

Modern Extension of Classical Culture Life: British Residential College System and Its World Influence

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Abstract

Residential College system was originated in Middle Ages, first founded in Paris, perfected in Oxford, and had proven to be the most important sign of British universities. Even to this day, residential college still retained in British universities, and inherited by American universities. With long history and unique concept, residential college system is not only a kind of enduring housing system, but also an effective cultivation system. Furthermore, it is an indication of spirit and creative culture life of university, which has a very important significance to Chinese universities. To learn from residential colleges, we need to combine theoretical logic and practical logic, and gain a clear idea of that the construction and operation of system must be established in the cultural basis.

Key words: Classical culture Life; British residential college; World influence

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INTRODUCTION

Education is not only in classroom, but also be in your life. Karl Theodor Jaspers believed that, a true sense of the university contains three inextricably aspects: knowledge

teaching, academic research, as well as creative cultural life (Karl, 2007). Due to the prevalence of market logic and instrumental rationality, the size of modern university has continued to expand, academic specialized increasingly, people alienated day by day, and cultural life has become barren. This situation has caused people's deep thinking.

Arised from the middle ages, and followed by a great number of later universities; residential college has typically represented the classical university spirit, worthy of further and continuous study. With the acceleration development of modern university in China, academic circles have grown research interest in British residential college system in recent years, not only emerged in a series of studies, but also put into practice at some universities.

In the theoretical level, the domestic study of British residential colleges has mainly concentrated in aspects of educational concept, management system and teaching mode, all aims at exploring humanities spirit behind the system, and its enlightenment to our personnel training and management system; At a practical level, some universities drew lessons from British residential college system, and combined with Chinese traditional academy mode, have also opened a series of beneficial exploration. But on the whole, domestic research has still stayed in the level of learning, absorbing, imitating, should further explore the combination of theory and practice of logical thinking. Building a sound and effective operation of the system must be based on deep cultural roots, and must adhere to the endogenous historical logic.

Throughout the spread of British residential college in the whole world, the United States University inherited the most comprehensive, but was not simply transplantation and grafting, but the long-term repeated testing and innovation. Tracing and analysis of British residential college as well as the United States University's innovation process helps to recognize the historical and practice logic, thereby clarifying the theoretical logic

of the construction of modern university system with Chinese characteristics.

1. THE ORIGIN AND FEATURE OF BRITISH RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

As a department organization pattern, residential college derived from medieval Europe, was built in Paris and perfected in Oxford. At the beginning, students were mainly taught in the rented house for no fixed classroom and dormitory, students were required to solve the accommodation problem on their own. In 12th century, European universities still retained the religious tradition of knowledge-transference and meditation, so students were most poor man from all over the continent of Europe, the predecessor of residential college called house was established by the donation from higher-order cleric and nobility (Hastings, 1936, p.681). At the end of the 12th century, Paris University built a residential college, and later spread to Oxford and Cambridge in the second half of the 13th century, and gradually developed into a unique ideal facility where teachers and students inhabit together.

Despite a few colleges found by mendicancy friars, dozens of different styles of residential colleges were evolved from boarding houses in Oxford and Cambridge. The founders of houses were famous scholars or celebrities, including the British royal family members. For example, King's College of Cambridge was created by Henry VI of England in 1441; Queens' College was almost the oldest and largest college, founded in 1448 by Margaret of Anjou (the Queen of Henry VI). With the support of the donations, houses gradually formed into academic communities. Under the administration of the statutes of the medieval university, the academic communities developed into residential colleges of autonomy. In 1489, Oxford teacher groups and the head of the houses drawn up the Aularian Statute which marked the residential college system formally established (Hastings, 1936, p.683). After the 15th century, residential college system has gradually become the main school-running pattern of the classical British university. In the 19th century, residential colleges began to take on more education function such as enrollment selection, tutor appointment and creation of cultural life; colleges finally become the core area of university life.

2. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

2.1 Institutional Features

The institutional system of British residential college has mainly included three modules; they are authorized management, mixed inhabitant mode and tutorial system.

2.1.1 Authorized Management

Since the implementation of boarder statute of 1489, residential colleges have used the "authorized management system" all the time. It means that donors will entrust the right of management to colleges, then the colleges should be responsible for organizing management committee, setting out statutes and discussing major events. Till the 19th century, the management committee has gradually stable structure includes the Dean, provost, tutors, managers and student representatives. The dean will be entirely responsible, the provost guides the students' learning life overall, they and their families must live in the residential colleges with students. The tutors and students have the most closely relationship with each other for the teachers' direct guidance in life and academic areas. Maintenance including dormitory management personnel, restaurant and security staff hold an important position in maintaining normal operation of the college. Student representatives are responsible for upload and give opinions. In addition to the management committee, the college also has a specialized agency responsible for specific items, such as meals committee, academic committee, which composed of administrative staff and student representatives. Students themselves also have a commission, whose main job is to provide consulting for junior students, organizing activities, participating in making school rules. Due to the multivariate management organization, almost all the teachers and students are blended in.

2.1.2 Mixed Inhabitant Mode

Students of different major and grade will live together, which is a way of showing college' democratic management and self-government. Before the new term begins, freshmen should have to fill in an application form which including their interests, habits and characteristics, etc.. The college staffs will base on the data to allocate the accommodation, thereby eliminating disharmonious factors and avoiding conflicts as far as possible.

2.1.3 Tutorial System

Tutorial system is a specialized teaching mode for undergraduates; it pays great attention to face-to-face communication between teachers and students. There are two kinds of tutors called life tutor and course tutor respectively, the life tutor is generally graduate students or low order professional teachers, and the course tutor are usually professors. For the similar age, graduate students have the common in life with undergraduate students, so they could provide comprehensive and direct help, they are mainly responsible for organizing activities, providing consultation and reviewing papers etc.; professional teachers are mainly responsible for academic. Accommodating together in the college provides a good chance for students to the teachers to communicate conveniently for each other.

In general, the residential college system would like to see the students holding an autonomous and self-

consistent life, so the undergraduates will immerse in the graceful liberal environment to learn and grow. British educator Newman argues that British residential college system is the most ideal form of learning. In such an environment, students have the opportunity to not only communicate with the professors, but also be able to learn from each other. The residential college system is better than those that have only professor lectures and lack of other teaching method.

2.2 Cultural Features

British residential college is not only where you live, but also the poetic habitation and culture field; this academic community made up by teachers and students who have the common academic interests gives the best interpretation of what is meant by “creative culture”.

First of all, the residential colleges have full of variety cultural activities. Some of them derive from traditional and religious social activities; others are the students’ innovative club activities. Residential college social culture originated from the medieval church etiquette, including prayer, mass, dinner, etc.. Then the social activities gradually faded the religious color and became academic. The most representative activities are high table dinner and afternoon tea. The former is grave and elegant, teachers and students must suit to attend, strictly abide by dining tradition and toast etiquette. The later is liberal, whether he is a highly respected professor or an immature freshman are welcomed to enjoy the leisure time or communicate freely in the afternoon. The source of club culture can also be traced back to the scholars’ fraternity in medieval university. As the time goes by, the fraternity which is based on geo-factors and ethno-factors has been gradually replaced by the club which is based on personal interest’s factors. There are famous rowing club as well as other interest groups in Oxford and Cambridge. Student associations not only often held music concerts and poetry reading activities inside the college, but also held intercollegiate theatrical performances and sports competitions (Liu, 2007).

In addition to the cultural activities, the residential college of the ancient university of Oxford and Cambridge has a distinctive cultural landscape. The institution title named after the founder, the buildings going through hundreds of years, the college badge, song and journal inherited the long, coupled with the natural ornament around, all function as the “hidden curriculum”. To sum up, professor Yeo-Chi King has a wonderful comment:

a Christ’s college (Cambridge University) student sees Milton’s mulberry without affection? A trinity college student lives in Newton’s study, how can he emulate those great people better than himself? And a St John’s college student hears the bells which Wool Watts describes as a girl or a boy’s voice to his mother’, how can he don’t have a tiny bit of a poet mood? (King, 2001).

In a word, the feature of the residential college system is the self-governance with democracy and equality, liberal arts education in a long history of cultural atmosphere. Newman had emotional praise about residential college:

this is a young society, a whole world, it embodies the unique concept and philosophy, it is not only the implementation of a code of conduct, but also to provide thoughts and behavior of moral principle. It produces the self-perpetuating tradition or so-called cultural loci spirit, which haunted and everyone live in the shadow of it (Newman, 1996).

3. THE INHERITANCE OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITY TO THE BRITISH RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

As a long-standing faculty organization, the British residential college did not fade its glory in the history. Even to this day, it is not only still alive at Oxford and Cambridge, but also be inherited by the modern universities of the United States as the representative. Broadly speaking, the development of the residential college system in the United States can be divided into four stages.

3.1 The Attempt Stage

Before 1860, the American scholars have long been engaged in sailing across the oceans to Germany to seek advanced ideas. System and personnel derived from Germany also became a driving force in the development of John Hopkins and other U.S. research universities. However, as the German university idea deeply rooted in classical philosophy, while American universities can imitate their system, it cannot transplant the temperament and culture. To compensate for this loss, Harvard University and other elite schools decided to follow the residential colleges at Oxford and reconstructed the undergraduate teaching around the small-scale students and staff in the mid-19th century. Eliot, president of Harvard at that time, didn’t favor British college, but Yale was more enthusiastic, and quickly implemented it. Since then, Chicago and Princeton also began to try, but unfortunately they did not form system clearly. In 1902, Harper, president of the University of Chicago planned to place the undergraduates and mentors into eight square courtyards; but the plan stopped due to his sudden death in 1905. In 1906, President Wilson also planned to transform the student cafeteria of Princeton into Oxford-mode residential college, but it was unable to achieve because of the fierce opposition from teachers (Alex, 1996, p.2).

3.2 The Development Stage

In the late 19th century, modern American universities began to appear. With the expansion of institutions and the growing interest in oriented scientific research of professors, the alienation between students and

teachers increasingly becomes a problem. Many scholars strongly questioned the practice that the university split teachers and students into two systems. To solve this problem, university administrators with innovation took a variety of measures, the most ambitious of which was the establishment of residential college on the modern university campus. Alongside this initiative, the United States set off a wave of imitating the British residential college. In the 1920s, the famous philanthropist Edward Harkness donated a large sum of educational fund, so Harvard and Yale managed to create a large number of Oxford-style colleges and dormitories. Almost simultaneously, Pomona College in California also took a series of measures, separately creating a series of British residential colleges within the existing single colleges system selectively; through this arrangement, Pomona managed to keep small college teaching style under the circumstance of the expanding size and functions. Subsequently, the residential colleges of Scripps College and others have also appeared, and until the 1940s, this wave began to slow down.

3.3 The Deepening Stage

After World War II, the number of American university's students continued to surge, while the higher learning institution didn't increase accordingly. In 1964, there were 5.3 million students in academy and university across the United States and it increased nearly 4 million than in 1940. Although the prosperity of the postwar American society has prompted the top university to focus on the teaching quality and the original, as the scale expansion and the surge number as well as the increasingly enthusiastic attention to research, it led to the relationship between American teachers and students became more alienated, besides the teaching quality and the original was also in recession. In consideration of precaution to the above-mentioned circumstances and the strong appeal to the humanism after the Vietnam War, headed by A. Wilson educators again pay attention to Oxford and Cambridge. They believed when teachers and students integrated in a semi-autonomous small teaching organization, it would be significant for college education realize its moral and academic mission. Therefore, in the 1960s and 1970s the British residential college system prevailed again in the United States; just in the 1960s, the United States built 44 residential colleges. Jerry. G. Gaff, a higher education expert puts forward the famous idea "Cluster College", and discussed it on a national conference in 1968. The initiator of "Cluster College" appealed people to cognize the precious residential college system tradition in Oxford and Cambridge, and set off a ferocious movement; one of the most important measures was creating the University of California-Santa Cruz in 1965, which made the residential college system as its dominate mode. From the plan perspective, Santa

Cruz not only reference Oxford to build vast student dormitories, but also establish the British residential college system (Alex, 1996, p.2). In Santa Cruz, the residential college is not only an academic department, also a communication platform between colleges in the school level, a public place for teacher working and living. Later, although Santa cruse also increasingly emphasized on graduate education and research, its main purpose has never deviated from the ideal, which puts forward by President Clark Kerr, university should be a strong foundation for undergraduate education.

3.4 The Reflection and Reconstruction Stage

After many years of study, the American university inherited British residential college system comprehensively. According to the data provided by the NCES, in 1997, 80% of public university provided accommodation for students, and 100% of private university took the residential college system. However, it doesn't mean that British residential college educational idea and humanism has taken root in the American university. For a long time, the American university usually holds that the scientific research is the most important, and the power is not derived from the need of teaching innovation or academic research results, but the market-oriented. Specialized and sophisticated research makes the teaching become insignificance, and residential colleges become siege. It makes both teachers and students want to escape from there. In 2008, only 13.8% of American undergraduates live on campus (Fleener, 2009). Of course, this doesn't mean the residential college system failure in the American university. In fact, the reasons why students choose to live off campus are varied. First of all, the university recruits too many students, leading to the residential college cannot accommodate for all students. Second, living in the campus will cost more rents than off-campus apartment. As the economic pressure, most of students finally choose to live out. The results show that the residential college can provide the safest environment for students. In 2008, 93% of college students' crime happened outside, and most criminals are students who lived off campus (Lynn, 2008, p.77); residential college students in criminal case, drinking disturbances are far less probability than off-campus students. Another study shows that there is no significant difference in school work between residential students and off-campus students, and when they are freshman, both they will violate the almost discipline. But after sophomore year, students who live in residential college, especially boys are more disciplined than students who live off campus (Fleener, 2009, p.151). From the long-term development perspective, in many aspects, such of personal morality, citizenship, team honor and collaborative learning, students who are cultivated by the residential college will have a better performance than others, it is the root

cause why the American university choose the residential college.

Up to this day, the American university administrators are still engaged in the exploration of the tradition of British residential college sedulously. Especially since the 1980s, the slogan “small is beautiful”¹ brought a huge shock to the America, and people began to reflect on educational alienation from the scale expansion deeply. In 1998, Presidents of the University of Wisconsin, University of South Carolina, Murray State University, Boston College and other schools gathered at Oxford University and discussed again how huge residential college system be used in modern universities, with the advantages of residential colleges in liberal education and holistic education to make up for the lack of modern universities and to solve the problems posed by profession differentiation and discipline segment. In short, the inheritance of American university to the British residential college is undergoing reflection and reconstruction from model to idea, system in spirit.

4. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

A remarkable characteristic of residential college attaches to the creative cultural life which combining living and learning. For quite some time, Chinese universities isolate teaching and life, rigidify student management, combine with simple housing system function, not only are they lacking in the joy of life, but also lacking of edification. British residential college has a long history and sophisticated system; it is worth learning and using for reference.

4.1 Reviving the Spirit of University Education by Linking Up Teaching and Life

Education happens not only in class, but also throughout life. The biggest characteristic of British residential college is to include teachers and students in a community where everyone dedicated to seeking the truth and realizing the spiritual life; under the education and demonstration of the tutor, students will learn to communicate, enrich their knowledge and develop a complete personality. Chinese universities should draw lessons from the British residential college system, and pay attention to the communication between teachers and students; then the education will not be confined in academic, but also in life. In fact, Chinese college

¹ The statement “Small is beautiful” derived from the classic which condemned the maladies of modern industrial civilization, *Small is beautiful*, published in 1973 by a German- British economist. In the 1980s, American scholars set off a wave of education reforms under its influence, aiming to reflect the benefits reduction and educational alienation from resources centralization. Since then, the colleges, class miniaturization movement began.

education had long term keeping the close relationship between teachers and students. Such as Mr. Mei Yiqi once mentioned in “the interpretation of the university”, said that: “School is like water, teachers and students are like fish, their teaching activities are like swimming, the old fish lead as a guide, and the young fish are constantly influenced by tailing after”. Reviving this kind of “guiding activity” is the key of developing the cultural life in our Chinese university. Currently, some universities have implemented tutorial system in colleges, and the students have benefited on this kind of management mode to some extent. But since most tutors live outside the college, the students have double barrier in physics and spirit, which means that the counselling outside the professional field is limited. It is necessary to require teachers to live inside the college with students, at the same time hiring graduate students as the life tutor living in the same college, creating the atmosphere of tutorial education.

4.2 To Restore Preexisting, Shaping China’s University Culture Character

The essence of British residential college is the liberal arts education which implies the traditional culture character and national spirit. In fact, the university is the mirror of national spirit; every university has its own national brand, such as the classical philosophy spirit to the University of German, the public intellectual values to the University of France. The history of American university imitating the British residential college system also shows the significance of national culture in developing the university spirit. Because of this, the continuity of the Chinese traditional culture should be paid great attention in constructing the modern university system and it is important to keep in consciousness about cultural independence and cultural particularity. To achieve this goal, we must restore and reconstruct the Chinese scholar’s research tradition, then to set up the Chinese university culture character. About learning tradition, Mr. Qian Mu has proposed three levels: the first one refers to “learning to be a good person”; the second level is “learning to be an excellent technician”; the third level connotes “learning how to be an academic scholar”(Qian, 1977). The three elements complement each other inseparably. As for the Chinese university’s cultural character, it is clear to insist the scientific research as the foundation, the socialist construction as the goal, the great renaissance of the Chinese nation as the ideal. In the end, our study of British residential college system is not a simple copying and transplanting, but a deep understanding of its internal spirit and culture character. The prosperous of Chinese university is not reflected in the digital data’s ascension and the transplantation of other countries’ system, but the molding of learning tradition and culture personality; Only on this basis, the Chinese university could cultivate conscious, cultural self-confident and firm faithfully citizen.

4.3 Improving the Student Management System, Strengthening the Educational Function of Accommodation

For so long, the student management in our country's university is relatively uniform, the dormitory function is single, and the educational function of accommodation life plays not enough; Because of this, we should draw lessons from British residential college, put democratic management, and strengthen educational function.

The improvement of the management system gives a full range of guidance to students' study and life, and also cultivates their comprehensive qualities.

First of all, our universities should improve the system of student management; clear the rights and obligations of students. Taking the management concept with "service, education, democracy" as the foundation; on the management of team construction, we should notice to exert students' subjective initiative, absorb the student representatives joining to the management team, and establish a committee on student autonomy. Secondly, our country's universities also need to reform the accommodation management system. On one hand, we should respect students' individual character needs and independent choice, innovate unified distribution system; On the other hand, breaking the rigid accommodation arrangement, encouraging autonomy and harmony, taking the mixed inhabitant mode across-grades and across-majors on the basis of fully considering the opinions of the students; At the same time, combining with the actual conditions, we should create cultural extracurricular activities and promote cultural connotation of the accommodation zone. These measures could not only develop students' individual character, but also be able to break the barrier of the department, major and grade, eventually prompt interaction and collaboration with each other, and cultivate specialized, erudite, all-round development of talents.

4.4 Development Direction and Attempt of Domestic University

About the construction of the residential colleges, universities in China have taken some beneficial attempt in recent years. In 2005, Fudan University built "Fudan College", under which contains four academies named after four former chancellor, provides general education for freshmen. Fudan College has engaged in improving the quality of undergraduate students, and learned to be a harmonious organic whole where students and teachers

have considerable communication space, beyond the limitations of college professional learning system. In the same way, Xi'an Jiaotong University set "Phun-khang academy" and "Chongshi academy" in 2006 and 2008 respectively. The academies are responsible for students' ideological and moral education, they aim to reconstruct Chinese college tradition, explore the new college mode of students' community management. In 2011, Suzhou University draw lessons from the Trinity College of Cambridge University, found the "Jingwen College" by gathering the students of different majors in a small community for centralized management (Jiang, Yang, & Yin, 2001, September 16). All reforming measures above in Chinese university have great significance in exploration of educational mode, management system and so on. But the residential college system in modern university of China is not mature enough after all; we need further practice and observation. Besides, the development and perfection of residential college system must not only carry on the system design, but also need to accumulate culture and form our own spiritual core.

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