

The Career of President Zhong Rongguang of Lingnan University from the Perspective of Historical Psychology

Muchan Lin¹ Junlong Lin²

¹ Cultural Museum, South China Agricultural University, Guangzhou, Guangdong 510642, China

² College of Humanites, Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, China

ABSTRACT

Zhong Rongguang (1866~1942) the first president of Lingnan University, was a famous educator in China. Starting from the imperial examination talents, he actively responded to social changes. Studying western education, he founded Lingnan Agricultural University, and raising funds to run education globally, he took Lingnan University back to the people of our own country to run. He has been engaged in education for more than 40 years, and closely linked patriotism with education. Having made outstanding contributions to the country, the people, and the development and growth of Lingnan University, he can be called a role model for future generations.

Keywords: *Zhong Rongguang — president of Lingnan University, Business of education, Good model.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Lingnan University, originally recognized as Gezhi Academy, was founded by American missionaries in the 14th year of Guangxu (1888). Its address was Shaji Jinli Port (now 623 Road), Guangzhou. Later renamed “Lingnan School,” it moved to Macao in 1900, and in 1904 to Kangle village, Haizhu District, Guangzhou (now the South Campus of Sun Yat-sen University). In 1914, university courses were developed to recruit college students. In 1916, a University of Arts and Sciences was established. Dr. Sun Yat-sen once praised the university’s magnitude of academic offerings and high-caliber education. Not only is it the first university in Guangdong but it is also unique in Southwest China because its founder and five subsequent presidents (supervisors) were all Americans, and the university was funded primarily by the United States. In 1927, the college was incorporated by the Chinese people and was renamed private Lingnan University. It became the first university established by a foreign church and incorporated by the Chinese people. Zhong Rongguang became the university’s first Chinese President (“Figure 1”).[1]



Figure 1 Zhong Rongguang (1866~1942)

In 1899, Zhong Rongguang was employed as the general Chinese teacher of Guangzhou Gezhi Academy, an American missionary school. In 1908, he served as the Provost of Lingnan School, founded Lingnan Agricultural University in 1917, served as the Deputy Supervisor of Lingnan University, served as the supervisor of Lingnan University in 1924 (with Dr. James M. Henry, regardless of the principal and deputy). In 1928, Lingnan University was owned by the Chinese

people and Zhong Rongguang served as the university's first President. In charge of Lingnan University, he founded Lingnan Agricultural University, Lingnan Institute of Technology, Business School, and Sun Yat-sen Medical School. In 1942, he died of illness in Hong Kong.

2. RENOWNED IMPERIAL EXAMINATION SCHOLARS SET UP LIBRARIES, TAUGHT DISCIPLES, RAN NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS, AND PUBLICIZED NEW REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPTS

Zhong Rongguang was born in Xiaolan Township, Xiangshan County, Guangdong Province (now Zhongshan County) in 1866. His father was a farmer who later engaged in business in Hong Kong. When Zhong Rongguang was young, he studied at a private school while his father was in Hong Kong; later, he transferred to Guangzhou. He was a scholar at the age of 17 and an apprentice at the age of 29. He established a renowned museum to teach apprentices.

In 1895, the Sino-Japanese war ended with China's defeat, and thoughts of saving and strengthening the country were pervasive throughout China. The bus written by Kang Youwei and the first Guangzhou Uprising launched by Dr. Sun Yat-sen were powerful sources of motivation for Zhong Rongguang in his important transformation. Kebao was founded in Guangzhou to publicize new ideas. The following year, he secretly joined the Xingzhong Society. After being sealed, Kebao co-founded Bowen newspaper and Anya newspaper in collaboration with others to actively engage in the revolutionary cause. During the reform movement of 1898, Zhong Rongguang actively responded to Kang's and Liang's reform ideas and echoed them in newspapers and periodicals.

3. THE FORERUNNER OF THE TRANSFORMATION FROM OLD EDUCATION TO NEW LEARNING

Zhong Rongguang is handsome and easy-going. Among Zhong Rongguang's many friends are Christian believers and priests. Influenced by them, he also felt the advanced atmosphere of the new western academy in the curriculum of natural sciences. Zhong Rongguang was baptized as a Christian in 1899 and he attended the Gezhi

Academy that was being run by Western missionaries in Guangzhou, where he learned English and natural sciences. At the same time, the school recognized Zhong Rongguang's renowned reputation and hired him as the general teacher of Chinese; gradually he played an important decision-making role in the development of the Academy. In the ensuing 37 years, he assisted the three supervisors of the school—Oscar F. Wisner, (governor from 1899 to 1907), Dr. Charles K. Edmunds (governor from 1908 to 1923), and Dr. James M. Henry (governor from 1924 to 1927) — in making significant contributions to the development and growth of Lingnan School and Lingnan University. In 1927, he became the first Chinese President when Lingnan University was owned by the Chinese people[2].

4. ZHONG RONGGUANG PARTICIPATED IN THE PERMANENT CAMPUS SITE SELECTION OF LINGNAN SCHOOL AND SERVED AS THE CHAIR OF GUANGZHOU YMCA

In 1900, Shi Jianru, a student Xingzhong member of Gezhi College, was arrested in an attempt to bomb the governor of Guangdong and Guangdong. Zhong Rongguang's rescue failed in many ways, and Gezhi College was forced to move to Macao. In 1904, in order to seek the long-term development of Lingnan University, Zhong Rongguang and the school supervisor Yin Shijia returned to Guangzhou to choose a new school site, and finally selected the area around Kangle village, Henan Province, because the place was far away from the urban area at that time, which could make the school a pure land and facilitate the management of students. From then on, he began to buy land and obtained more than 200 mu. That year, Lingnan School was relocated from Macao. The following year, Zhong Rongguang graduated from the second preparatory class (middle school) of the school at the age of 39.

Zhong Rongguang believes that in order to make the country rich and strong, we must initially broaden people's intelligence and motivate the learning of Western science and technology, starting with running new schools. Christianity is a good medium and stepping stone for learning Western education. He devoted himself to participating in Christian affairs. In 1907, Zhong Rongguang went to Japan with Oscar F. Wisner as a representative of the Chinese YMCA to attend the

conference of the world Christian Student Alliance and investigate educational affairs. On his return trip to Tianjin, he was detained for examination. Fortunately, Tang Shaoyi and other fellow villagers rescued him. He returned to Guangzhou, where he initiated the establishment of Guangzhou YMCA, which is mainly composed of teachers and students from church schools. He served as the chair of the association.

5. ZHONG RONGGUANG LAUNCHED GLOBAL CHINESE FUNDRAISING AND WENT FREQUENTLY OVERSEAS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

In 1908, Yan Wenshi was the supervisor of Lingnan School, and Zhong Rongguang was the Provost. As the school is far away from the urban area, the students require board and care and because the teaching staff's children cannot attend other schools in the urban area, it is necessary to set up a primary school. However, the Lingnan board of directors in New York could not raise sufficient funds to construct new buildings and dormitories. Zhong Rongguang began to raise money for the school in 1908. From 1909 to 1910, he went abroad for the first time to raise money from overseas Chinese, mainly in Nanyang, the United States, and Canada. Thus began a large fundraising effort on behalf of the school that continued for more than 30 years.

After the revolution of 1911, the governor's office of Guangdong was established. In May 1912, Zhong Rongguang became the director of the Education Department of Guangdong Province. During his tenure, he carried out several education reforms in Guangdong Province. In 1913, after the failure of the Second Revolution to denounce Yuan, Long Jiguang entered Guangdong and killed revolutionaries. Zhong Rongguang was also blacklisted and pursued. Fortunately, Yan Wenshi rescued him. He entered to the United States through Hong Kong.

Zhong Rongguang arrived first in Honolulu. In 1914, he transferred to Columbia University in New York to study education as an elective. During his study abroad, Zhong Rongguang served as the director of the New York branch of the Kuomintang. He was ordered by Sun Yat-sen to establish the people's gas newspaper, and organized Lingnan joint meetings all over the United States to

raise funds for the school. In 1917, influenced by World War I, the exchange rate of the US dollar plummeted, and the funding sources of the United States decreased significantly. Lingnan School encountered unprecedented financial difficulties. Lingnan was a missionary school, which was located in a remote suburb at that time. The people's xenophobia was quite strong, which was subject to various resistance and even interference. Therefore, Yan Wenshi, the highest authority of the school at that time, was worried about funds and social relations. He asked Sheng Zhong Rongguang to be the Deputy Supervisor of the school and urged him to return to school as soon as possible.

During Zhong Rongguang's visit to the United States, his first wife Ho died. In 1915, Zhong Rongguang married Zhong Tingfen, a teacher in Honolulu. In early 1917, Zhong Rongguang and his wife returned to Guangzhou.

6. ZHONG RONGGUANG REENTERED LINGNAN UNIVERSITY AND VIGOROUSLY ADVOCATED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICAL DISCIPLINES SUCH AS AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Zhong Rongguang believes that as a large agricultural country with a large population, developing agriculture and solving the problem of eating are primary problems. Under his active promotion, he founded Lingnan Agricultural University in 1917 and changed it to the College of Agricultural Sciences of Lingnan University in 1921[3].



Figure 2 Zhong Rongguang and Sun Yat-sen.

After the establishment of Lingnan School, there were only dozens of students. After moving to Kangle village, Lingnan School gradually developed. It was set up as a freshman in 1912. Because of its small scale, Americans do not want Chinese to interfere too much in school affairs. For a long time, Zhong Rongguang just hung a false title and assisted in supervision. By 1917, the primary and secondary schools were complete; the entire school had more than 600 teachers and students, and the area was much larger than before; so the problems increased. At the same time, the scale of the school expanded as did the campus; there were many difficulties in purchasing land, and the assistance of reputable Chinese was urgently needed.

After Zhong Rongguang returned to school, due to his good relationship with senior officials, he often invited important party and government officials of the Republic of China to participate in school activities, Dr. Sun Yat-sen was invited to give a speech at Lingnan University three times ("Figure 2"); he hired military and government personnel from Guangdong as school directors; he played a good role in solving problems such as land purchase and relocation of graves and campus security and stability; and he was successful in receiving government financial support many times when the school's maintenance funds were unsustainable in order to overcome difficulties and ensure the growth of Lingnan University.

7. ZHONG RONGGUANG SERVED AS THE FIRST CHINESE PRESIDENT AT LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

In 1923, Yan Wenshi resigned as supervisor and was succeeded by Dr. James M. Henry, with Zhong Rongguang as deputy governor. In the summer of 1924, Zhong Rongguang went to America to raise money and traveled extensively throughout North and South America. At that time, the anti-imperialist movement was surging in Guangzhou, whereas the anti-education movement and the movement to recover the right to education formed by it were also surging. Dr. James M. Henry was unable to support the overall situation, and died. Zhong returned to school as soon as possible. Zhong Rongguang returned to school in the summer of 1926. In the summer of 1927, Lingnan was finally taken back and run by the Chinese. Canton Christian College, which was the English name of the school, was renamed Lingnan University. A new board of directors with the majority of Chinese was established, with Sun Ke as the chair and Zhong Rongguang as the President.

On December 1, 1928, the agricultural teaching building (i.e., Shiyou building) of Lingnan University under the direction of President Zhong Rongguang opened ("Figure 3")[4].



Figure 3 The agricultural teaching building of Lingnan University groundbreaking ceremony.

8. ZHONG RONGGUANG VIGOROUSLY PROMOTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF LINGNAN UNIVERSITY INTO A MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIVERSITY

In 1928, Zhong Rongguang went to Nanjing to report on his work as a standing member of the Education Committee of the national government, and served as the director of the Central Bureau of overseas Chinese affairs. The school affairs were carried out by Li Yinglin, Vice President, and Zhong Rongguang still held the title of President. When Zhong Yu took office, he discussed with Sun Ke, Minister of Railways, and obtained his support. It was decided that the Ministry of Railways and Lingnan University would jointly set up a college of engineering, and the Ministry of Railways would allocate funds to train students who demonstrated railway and highway talents. The next year, the director of overseas Chinese Affairs resigned. In 1930, Lingnan received foreigners at Boji Hospital in Changdi, Guangzhou. Because Sun Yat-sen practiced medicine in the hospital in his youth, Zhong Rongguang always wanted to run a medical school to commemorate Sun Yat-sen. In 1935, he personally went to Nanjing and asked the Kuomintang government to allocate funds. After multiple attempts, he was finally approved to allocate 500,000 yuan to run the largest Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hospital in Guangzhou at that time. In this way, together with the original colleges of Arts and Sciences, agricultural colleges, engineering colleges, business schools, and Theological Seminary jointly organized with Xiehe, there are nearly 30 departments of six colleges, more than 400 subjects, and more than 1,000 students, making it a large-scale institution of higher learning with multiple colleges and departments. Over the years, in order to change the limitation that the school only trains talents in basic disciplines, Zhong Rongguang has finally achieved the goal of cultivating practical intellectuals, and the school's scale and discipline setting have been developed in a comprehensive manner[5].

9. PIONEERS OF MODERN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN CHINA

In 1937, Zhong Rong was 70 years old. Due to his age and frailty, he retired in June and served as

honorary President. In July, he participated in the Lushan Guling symposium to discuss the plan of the war of resistance against Japan, and served as a senator of the National Political Council. During the Anti Japanese War, he moved to Fangcheng, Vietnam and Hong Kong. On his 75th birthday in 1941, he launched a fundraising event for Lingnan University, which was suspended after the Pacific War. After the fall of Hong Kong, he was unable to withdraw due to physical reasons and died of illness on January 7, 1942.

At the age of 70, Zhong Rongguang drew up a long couplet and summarized his life in this elegy:

After 30 years of obsession with the imperial examination, he has changed his life, no party honors, served as an official, no political achievements, studied and had no diploma. He is the only one who works and dies in Lingnan.

Both hemispheres are used to travelling, but they take pleasure in the completion of tasks. They do not have private wealth, daily use, adoptive children, disciples, fame and accounts. The soul is the true self. How many trials and honors will be given to Christ's eternal life?

— Zhong Rongguang

In the history of Chinese university education, there have been two sentences. The first sentence is "Cai Yuanpei in the north and Zhong Rongguang in the South." The second sentence is "North Zhang (Boling) south bell." Of course, Cai Yuanpei and Zhang Boling are thunderous, and this "clock" is Mr. Zhong Rongguang.

Lingnan University — the first university to accept higher education in the same school, the first university to recognize degrees with famous American universities, foreign exchange students, and directly introduce the Western modern education model—plays an exemplary role in the process of China's educational modernization. One hundred years ago, when the national economy was very depressed and the situation at home and abroad was chaotic, Zhong Rongguang traveled around the world to raise funds from patriotic overseas Chinese and those from all walks of life at home. In 1927, he took Lingda back from the American church and built it into a comprehensive university with a modern discipline setting and academic spirit with colleges of arts and sciences, business, agriculture, engineering, and medicine. Its contribution to the modernization of Chinese university education will never be forgotten[6].

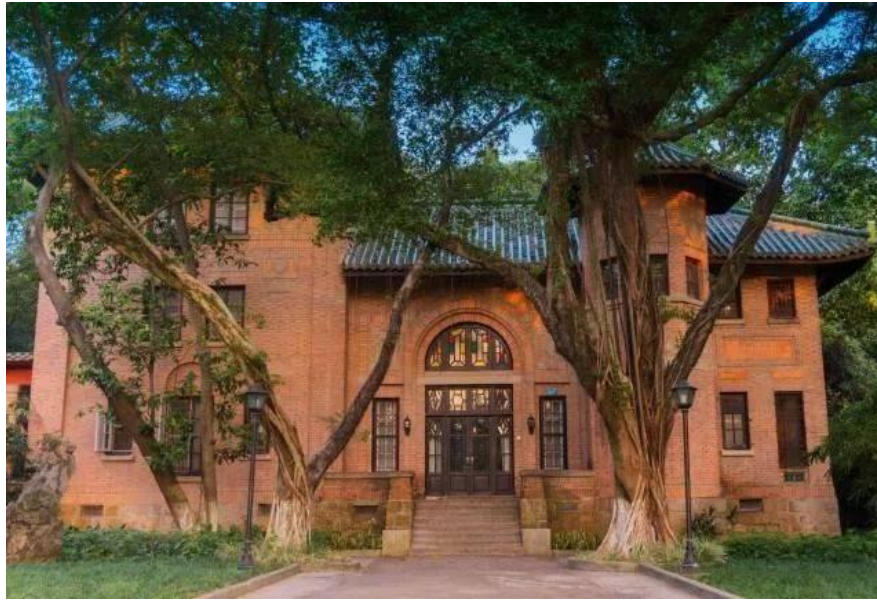


Figure 4 Zhong Rongguang's residence in Lingnan University—Blackstone House.

At present, Rongguang Hall was established on the campus of Sun Yat-sen University in memory of Mr. Zhong Rongguang ("Figure 4"). A student dormitory donated by a group of alumni of Lingnan University, such as Mo Gansheng and Lin Zhihao, was completed in 1924. Later, in memory of Dr. Zhong Rongguang, the first Chinese President of Lingnan University, it was renamed Rongguang Hall. It is now a guest house and a Western restaurant.

10. CONCLUSION

Zhong Rongguang was a famous educator and social activist in the period of the Republic of China. He occupied an important position in the educational circles at that time and had a far-reaching influence. He is still remembered by many people today. From the perspective of historical psychology, this paper studies Zhong Rongguang's life. He made different contributions to China's education in different stages of life, which had a great impact on that time and now. In order to commemorate his outstanding contribution to the University, Lingnan University was honored as the "father of Lingnan University". his office & residence in Lingnan University was also regarded as a "holy land".

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Muchan Lin, wrote the manuscript, and Junlong Lin contributed to revising and editing

REFERENCES

- [1] Modern Guangdong education and Lingnan University, Huang Juyan. Commercial Press (Hong Kong) Co., Ltd., 1995.
- [2] Special Edition of Alumni Performance of South China Agricultural University, edited by the Editorial Committee of the centennial celebration series of South China Agricultural University, Guangdong Science and Technology Press, 2009.
- [3] Luo Xinglian, Zhong Rongguang, and Lingnan Agricultural University [J] Guangzhou Wenbo, 2007, issue 00, pp 190-203.
- [4] Liu Baozhen, Zhong Rongguang and Modern Agricultural Education in South China, Journal of Zhengzhou Institute of Aviation Industry Management (Social Science Edition) 2014, issue 3, pp 33-38
- [5] Xia Mingliang, Father of Lingnan University, Zhong Rongguang, Literature and History, spring and autumn 2016, issue 1, pp 47-51.
- [6] Biography of Mr. Zhong Rongguang, edited by Lingnan University Alumni Association, 4th edition, November 2003.