

Economic Foundation and Cause of the Difference between China Mishu and Europe Secretary

Ruihui Han

Humanities School, Jinan University, Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, China.

Abstract: Definitions of mishu in China and secretary in Europe are different. However, the two definitions often refer to the same concept in China and western world, although some researchers noticed the differences between such two concepts. But the cause of the difference is rarely investigated. The aim of this research was to discuss on the cause of the difference between such two concepts. This research based on the historical development of such two kinds of different concepts to find the cause of the cause that resulted in the difference. The findings show that the Industrial Evolution in Europe resulted in the changing of definition of secretary concept. Without the significant economic form changing, the definition of mishu concept did not change throughout the period of China feudalism, even in the period of the Republic of China. After reform and opening period, the concept of mishu in China changed with economic function. This study implies that the economic foundation is critical to the function of mishu and secretary, which often refer to the same vocation.

Key words: mishu; secretary; politics; economic foundation; private secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

Mishu is a unique phenomenon in China. Mishu, which is called as secretary in the western countries, is ubiquitous in China. Mishu position can be found in almost every school, hospital, institution, organization, factory and all levels of governments *et al.* in China. Such position is relatively all-purpose and diffuse in China than the counterpart in the western countries, in it has the far more personally intimate responsibility and broader power than the western secretary position. So in this sense, we can defined the China secretary position, on mishu in Chinese, as one kind of phenomenon rooted in unique China history and culture. There are many research materials suggest that the secretary in the western countries is mainly about the secretary in company, which functions for economic profit in the market economy. For example, Dorothy Morris Willey's *Role Playing in Secretarial Science*, which is an article dealt with the secretarial science teaching, focused on the training of the secretarial works, which were about the office dress and grooming, the office hostess, the diction and transcribing of the secretary, the "voice with a smile" and the interview for a position *et al.* (Dorothy Morris Willey.2012). Another article about the secretarial science is Terry D. Roach's *Give Your Secretarial Science Program a Medical Transfusion*, which addressed on the need of the secretaries in medical offices and the necessity of schools to cultivate secretaries for medical offices with the changing of teaching content of secretarial science (Terry D. 2012). This article mentioned that "according to these estimates 635,000 receptionists, 1,100,000 typists, and 2,500,000 secretaries will be needed in the next decade." ("Where Jobs Will Be In the 1980s,"1982.). From the research articles above, we can find that the secretarial science education in the western countries is market-guided. However, situation will be different in China.

Different from the western secretary in the companies, China secretary is mainly about the who works in government or danwei (institution belonged to country). Secretary position in China is ubiquitous (Li W, Pye L W. 1992). On the other side, the secretary in China is an institutionalized part of China politic process, in which the secretary will aid the leader to accomplish the tasks. There are also some aids beside some particular leaders in the western countries, however, they played the less important roles in the politic activities than those of the China secretaries. From many materials, it can be found that the secretaries in western countries in one kind of office clerks who in charge of the routine works in the office. However, the secretaries in China discussed are mainly about the secretaries in the complicated politic situations, and in service for the leader, play the important functions in China politic activities. There are several articles addressing on the secretary phenomenon in China. The unprecedented one deals with the secretary phenomenon in China is Wei Li and Lucian W. Pye's *The Ubiquitous Roles of the Mishu in Chinese Politics*, in which Wei Li and Luciano W. Pye discussed the mishus(secretaries) beside the leaders, in the aspects of mishu's functions and types of mishus, the symbolic relations of mishu and the corresponding leader, mishu's power game and possible changes of the mishu's roles (Li W, Pye L W. 1992). Another important article is Xia Li Lollar and Anne Wing Hamilton's *Patronage or Prebendalism? The Mishu/Shouzhang Relationship and Corruption in Chinese Politics* (Lollar, Xia L, Hamilton, *et al.*.2010), in which Xia Li Lollar and Anne Wing Hamilton examine the relations between the secretary and the corresponding leader in contemporary China. As they have considered, the secretary and the corresponding leader's relations are of patron-clientelism. The other research materials about *Lifting the Veil of*

the CCP's Mishu System: Unrestricted Informal Politics within an Authoritarian Regime discussed two kinds of secretary in China: the institutional Mishu and the personal mishu. In this article, the authors believe that the mishu in China is in the client-patron relationship with the leader, and they accumulate the power in unrestricted informal politics (Tsai W H, Dean N. 2015). From the materials mentioned above, it can be found that the secretary in China, which is called as mishu, is related with the politics intimately. Although there are teaching materials of secretarial science and research articles about secretary study in China deal with the secretary's function in market economy, such materials and articles are few. The authoritative academic journal *Mishu*, which focused on the secretary study, publishes the research articles related to the secretary and secretarial works in all levels of governments.

However, up to now, there is rare research about the reasons for why China secretarial works related to the politic and governmental activities. This article set out to investigate such problem in the perspectives of China secretarial history and culture. This article begins by the Introduction of the origin of secretarial position in ancient China and the following development. It will then go on to discuss on the secretarial position in modern times of China. The next chapter will investigate the politic features of traditional secretarial position. The following chapter will discuss on the influence of traditional secretarial position concept on contemporary secretary concept. The term "mishu" here will be used in this paper to prefer to the secretary in English. However, it is noticeable that the mishu is the secretary with Chinese style obviously. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, secretary can be defined as follows: "a person who works in an office, working for another person, dealing with letters and telephone calls, typing, keeping records, arranging meetings with people, etc.", "an official of a club, society, etc. who deals with writing letters, keeping records, and making business arrangements". (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2017). From this definition, we can find that the secretarial works are mainly confined in the office. According to Hanyu cihai (one of the biggest Chinese Dictionaries), mishu is defined as the follows: "the confidential and critical books, or the confidential books in court"; "the books about the superstition"; "the confidential and critical files, which refer to the confidential and critical documents in ancient government"; "the official title, who handle the books administration"; "the officials who handle the critical and confidential documents"; "the diplomatic clerk whose title is between counsellor and retinue". (Hanyu Cihai. 1999). According to Xiandai hanyu cidian (Modern Chinese Dictionary), mishu is defined as "who handles the documents and assists the institution or principal of section to process the daily and routine works" (Xiandai hanyu cidian, 1978). Compared with Hanyu cihai, Xiandai Hanyu cidian explains the means in more modern sense. So here we can find that China mishu has the following difference from the English secretary: first, the China mishu mainly handle the documents while the English secretary deals with the letters, telephone calls and other trifles in the office; second, China mishu's duty includes helping and assisting the institution and principal to cope with the works, while such duties are not obvious in the routines of the English secretary. It can be said the helping or assisting principal and institution can have ambiguous means, because, as the secretary in English tongue, his or her works are mainly in the office, so such works can also be deemed as helping and assisting the principal and institution. But, the China mishu's definition in Xiandai hanyu cidian (Modern Chinese Dictionary) emphasizes the assisting and helping, so it can be understood that such so called "helping" and "assisting" are more than the routine office works, such as handling the documents and the office trifles.

From the definitions of mishu and secretary definitions in the above paragraph, we can also find that China mishu has the intimate relationship with the keeping and handling documents and books, especially the critical and confidential documents in government. Hanyu cihai is one dictionary explaining the definitions with many traditional and historical meanings, while Xiandai hanyu cidian deals with the definitions with more modern Chinese language sense. Associating to the definitions of mishu in Hanyu cihai, we can find that mishu's works had many relationship with the critical and confidential documents in government in ancient times of China, however, in Xiandai hanyu cidian, the definition of mishu retains the description about duties of handling the documents, and on the other hand, it adds one meaning about the assisting and helping the principal and institution. Such assisting and helping results in many informal power for mishu (Lollar, Xia L, Hamilton, *et al.*. 2010), because such assisting and helping's meaning is ambiguous. From above discussion, we can find that the secretary in English Language and counterpart position in China, mishu, are different from each other to a large extent. Such differences are resulted from the different cultural and historical background. The following chapter will discuss about the origin of China mishu.

The origin of China mishu

According to Liu Mengyu's Xiandai mishuxue (Modern Secretarial Science), the origin of mishu in China can be traced back to the period of Yellow Emperor, who had two mishus, one recorded his behaviors, and another his words (Liu Mengyu. 1988). Yellow Emperor was in the times around 2500 B.E.C., while around 2000 B.E.C., in Xia dynasty, one national administration institution originated, which was called shuyin, the counterpart of modern mishu institution in China. In the end of Shang dynasty, which was across the period

between 1600 B.E.C. and 1046 B.E.C., the characters for recording were invented. Then some specialized staff in court appeared, which were called wu and shi, recording the words and behaviors of the court, and sending the orders of the emperor and the implication of the god(Liu Mengyu. 1988). In Zhou dynasty, which spread between 1046 B.E.C. and 256 B.E.C., the mishu institution got more specialized and divided into different sections, such as dali, who recorded the emperor's words and orders in dictation; zuoli, who recorded the emperor's behaviors and the vital politic, economic and military events in and beyond court; neishi, who participated in the policy-decision and drafted the confidential and critical documents; and yushi, who accompanied the emperor in the important scenes, accepted the confidential documents on behalf of emperor(Liu Mengyu. 1988).

Yushi in Zhou dynasty was called zuotu, whose functions became more diversified and important. In the court, he participated in the policy-decision and sending out orders, and out the court, he coped with the dukes and important guests of the court(Liu Mengyu. 1988).From the above description of origin of mishu in China history, we can find that the mishu's origin in ancient China was beside the emperors and the courts. The power of mishu became expanded with history evolution. In the beginning, mishu's functions were mainly about recording the words and behaviors of the emperors, then mishu began to record the events of the court and emperor's orders, except for the routine words and behaviors of the emperors. In the following periods, mishu took part in the policy-decision making in court and diplomatic events with considerable power. We can find that the first type of mishu in ancient China was around court, emperor and government. So in this sense, we can call such kind of mishu as institutional mishu, which and the personal mishu in *Lifting the Veil of the CCP's Mishu System: Unrestricted Informal Politics within an Authoritarian Regime* of Wen-Hsuan Tsai and Nicolas Dean compose the mishu system. So here this article will proceed to the origin of personal mishu in ancient China.

According to Zhang Ruinian (1998), the personal mishu in China appeared in West Zhou period, which spread between 1046 B.E.C. and 771 B.E.C.(Zhang Ruinian. 1998). In this period, the court became weak and the politic center moved to the dukes, so the dukes began to employ different staff in the service for themselves. One kind of the staff, who were proficient in the words and in charge of recording and give advice and suggestion for those dukes, can be regarded as the personal mishu (Zhang Ruinian. 1998). After the middle Warring-state times, many dukes began to employ the personal mishu, which was the group for shi class. As the personal mishu, shi class traveled among the different states, wanting to get the better treatment and higher social status. Some of the famous shis in that times became the important minister of the state(Zhang Ruinian. 1998). In order to get the better treatment and higher social status, shi must demonstrate their abilities and knowledge. As the employer, the dukes will spend more money to hire them, among which became so famous that they became the state ministers.

It can be concluded that the personal mishu is also related with the politic activities in the exact beginning. The employers of the personal mishus were the dukes and even the ministers of the state, and the functions of those personal mishus were mainly involved with the politics. Even some of the personal mishus became the state ministers in the condition that they really demonstrated the excellence in politic activities. Both the institutional mishu and personal mishu were all involved with the politics. To be concrete, their activities focused on the state's politics, the court and the dukes' benefits. In the aspects of working form, their duties included not only processing the documents, but also, more importantly, giving advice and suggestion for their employers. In the beginning of the secretary position in China, politics was imbedded in such profession. In the section that follows, the article will discuss on the origin of the secretary in Europe.

The origin of secretary in Europe

According to Lu Yufang's *Mishuxue gailun* (Introduction to Secretarial Science), secretarial works origin followed the appearance of state or tribe administration and the writs in ancient Europe (Lu Yufang. 2001). In the medieval age, many state monarch had the professional minister in charge of court routines and confidential documents. The English words to describe such position is "secretary"(Lu Yufang. 2001). In Chinese, such position is translated as "mishu". There were also some employees of the slave owners and aristocracies in charge of the letters and documents, and they were also the secretaries (Lu Yufang. 2001), however, they did not have the power to handle the politic activities. As discussed above, it can be found that the first kind of the secretary in Europe was also involved in politic activities. That was similar to the mishu's origin in ancient China. However, things changed in modern times, when the Industrial Revolution and bourgeois revolution happened. In modern enterprises, secretary was the intimate assistant and reliable manager of the enterprise owner(Lu Yufang. 2001). Here we can find the secretary duties became economy-guided from politics-guided. After 20th century, employment of the personal secretary was popular in the upper classes(Lu Yufang. 2001). Most of the upper classes' intention to hire the secretaries is not to cope with the politic activities, but to assist themselves with the other routines. So it can be found that politic meanings faded gradually with the expanding scale of personal secretary group. On the contrary, personal secretary, which are employed by private, is not common in contemporary China. Secretary position is still mainly in the governments, institutional

organizations and state-own incorporations. Therefore, it can be concluded that, until the contemporary times, the secretary positions in China are less related to the private organizations or companies. In other words, the secretary in China is different from that in the Europe and North America. So, in order to differentiate China secretary from that in the western countries, this article describes China secretary as mishu, which are related to public organizations or institutions more.

The economic development and the private secretary

One transition of the functions of secretary in Europe history was resulted by the Industrial Evolution and the Bourgeois Evolution. Those evolutions promoted the economic transition, in which process, the strength of the Bourgeois was reinforced. With the significant economic strength and the need to manage their companies more effectively, the bourgeois began to hire the secretary, who engaged in the Industrial management. So the functions of secretary became economy-guided from the politics-guided. The situation is different in China. There is no Industrial Evolution in China history, so the Bourgeois class did not become strong in ancient China. Therefore, with the weak economic foundation, the economic form, as the superstructure, could not change much. In Ming dynasty(1368-1662), the royal family, aristocracies and the government still hold the paramount power, or in other words, the absolutism prevailed in that times. In order to maintain their own benefits, the dictators in Ming dynasty upheld the feudalism. The situation continued in Qing dynasty. However, although the feudalism was in favor of the dictators' domination, that did not benefit the economic progress. With the weak bourgeois development, Qing dynasty's governments in different levels involved in the corruption, and that caused the underdeveloped economy in turn.

In Qing dynasty, there existed both the public mishus and personal mishus. The public mishus were those hired by the government, however, the personal mishus were still hired by the government in the sense that the personal mishus were generally hired by the officials in the governments. Qing dynasty ruled that the officials should not hire the personal mishus in the cost of the national finance. Although the officials in Qing dynasty had the pity salary, however, they still had much money to hire the personal mishus, who were called as shiyes, serving them in the finance management, politic activities and even law activities. Shiyes in Qing dynasty played significant roles in the spheres of politics. The more famous shiyes would be hired by the officials with more salary. Even one shiye got part of his salary according to the numbers his Chinese characters in his letters written on behalf of his employer: one character was worthy one ounce of silver. The officials provided the salary to the shiyes, their personal mishus. In the condition that their salary was low, they got the finance from corruption. Some famous shiyes got their official titles in governments according to their excellent assistance for their employers. From the discussion above, we can find that, until Qing dynasty, the mishu was still a profession about political and governmental activities. Even after finding the weakening of the country in Opium War, Qing government began to reform its mishu institutions according to the western secretary institution, however, those mishu institutions were mainly belonged to the government, but not the private. According to the research materials available, the researches about mishu in the time of the Republic of China(1912-1949) are still about the government. For example, When Wang Qin(2002) discussed the mishu institution in the period of the Republic of China, she referred the mishu institutions as the government institutions(Wang Qin. 2002). Mao Hande also preferred the mishu organizations in that times as governmental institutionalized profession in his article(Mao Hande. 1992).

In the period of the Republic of China, the mishu institutions in government was still similar to the aides agencies in feudal China. In the surface, the mishu institutions in that times were belonged to government and worked for the government. However, the mishu institutions were controlled by the single or several leaders and in service for the leaders. Such institutions shared the mutual benefit or loss with their leaders(Wang Qin. 2002). Therefore, the mishu in the period of the Republic of China still were feudalism and had the similar power to that of the mishus in ancient China mishus. After reform and opening in China of 1980s, the personal mishu in service for commercial business appeared. Public sector of the economy is still the main body of China economy, and the private owned economy is approved according to the reform and opening policy. So with the development of private owned economy, the personal mishus for commercial business and Industrial produce appeared and became more(Ma Junkui. 1990). The private mishus have four missions: first, giving the advice and suggestion to their employers according to their investigation and information; second, assisting their employers to cope with the public relationship; third, keeping the confidential and critical information for their employers; fourth, handling the routine works for their employers(Ma Junkui. 1990). Therefore, we can find that the private mishu in private owned economy do the works more than the office routines.

The economic reform resulted in the appearance of private mishu, or personal mishu in private owned economies. In 1990s, some new rich employers of private owned economies began to employ the young and beautiful female mishu, and therefore, there were some gossips about the love affairs between the employers and their female mishus. But with time flying, such gossips became faded, as such surprise brought about by such gossips became less. However, When one talks about the mishu in China, the word "mishu" is often

referred to the public mishu in government. With the flourishing of China economy from 1990s, however, the news about the corruption of mishus in governments became more and catching. The fast economic progress without effective legal system nourished the corruption(Chengze Simon Fan, Herschel I. Grossman.1998). Mishus often participated in the corruption with their leaders they served(Lollar, Xia L, Hamilton, et al. 2010), and often fell with their leaders' lose. But in recent years, with the rigid anticorruption measures, the corruption became much less. Therefore, we can conclude that the functions of mishu or secretary changed according to the economic foundation. The Industrial Evolution Europe and Economic Reform and Opening in China both inspired the commercial business private secretary's origin. However, the public mishu position continues to exist, and participated in economic corruption as the flourishing of economy, which provided some nurture for economic corruption. In all the process, economic foundation played the fundamental role.

II. CONCLUSION

This article set out to analyze the cause of the difference between China mishu and the western secretary concepts. It has shown that the origins of such concepts in the western can China history were similar. That is, they both related to the politic activities. However, the concepts changed According to the economic situations. In Europe, the definition of secretary concept began to tend to the economic function in Industrial Revolution period, however, as the bourgeois developed extremely slowly in China history, concept of mishu did not change in Feudal times, even the times of the Republic of China. After the period of Reform and Opening, the mishu concept in China changed according to the economic situation. In this times, more economic mishu appeared. This thesis has provided a deeper insight into the concepts of mishu and secretary. It indicates that the economic foundation is critical to the function changing of the mishu and secretary definitions.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Chengze Simon Fan, Herschel I. Grossman. Incentives and corruption in chinese economic reform[J]. Journal of Policy Reform, 1998, 4(3):195-206.
- [2]. Dorothy Morris Willey. Role Playing in Secretarial Science.[J]. Journal of Education for Business, 2012, 45(6):249-251.
- [3]. Hanyu Cihai. 1999. P1467
- [4]. Li W, Pye L W. The Ubiquitous Role of the, Mishu in Chinese Politics[J]. China Quarterly, 1992, 132(132):913-936.
- [5]. Liu Mengyu. Xiandai mishuxue(Modern Secretarial Science). Guangdong gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe. 1988, p12
- [6]. Lollar, Xia L, Hamilton, et al.. Patronage or Prebendalism? The Mishu/Shouzhang Relationship and Corruption in Chinese Politics[J]. China Review, 2010, 10(1):157-182.
- [7]. Lu Yufang. Mishuxue gailun(Lu Yufang. Introduction to Secretarial Science). Fudan daxue chubanshe. 2001, p33
- [8]. Ma Junkui. Lun dangdai zhongguo de siren mishu(On the Private Mishu in Contemporary China). Mishu zhiyou, 1990(7):11-13.
- [9]. Mao Hande. Qingmo zhi minguo mishu jigou jianjie(The Introduction to Mishu Institutions from the End of Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China). 1992(Z1), 36-38
- [10]. Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (2017) *Definition of secretary noun from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Available at: <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/secretary?q=secretary>(Accessed: Feb 3, 2017).
- [11]. Terry D. Roach. Give Your Secretarial Science Program a Medical Transfusion[J]. Journal of Education for Business, 2012, 59(2):80-81.
- [12]. Tsai W H, Dean N. Lifting the Veil of the CCP's Mishu System: Unrestricted Informal Politics within an Authoritarian Regime[J]. China Journal, 2015, 73(73):158-185.
- [13]. Wang Qin. Shixi minguo shiqi mishu jigou de xingzhi(The Analysis on the Features of Mishu Institutions in the Period of Republic of China). Mishu. 2002(8), 43-44
- [14]. "Where Jobs Will Be In the 1980s," U.S. News & World Report 92: 85; May 1982.
- [15]. Xiandai hanyu cidian. P894. 1978
- [16]. Zhang Ruinian. Chunqiu zhanguo shiqi de siren mishu(The Personal Mishu in Spring and Autumn, Warring State periods). Mishu zhiyou. 1998(12):40-41.