬人, 必由高足弟子傳授, 有如鄭康成在馬季長門下三年不得見者。’

⁹ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 133. The original text is, ‘『一經說至百餘萬言』, 則漢之經學所以由盛而衰者,

堅 said in *Yiwenzhi* 藝文志:

The scholars of ancient times...understood the general meaning of the classics, discussed with each other and experienced the deep meaning repeatedly. Therefore, they spent little time but accumulated profound virtues, and when they were thirty years old, they were able to grasp the general meaning of Five Classics 五經.¹⁰

However, in the early Eastern Han Dynasty, scholars focused on erudition but did not understand the meaning of the classics. If they could not solve the problems themselves, they would use ‘flowery words 巧辭’ to evade them; The classics are becoming more and more complicated, and sometimes even ‘an article expounding five characters has 20,000 to 30,000 words. 五字之文至於二三萬言’ In this condition, scholars can only explain one book when their hair is grey. Therefore, Pi pointed out,

For learning, what is useful will flourish, and what is useless will decline. It is useful to grasp the general meaning and discuss with others while it is useless to search for evidence to avoid criticism from others, and to respond with flowery words.¹¹

Wu Yangxiang 吳仰湘 also mentions: ‘Pi Xirui strived to improve the teaching of classics, adopting the method Western Han Dynasty of ‘grasp the general meaning and discuss with others’ to cultivate talents who can understand the classics and apply them.’¹²

Pi quotes Shen Gong 申公 and General Ding 丁將軍 as examples, and Qin Gongyan 秦恭延 as counter-examples. Shen Gong, a teacher of Lu poetry 魯詩 from the Three Schools of Poetry 三家詩, used *the Book of Songs* as the teaching material for exegesis. If he encountered doubts, he would put the controversial content aside and not continue to teach it. He was afraid that it will cause students to suffer misunderstanding. General Ding was called Ding Kuan 丁寬. He only used 30,000 words when he wrote *Yishuo* 易說, and when he explained it, he only gave the general meaning of the texts, similar to ‘Xiao zhangju 小章句 (syntactic and semantic analysis of ancient writings)’¹³. Qin Jun 秦君 studied with his teacher, Xiao Xiaqi 小夏侯, and added his own ideas to the teacher’s teaching, and his opinions were widely spread. It can be

弊正坐此，學者不可以不察也。’

¹⁰ Ban Gu 班固, *Han Shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964), p. 1723. The original text is, ‘古之學者……存其大體、玩經文而已。是故用日少而畜德多，三十而五經立也。’

¹¹ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 134. The original text is, ‘凡學有用則盛，無用則衰。存大體、玩經文則有用，碎義逃難、便辭巧說則無用。’

¹² Wu Yangxiang 吳仰湘, *Pi Xirui's Achievements and Thoughts on Classical Learning* 皮錫瑞的經學成就與經學思想 (Changsha: Hunan daxue, 2013), p.435. The original text is, ‘皮錫瑞努力改進經學教學，采行西漢『存大體、玩經文』之法，培養通經致用之才。’

¹³ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 135.

seen that ‘grasp the general meaning 存大體’ is one of the key points of learning classics, otherwise mistakes will be made during of the process of teaching of, and it will also make the scholars of later generations lose their confidence in inheriting the study of the classics.

2.5 Keep teacher’s learning 守師法

According to Pi,

The former Han emphasized the *shifa* 師法, and the later Han emphasized the *jiafa* 家法 (thoughts or teachings of a teacher passed down through generations of followers). The scholars followed *shifa* 師法 traced back to the source, and the scholars followed *jiafa* 家法 inherited the teachings of their teachers.¹⁴

In *The Book of the Later Han Dynasty* 後漢書, Xu Fang 徐防 once said to the emperor: ‘I saw that the Taixue 太學 recruited students through examinations, all based on personal opinions, not according to what their teacher said...it really goes against the original purpose.’¹⁵

Confucius took the principle of ‘passing on the ancient culture without adding anything new to it and believing in the teachings of ancient sages 述而不作，信而好古’¹⁶ as his guideline, while scholars in the later Han Dynasty did not respect the guidance of teachers. Not only did they set up different *jiafa* 家法, but also used their own opinions as a system to teach, so that the true theory deviated from the original meaning of classics and became distorted in the process of teaching.

Therefore, Pi believes that another core of studying the classics is ‘keep teacher’s learning 守師法’, and upholding the respect and instructions of teacher:

Most of the types of learning advocate innovation, only the classics must be single-minded and keep the teachings of the original teacher...With the changes from one generation to the next, each generation of teachers can carefully inherit the guidance of their teachers, and not change them with their own opinions. If this can be done, the meaning of the classics will not become complicated, and the teachings of the saints can also be manifested.¹⁷

It is precisely because the study of the classics in the later Han Dynasty was more unconventional and did not follow the teacher’s teachings, so Pi indicates, ‘I think the situation of the Classical Learning in the of Emperor Ming Zhang of the Han Dynasty was not as good

¹⁴ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 136. The original text is, ‘前漢重師法，後漢重家法。……師法者溯其源，家法者衍其流也。’

¹⁵ Fan Ye 范曄 and Li Xian 李賢, *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2018), p. 1500-1501. The original text is, ‘伏見太學試博士弟子，皆以意說，不修家法，……誠非詔書實選本意。’

¹⁶ The sentence is my own translation.

¹⁷ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 139. The original text is, ‘蓋凡學皆貴求新，惟經學必專守舊。……世世遞嬗，師師相承，謹守訓辭，毋得改易，如是，則經旨不雜而聖教明矣。’

as that of Emperor Wu and Xuan.’¹⁸

2.6 Focus on one school of thought 重顯門

Pi mentioned, when Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 made annotations for several classics, he used both ancient characters and modern characters (a kind of calligraphy style in Han Dynasty, which is *lishu* 隸書), but gradually, the opinions that recorded by ancient and modern characters could not be passed down completely and separately, and they could only be found separate in Zheng Xuan’s annotations. In addition, in terms of *jiafa* 家法, those in Han Dynasties had been died out that scholars cannot verify them, and the teaching of classics has gradually tended to be single. These phenomena are closely related to Zheng’s compiling classics.

From Pi’s view, Zheng Xuan’s practice of compiling the classics has both advantages and disadvantages. Although it made the distinction between modern and ancient characters no longer, it also benefited scholars that they do not need to learn several opinions from different schools, and they would not suffer from the complexity of categories. Through Pi’s comments, we can also see that he attaches great importance to ‘focus on one school of thought 重顯門’.

2.7 Summary

The above six points are all the inner appeals of Pi Xirui when he saw the major problems in the development of the Han Dynasty. These core principles that he valued are the pillars that make the Classical Learning present ‘external prosperous and inner steady 外榮內實’. If it deviates from these core points, then ‘the building of the classics 經學之樓’ will also be crumbling and weak in the wind and rain.

However, from the middle and late Western Han Dynasty to the early Eastern Han Dynasty, the state used Classical Learning as the basis for selecting officials, and the conduct of ‘citing the meaning of the classics 援引經義’ in the court also played a significant role in promoting the development of classics study and social stability.

From another point of view, due to the influence of politics, wealth and other factors, the initial plan deviated from its right track, which made the prosperity of classics turn to decline. Therefore, we can see the importance and positive effects of these six points, whether from the perspective of prosperity or the view of decline.

¹⁸ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 139. The original text is, ‘愚以為明、章極盛之時，不及武、宣昌明之代也。’

3. The value evaluation of the key points

As for the key points of Classical Learning proposed by Pi, this chapter will evaluate its value and significance to the past and the present, and analyse its practicability in the historical context. As Qiao Xiuyan 喬秀岩 points out in ‘On the Similarities and Differences of Zheng Xuan and Wang Su’s opinions’:

In terms of the study of Classical Learning and its history in the past, scholars’ perspectives were often limited to the field of Confucian classics, while ignoring its relationship with the actual system. Nowadays, more and more scholars tend to study Classical Learning from the perspective of history, and observe the theory of Confucian classics in the historical environment at that time.¹⁹

In terms of the six main points, the first three (Put emphasis on Classical Learning, know the importance of practice and not seek fame and wealth) are biased from the perspective of the sovereign and the official class; the latter three (Grasp the general meaning, keep teacher’s learning and focus on one school of thought) seem to focus on the research level of scholars.

As for the ‘Put emphasis on Classical Learning 重經術’, after Emperor Yuan and Cheng of Han, the emperor attached great importance to the study of classics, which was the basis for employing officials and implemented it at the political level. At that time, not only most of the officials could understand the meaning of the classics, but also improve public morals and educated the common people, and every official can understand at least one classic. This reflects the positive function of Classical Learning under the attention, which can not only enhance the morality of officials, strengthen the implementation of government affairs, but also enlighten the people, and build a harmonious and stable social order.

In terms of the classification and inheritance of the classics, ‘In the Xiping reign of the Han Dynasty, Emperor Ling convened the Confucian scholars to check against the authoritative text of the Five Classics and engraved the text on the stone stele.’²⁰ Although the stele has different degrees of damage, it has a great benefit to scholars, especially in their study of classics. The remaining stones that are retained today are also stored in the museum as historical materials, allowing scholars to learn and have a deeper understanding of the classics.

‘Know the importance of practice 明實修’ and ‘Not seek fame and wealth 輕利祿’ are actually two aspects of a subject. If officials can truly implement the teachings of the classics,

¹⁹ Qiao Xiuyan 喬秀岩, ‘On the Similarities and Differences of Zheng Xuan and Wang Su’s opinions 論鄭王禮說異同’, in *Beida shixue* 北大史學 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008), p. 4. The original text is, ‘以往的經學和經學史研究，視角往往局限在經學領域內部，而忽視其與現實制度的關係。現在越來越多學者傾向於從歷史的角度看經學，把經學學說放在當時的歷史環境裡進行觀察。’

²⁰ Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 117. The original text is, ‘靈帝熹平四年，詔群儒正定五經，刊於石碑。’

they will naturally be indifferent to fame and fortune and try their best to serve the country and the people. If officials do not engage in the work they should work, the court should also have the corresponding official assessment system, just like the *Key Performance Indicator* 關鍵績效指標 implemented within the company today. In this way, there are certain cutting and control of redundant staff, so that national funds can be used reasonably.

Under the background at the time, the top three showed the focus of attention after the ‘classics’ linked up with ‘politics’. However, when Classical Learning is combined with fame and fortune, it will inevitably be affected by the political form and social environment, resulting in some problems. While the rulers attach great importance to the classics, they should also strengthen the assessment mechanism and evaluate the government’s affairs to avoid excessive redundant staff, and improve the administrative efficiency of government affairs to a certain extent.

Regarding the ‘Grasp the general meaning Grasp the general meaning’, Mencius said: ‘People should establish a big goal in life and master the general situation, so that small things cannot affect their decisions or disturb their own mind.先立乎其大者，則其小者弗能奪也.’²¹ Similarly, in the study of classics, scholars should also have a general understanding of the classic such as ‘the Five Classics 五經’, rather than specializing in one from the beginning. In this way, the interest of classics and the coherence of various classics are also lost.

‘Keep teacher’s learning 守師法’ and ‘Focus on one school of thought 重顓門’ can make the inheritance of classics more specific without mixing. If various viewpoints are mixed, it would be difficult for students to distinguish and clarify them, and they may even be at a loss as to what to do. In terms of the historical background at that time, it was really difficult to follow the two points. Due to the continuous increase in the number of students at the end of the Han Dynasty, the teacher could not teach so many students in person, and only outstanding disciples could teach on their behalf. When faced with the criticism of each other by people of various theories,

Zheng Xuan wanted to combine the theories of various schools into one and become his own system of theories...the various studies at that time were tedious and complicated, scholars were very painful. When they saw Zheng Xuan has a wide range of knowledge, so everyone followed him to learn.²²

²¹ Zhao Qi 趙岐 and Sun Shi 孫奭, *Mengzi zhushu* 孟子注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), p. 370.

²² Pi Xirui, *Jingxue lishi*, p. 149. The original text is, ‘（鄭君）意欲參合其學，自成一家之言，……學者苦其時家法繁雜，見鄭君閎通博大，無所不包，眾論翕然歸之。’

Therefore, Zheng Xuan's practice of combining ancient and modern characters and opinions may be the inevitable trend of the development of Classical Learning under the complicated situation at that time.

When Jiang Longxiang 姜龍翔 analysed Pi Xirui's 'ideology of conservatism 守舊之說', he found that Pi 'truly avoided the contradictory examples that are inconsistent with these conserve phenomena', and believed,

Pi's theory should return to the historical background in which he produced this opinion, and it is regarded as his personal adjustment to cater to that situation, seeking a balance between the old and the new academic in terms of viewpoint, and we should not rashly regard the study of the classics as a real ideology of conservatism.²³

Therefore, with regard to 'ideology of conservatism 守舊之說', we should be dialectical. First, we should respect teacher's teachings, but when we encounter problems, we could flexibly improve and not be limited by the teacher's words. Perhaps it is also a necessary process to further advance the study of classics and make contributions to the Classical Learning.

4. Reflection on Pi Xirui's historical view of Classical Learning

Zhou Yutong 周予同 said in the preface of *The History of Classical Learning*: '(Pi Xirui) cannot go beyond all scholarship groups to describe the classics, but just criticize the opposite group according to Jinwen Group 今文派.'

Although Pi Shi also mentions: 'Things cannot be generalized. If you do not think from both perspectives of past and present, the things cannot be determined at once.' However, Pi did not jump out of the perspective of 'Jinwen Group 今文派' and still attacked the 'Guwen Group 古文派', especially for Zheng Xuan. In fact, the classification of the Classical groups in terms of the Han Dynasty in the Qing Dynasty may cause Pi's partiality for Classical Learning, so he believes that Zheng Xuan has influenced the inherit of jiafa 家法. From my point of view, maybe Zheng Xuan's opinions and solutions is the trend and social needs in the historical background.

And Pi's criticism of Wang Su 王肅 was not entirely fair. Even if the conduct of 'forging

²³ Jiang Longxiang 姜龍翔, 'Analysis of the Idology of Conservatism in Pi Xi-Rui's Calssical Theory', *Taida wenshizhe xuebao* 臺大文史哲學報, (2018), 39-76 (p.72). The original text is, '皮氏的說法當回歸於他產生這種見解的歷史背景中進行理解，視為他個人適應時局，尋求新舊平衡的學術觀點，未可貿然便將經學視為真正的守舊之學。'

ancient books' is not correct, it seems that his daughter's husband, the Sima Shi 司馬氏, usurped the power of the Wei Dynasty and had no direct relationship with Wang Su.

Qiao Xiuyan analysed Zheng and Wang's views on ritual, he said:

Zheng Xuan's thinking was closely linked to the text, starting from the characters of the literature, and developing a purely theoretical system of classics based on these texts; Wang Su 王肅, from the perspective of our real life, considered the practicability and reasonableness of etiquette, and he also transformed Zheng Xuan's classics system.²⁴

As a result, Wang and Zheng were based on different standpoints, it is impossible to judge who is right and who is wrong.

From the reflection on Pi's view on the history of Classical Learning, we can conclude two points. First, we should break away from personal academic standpoints and viewpoints to analyse the development and evolution of the history of classics. Second, we should evaluate scholars from multiple perspectives, such as the history and the focus of scholars, and we cannot see only one of the pros and cons.

Of course, we cannot completely criticize Pi Xirui's achievements in the study of classics. We should understand his original intention in writing 'The History of Classical Learning'. Wu Yangxiang 吳仰湘 concludes in the book 'Pi Xirui's Achievements and Thoughts on Classical Learning':

His original intention was not to summarize the history of Chinese classics, but only to use the historical changes of classics as the background of the narrative and the support of the argument, to compile a classical book that 'understands the changes of the past and the present 通古今之變'...Expounding the necessity and need of 'respecting Confucius and advocating classics 尊孔崇經'.²⁵

Therefore, when we think about it carefully, we can also understand the good intentions of Pi, who wanted to guide the students who are fond of the new and dislike the old by sorting out the thousands of years of classics, and let the new school continue to accept the study of the classics.

Japanese scholars IZAWA Koichi 井澤耕一 and HASHIMOTO Akinori 橋本昭典 found that Pi once commented on the theories of the opinions of Jinwenjia 今文家 in his Diary, such

²⁴ Qiao Xiuyan 喬秀岩, pp. 13-14. The original text is, '鄭玄的思維緊貼文本，從經緯文獻的文字出發，根據這些文字展開一套純粹理論性的經學體系；王肅則從我們現實生活的角度出發，考慮禮說的可實踐性以及合理合情性，對鄭玄的經學體系進行改造。'

²⁵ Wu Yangxiang 吳仰湘, p. 378. The original text is, '其初衷並非總結中國經學的歷史，而僅以經學的歷史變遷作為敘述的背景和立論的依托，編撰一本「通古今之變」的經學論著……闡述「尊孔崇經」的必要和有用。'

as Liao Ping 廖平, Wang Kaiyun 王闡運, Kang Youwei 康有為: ‘While supporting the Classical Learning of Jinwen 今文經學, he also criticized theories that were too attached, novel, presumptuous, and lacking evidence.’²⁶ From this, we can see that Pi’s emphasis on substantial evidence 實證. Therefore, the two scholars believe: ‘Even if Pi Xirui’s theory has the meaning of Classical Learning of Jinwen’s proposition, we should not rashly assume that he blindly believes in this group’s statement or stubbornly adheres to the group’s position. We need to be cautious to discuss his opinions.’²⁷

5. Conclusion

The six key points of Classical Learning summed up in Pi Xirui’s ‘History of Classical Learning’ in the two periods of the ‘golden era 極盛時代’ and ‘mid-decline 中衰時代’ represent Pi’s views and emphasis on classical studies. The first three (Put emphasis on Classical Learning, know the importance of practice and not seek fame and wealth) are biased from the perspective of the sovereign and the official class; the latter three (Grasp the general meaning, keep teacher’s learning and focus on one school of thought) focus on the research level of scholars. These six have their value and significance to the academic at that time, in addition, we should also consider their practicability and influencing factors in the historical environment.

At first, the rulers ‘attached great importance to the classics 重視經術’, but later, ‘academics’ was linked with ‘fame and wealth’, resulting in a surge in the number of students, the quality of teaching could not be guaranteed, and the conduct was also deviated from its original path. ‘Know the importance of practice 明實修’ and ‘not seek fame and wealth 輕利祿’ also cannot be implemented due to the combination of academics and fame and fortune, influenced by political forms and social atmosphere.

As for studies of classics, it is precisely because of the mixture of *shifa* 師法 and *jiafa* 家法 at the end of the Han Dynasty, so that Pi’s appeals to ‘keep teacher’s learning 守師法’ and

²⁶ IZAWA Koichi 井澤耕一 and HASHIMOTO Akinori 橋本昭典, ‘Cong Jingxuelishi de chuanguo guocheng kan Pi Xirui de jingxueshiguan 從《經學歷史》的創作過程看皮錫瑞的經學史觀’, *Zhongguo jingxue* 中國經學, 26(2020), 153-168, p. 163. The original text is, ‘他在支持今文經學的同時, 也對過於附會、新奇、臆斷、缺乏根據的學說進行了批判。’

²⁷ IZAWA Koichi 井澤耕一 and HASHIMOTO Akinori 橋本昭典, p. 164. The original text is, ‘即使皮錫瑞的學說帶有今文經學的主張的色彩, 也不應草率認定其為盲信今文經學說或固守黨派立場, 有必要慎重地討論其學說。’

‘focus on one school of thought 守師法’. Moreover, when annotate the meaning of classics, *guwenjia* 古文家 used a lot of words, so there is a need for implementing ‘grasp the general meaning’.

In fact, we should also understand that it is precisely because the rulers attached great importance to the study of classics that the number of students in later generations increased, and *jiafa* 家法 gradually increased, complicated and attacked each other. Although some of the main points were only an idealized theory and could not be fully implemented at that time, Pi’s views are still enlightening and valuable for our study today.

Through the clarification and reflection of the key points, value evaluation, and historical view of the Classical Learning of Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞, we can learn that whether we judge people or events, we should extract ourselves from it, and use an objective attitude, analysing from different perspectives (historical environment, pros and cons, etc.), and avoid prejudice against something or someone with our own opinions and affect its true value.

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