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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Seeking and Managing Wealth: Advice from a Guangdong Mother in Late Qing and Early Republican China

Abstract This article traces the life of Qu Fengzhu (1860–1927), a native of Panyu, Guangdong, with special focus on her *Zhijia yaoyi* (Basic principles of household management). Whereas many women from elite families in late imperial China emphasized the importance of their sons studying hard in order to secure a place in the government or to live with dignity, Qu Fengzhu focused on seeking and managing wealth properly to sustain the family finances. Living in the greater Canton area loaded with heavy commercial activities and East-West interaction opportunities, as well as witnessing the political and social transition from the imperial era to the republican era, Qu Fengzhu gave very pragmatic advice to her offspring without elaborating much on high-sounding truths and principles. She set four rules for her children to follow and emphasized the importance of diligence and frugality. In a flourishing commercial world, the relatively conservative arguments on wealth management contained in *Zhijia yaoyi* somehow incorporates moral education. This makes its author's words carry weight and significance.

Keywords Qu Fengzhu, Wu Qingshi, Guangdong, Panyu, educated mothers, wealth management, household instruction manual

Introduction

Qu Fengzhu 屈鳳竹 (*h.* Wutong 五桐, 1860–1927), a native of Panyu,

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Guangdong, was an 18th-generation descendant of the Ming loyalist and famous scholar Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630–96). She was married to Wu Baozhen 鄔寶珍 (1859–93), also from Panyu, but was widowed at the age of 34 *sui*. She gave birth to five children, including two sons, Qingshi 慶時 (1883–1968) and Qingpan 慶槃, and three daughters, Zhaogui 兆桂, Ruichu 瑞初, and Kuanrou 寬柔.

The Wu clan of Panyu traced their origin back to the pre-Qin era and recognized Wu Daxin 鄔大昕 (*jinshi*, 1112) of the Southern Song, who led the migration to Guangzhou, as their first local ancestor. Fengzhu's husband belonged to the 24th generation. With continuous prosperity in subsequent generations, the Wu descendant community today still honors their ancestors and maintains their ancestral hall, tombs, gardens, and other historical properties to hold regular activities, especially during the Qingming 清明 festival. Their main ancestral hall Guangda tang 光大堂 (Bright and Great Hall), and their garden Yuyin shanfang 餘蔭山房 (Yuyin Garden), both located at Nancun (South Village), are famous and have become tourist attractions. Recently, Wu Yongxiong 鄔詠雄 (Octa Woo), an active member of the Wus, has compiled and published a new genealogy based on the older editions to honor the clan.[1] He has also set up a blog and uploaded much textual and pictorial information of the Wu clan from the past and the present.[2]

Qu Fengzhu's husband, Wu Baozhen, belonged to the fourth *zhai* 宅 (house) of the Shilong tang 世隆堂 (Shilong Hall) in the 24th generation of the Panyu Wu clan. Their offspring and descendants in later generations could be traced accordingly in the family history. It is clearly marked on the succession line that Fengzhu's eldest son, Qingshi, was assigned to continue the succession (*chusi* 出嗣) of the third branch, under his uncle Baoli 寶理.[3] Therefore, Qingshi addressed Baoli as his *jifu* 繼父 (father-in-succession) and himself as *sinan* 嗣男 (son-in-succession) when he edited Baoli's work *Da'an suibi* 達盦隨筆 (Da'an's casual essays) for publication.[4] However, it is

[1] Wu Yongxiong (Octa Woo), *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu: Guangdong Panyu Nancun*.

[2] Octawoo and Wu Family Blog (2008). Accessed on April 2, 2016, http://blog.xuite.net/octawoo/hkblog

[3] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 193.

[4] Contained in Wu Qingshi, comp., *Wu jia chuji* (17-volume, a late Qing-early Republican edition housed at the Fudan University Library).

quite obvious that Qingshi still maintained a very close relationship with his own parents. Evidence could be found in Qingshi's own works, in which he mentioned and honored his own parents rather frequently. A surviving family picture taken in 1924 also reveals Fengzhu's close relation with her grandchildren, Qingshi's eldest son and some daughters, among others (See Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 A Family Picture of the Wus Taken in 1924

Note: Left to right: Qu Fengzhu's granddaughters Wu Zhuohua 鄔灼華 and Wu Zhuoyi 鄔灼宜, Qu Fengzhu's grandson Wu Chongguang 鄔重光, Qu Fengzhu, and Qu's granddaughter Wu Zhuoxin 鄔灼新 (information provided by Octa Woo in his email communication with Lin Zhihui on May 10, 2016). The picture also appears at http://blog.xuite.net/octawoo/hkblog.

Qu Fengzhu's Life as Narrated by Family and Relatives

Scattered accounts of Qu Fengzhu's life can be gathered from different sources, mainly written by her family members and relatives. Wu Qingshi mentions the life of his mother briefly in the preface of the chronicle of Qu Dajun he compiled, and officially points out that his mother is a descendant of Qu Dajun.[5] Additionally, records of Wu Qingshi narrating episodes of his mother's

[5] Wu Qingshi, *Qu Dajun nianpu*, "Xu," 1–2.

life can also be found in a message of birthday greetings presented by a relative Liang Guangzhao 梁廣照 (1877–1951), in which Qingshi is quoted for praising his mother as a filial daughter and daughter-in-law, a virtuous wife who brings harmony to the family, a strict mother who pays great attention to the school work of her son, and a generous member of the family who spends little on herself but goes out of her way to help others in need.[6] Not only was Qu Fengzhu kind to her immediate family, she was also a much-welcomed member in her natal family. Her nephew, Qu Xiangbang 屈向邦, also remarks that Fengzhu shared many stories about their ancestors with her nephews and nieces in the Qu family.[7] Wu Xiangguang 鄔祥光 (1926–2006), son of Qingshi and grandson of Qu Fengzhu, describes his grandmother as a lady of the new era with advanced ideas, who supported the revolution led by Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (1866–1925).[8] Qu Fengzhu's very brief data is also included in the Wu genealogy, after the entry about her husband Wu Baozhen.[9]

Besides general information, more details of Fengzhu's life can be found in other writings of her son Qingshi. For example, Qingshi once remarked on his mother's virtue, telling how fair she was and how well she treated her two maids. Qingshi mentioned that his mother spent very limited money (15 *qian* 錢) on fish for meals, but the two maids were allowed to have equal share with Qingshi and his siblings. Qingshi highly commended this virtuous deed. On another occasion, Qingshi also recalled that during his childhood, when he returned from school, his father often continued teaching him in the evening, but sometimes his mother also took up the teaching role. Scenes of three persons studying together by a lamp, a typical scene of *kezi tu* 課子圖 (pictures featuring scenes of parents educating their children) that flourished in late imperial China,[10] appear in Qingshi's writings. However, Qingshi's father,

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[6] Liang Guangzhao, "Gongzhu cefeng ruren Wu lao taiyinbomu Qu tai ruren liuzhi jinyi rongqing," in Qu Fengzhu, *Zhijia yaoyi*, contained in Wu Qingshi, comp., *Wujia chuji* (1931 edition, housed at the National Library of China), "Shouxu," 1a–2a.

[7] Qu Xiangbang, "*Zhijia yaoyi* xu," contained in Wu Qingshi, comp., "Xu," in *Wu jia chuji*, 1a–2a.

[8] Wu Xiangguang, *Wu Xiangguang huiyilu*, 5.

[9] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 221–22, see also 79.

[10] For further information, see Liu Yongcong, "Qingdai kezi tu zhong de muqin," in *Caide xianghui: Zhongguo nüxing de zhixue yu kezi*, 156–96; "Yitu mingzhi: Qingdai nüxing tiyong kezi tu wenben tanxi," *Zhongzheng hanxue yanjiu*, 229–56; "Mingdai kezi tu shiliao lüelun," 117–54.

Baozhen, passed away early when he was a boy. He recalls painfully the scene of his mother passing him his late father's unpublished manuscript after he had grown up, and how he had thus made up his mind to edit and publish the surviving works of his father.[11]

The image of Qu Fengzhu as a helpful mother who inspired her children is also represented in Qingshi's writings. For example, as mentioned in one of Qingshi's miscellaneous notes, *Nancun caotang biji* 南村草堂筆記 (Miscellaneous notes from the South Village Humble Cottage), he followed his mother's instruction to worship Confucius instead of honoring incense tablets.[12] In another set of notes, *Tingyulou suibi* 聽雨樓隨筆 (Casual essays from the Rain-Appreciating Tower), he recalls that his mother advised him not to pursue a career in law, explaining why he was determined to build up his career in wealth management. He also argues that improper management of property (*licai budang* 理財不當) could lead to more widely spread troubles than poor judicial administration (*sifa budang* 司法不當). Qu Fengzhu's wisdom in warning Qingshi to be always prepared for unexpected circumstances is also recorded.[13]

Qu Fengzhu's Role in Shaping Her Son Qingshi

Besides engaging in primary education in his late twenties, Wu Qingshi did follow his mother's wish and embarked on a career in finance in his thirties. Appointed by the Republican government, he took up a finance-related position in Hunan in 1915 and returned to Panyu to manage the finance of the various divisions of the Wu clan in 1916.[14] He served as a press reporter in Beijing in 1920, then joined the Revenue Office of the Republican government from 1922 to 1926. His *Qiongmang xiaoji* 窮忙小記 (Notes taken when busy earning a living) is actually a record of his work in those years.[15] However, in later years, Wu Qingshi had established himself as a scholar and eventually produced a considerable number of publications and was

[11] See Wu Qingshi's preface to Wu Baozhen's *Zhiyinge shiji*, in *Wu jia chuji*, "Ji," 4b.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Wu Qingshi, *Tingyulou suibi*, in *Wu jia chuji*, vol. 3, 13a.

[14] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 50–53 and 223.

[15] See Wu Qingshi's preface in *Qiongmang xiaoji*, in *Wu jia chuji*, 1a.

well-respected in the Wu family. In the Wu genealogy, Qingshi's list of publications is very impressive, including works in genealogy, chronicles, gazetteers, prose, poetry, and miscellaneous notes.[16] He also compiled several editions of the Wu family collections.[17] His calligraphy was famous too, and he spent the last decades of his life compiling gazetteers and leading a scholarly life at the Sun Yat-sen University and a number of departments within the Guangdong provincial government.[18] Among the limited existing studies on Wu Qingshi, most works focus on his contribution to the compilation of local histories.[19]

Qu Fengzhu and Other Members in the Family

Accounts of several members of Qu Fengzhu's family are worthy of attention and their stories may reflect the relative openness of the Guangdong area.[20] For example, Qu Fengzhu's father-in-law, Wu Qizuo 鄔啓祚 (1830–1911), celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary with his wife in 1908. He was

[16] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 50–53.

[17] Major editions included the following: *Wu jia chuji* (*op. cit.*); *Wu shi congshu*, 26 vols., 1905–30, housed at the East China Normal University Library; *Wu shi quanji*, 15 vols., 1908–28, housed at the Fu Ssu-nien Library, Academia Sinica, Taipei; *Wu shi congke*, 27 vols., 1908–29, housed at the National Palace Museum Library (Taiwan); *Wu shi congshu*, 31 vols., 1909–32, housed at the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong province; *Wu jia chuji*, 1931; *Banfanlou congshu*, 20 vols., 1933, housed at the Shandong University Library; *Banfanlou congshu*, 27 vols., Republican period, housed at 7 libraries and recorded in *Zhongguo congshu zonglu*; *Wu shi congshu*, 10 vols., Republican period, recorded in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*.

[18] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 50–53.

[19] See Hou Yuexiang, "Wu Qingshi," 29; Wu Xiangguang and Wu Minsui, "Wu Qingshi shengping jishu," 179–84; Zheng Quanan, "Wu Qingshi fangzhi xue lilun pingjie," 24–27; Gong Bohong, "Fangzhi xue jia Wu Qingshi jiqi fangzhi lilun," 64–66; Wang Guiyun, "Xiuzhi zhuzhong jishi xiangzai de Wu Qingshi"; Zhang Fudong, "Luo Gongwu *Xiaojing tonglun* qianxi: Jianlun qi yu Wu Qingshi *Xiaojing tonglun* zhi bijiao," 33–37.

[20] See Michael Tsang-woon Tsin, *Nation, Governance, and Modernity: Canton, 1900–1927*; Steven B. Miles, *The Sea of Learning: Mobility and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Guangzhou*; Cheng Meibao, *Diyu wenhua yu guojia rentong: Wan Qing yilai "Guangdong wenhua" guan de xingcheng*; Steven B. Miles, *Upriver Journeys: Diaspora and Empire in Southern China, 1570–1850*.

especially proud of his good fortune in experiencing the occasion and therefore held a ceremony known as *chongfeng huazhu* 重逢花燭 (lighting up the wedding candles for a second time), as if running a wedding ceremony again. It was a rare but highly honorable occasion, as not too many people could live long enough to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.[21] Hundreds of congratulatory messages in poetry and prose were sent to Wu Qizuo and he gave this a special mention in his *Gengyun bieshu shihua* 耕雲別墅詩話 (Remarks on poetry from the Gengyun Mansion),[22] while his grandson Qingshi compiled all the messages into a volume *Nanshan jiahua* 南山佳話 (Happy notes from the South Mountain).[23]

Women sworn spinsterhood via a hairdressing ceremony known as *zishu* 自梳 (self-combed) and refused or delayed cohabiting with their husbands and families in an action known as *bu luojia* 不落家 (not entering the family). These marriage-resistance practices were common in several parts of Guangdong, especially Shunde and Panyu.[24] Wu Qingshi co-published an article with two friends on this subject, in which he also mentioned that many of his female relatives were either *zishu* or *bu luojia*, and two of his three sisters and many female cousins, also did the same. Wu Qingshi also provided information on two of his sisters: One of them established a factory in Guangzhou that hired hundreds of *zishu* ladies of the same village, while the other set up a private school with an enrolment of a few hundred students, with many of them subsequently becoming *zishu* ladies.[25] Although it is not clear whether Qu Fengzhu had a significant role in her daughters' decisions to stay independent and pursue their own careers, the choice of her daughters seems to reflect both the local culture and parental support.

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[21] For an account of the 60th wedding anniversary celebration of the Wu Qizuo couple, see my "Wan Qing hunyin wenhua zhong de chongfeng huazhu qingdian: Wu Qizuo ge'an yanjiu."

[22] Wu Qizuo, *Gengyun biexu shihua*, 8b.

[23] Wu Qingshi, comp., *Nanshan jiahua*.

[24] See Marjorie Topley, "Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwangtung," 67–88; Janice E. Stockard, *Daughters of the Canton Delta: Marriage Patterns and Economic Strategies in South China, 1860–1930*; Helen Siu, "Where Were the Women? Rethinking Marriage Resistance and Regional Cultural History," 32–62; Ye Hanming, *Zhuti de zhuixun: Zhongguo funü yanjiu xilun*, 175–285.

[25] Chen Yuzeng, Li Sifu, and Wu Qingshi, "'Zishu nü' yu 'bu luojia,'" 172–88.

In another work, *Baitaohua guan zayi* 白桃花館雜憶 (Miscellaneous memories from the White Peach Blossom Studio), Wu Qingshi records episodes of his family life, with loving memories of his daughter Zhuoyan 灼顏 who died young. Qingshi mentions that Zhuoyan insisted to follow two of her sisters who had initiated visits to their grandmother Qu Fengzhu during a school-term break. He also remarks that Qu Fengzhu once sent him fresh lychees from the family garden and his daughter Zhuoyan felt very excited.[26] All these examples reflect the harmonious relation Qu Fengzhu had with her family members.

Qu Fengzhu Remembered by the Wu Family

Qu Fengzhu did live long enough to receive an official honor in 1920, probably owing to the career and connection of her son Qingshi. Similar to the practice of the Qing imperial government, the Republican government also regularly honored exemplary individuals, especially immediate family members of successful officials. The honors given to Wu Qingshi's grandfather Qizuo, father Baozhen, mother Fengzhu, and uncle/*jifu* Baoli in 1920 are all preserved in a multi-volume collection. Qu Fengzhu is highly praised for her womanly virtue in serving her in-laws and raising her children in widowhood. An elegantly written citation was dedicated to her with the four heading characters *wu xianren yan* 無閒(閒)人言 (nothing could be gossiped by busybodies), publicly issued in the name of the President (The Wu family genealogy claims that it was Sun Yat-sen,[27] but actually the President in 1920 was Xu Shichang 徐世昌 [1855–1939]).[28] Wu Qingshi remarks in *Tingyulou suibi* that the tablet printed *wu xianren yan* was actually with him in Beijing. In 1921, he brought home the tablet, medal, and calligraphy of numerous congratulatory messages written by relatives and friends, in order to celebrate the 61st birthday of his mother.[29]

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[26] See Wu Qingshi's *Baitaohua guan zayi*, in *Wu jia chuji*, vol. 1, 3ab.

[27] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 78–79.

[28] See *Zhonghua Minguo baoyangling ji (chubian): Fu youguan shiliao*, vol. 3, 732, "Zhonghua Minguo jiunian eryue ershisan ri," *lingwen bianhao* 0233.

[29] Wu Qingshi, *Tingyulou suibi*, in *Wu jia chuji*, vol. 2, 14b–15a. In an interview with Qu Fengzhu's great granddaughter Wu Minli and the Wu genealogy compiler Octa Woo on August 22, 2017, both members of the Wu family doubted if the tablet survived the Cultural Revolution.

Qu Fengzhu died at the age of 68 *sui* in 1927. Her original grave, as described in the family genealogy, was located next to her husband's grave at Zhangbian village Laohu gang 樟邊鄉老虎岡.[30] However, the grave was relocated to a cemetery Xianghe yongjiu lingyuan 祥和永久陵園 at Nancun in 1996. It was a combined grave of three generations, including Wu Qizuo and his wife (née Zhou), Wu Baozhen and Qu Fengzhu, and also Wu Qingshi and his two wives, with all identities clearly marked on the tombstone. Wu Qingshi's son, Wu Xiangguang, mentioned this arrangement in one of his poems, "Sandai tongfen zi benyuan, liangzhi quanxia wei hong'en" 三代同墳自本源，良知泉下慰鴻恩 (Three generations were buried together to honor our ancestral line, gratitude was extended to our ancestors in heaven). The poem, together with a picture of the new grave, appears in Wu Xiangguang's memoir[31] (See Figs. 2, 3 and 4).

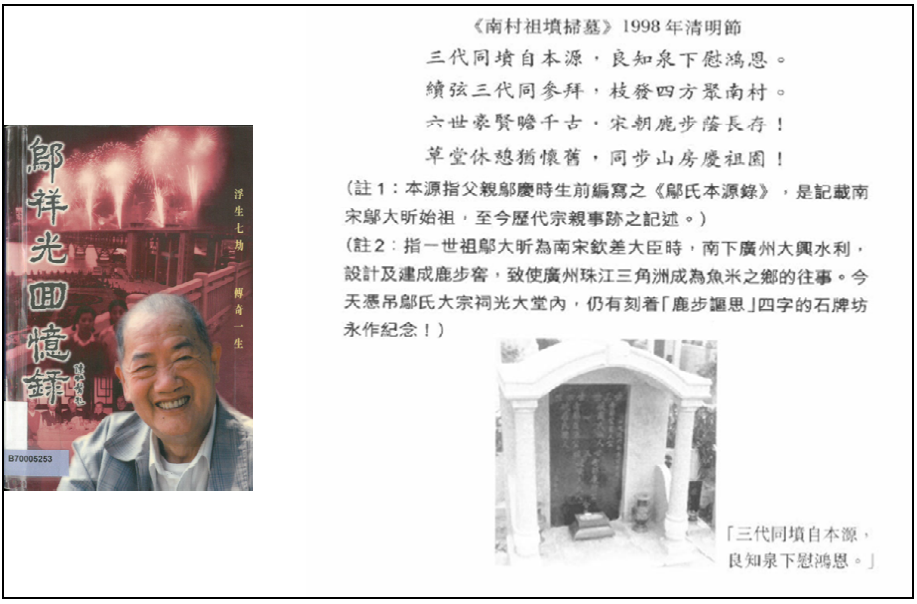

Fig. 2 Qu Fengzhu's Grandson, Wu Xiangguang, Composed a Poem on the Three-Generation-Tomb

Source: Taken from Wu's memoir, *Wu Xiangguang huiyilu*, 94.

[30] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 222.

[31] Wu Xiangguang, *Wu Xiangguang huiyilu*, 94.

Fig. 3 A Picture of the Combined Graves Taken by Lin Zhihui in 2016

Qu Fengzhu's official honor is well-remembered by the Wu family, and has indeed received mention in the family genealogy.[32] It was also interesting to learn from Octa Woo, the author of the genealogy, that to commemorate the 100th *sui* birthday of the late Qu Fengzhu, her two sons Qingshi and Qingpan, both in their seventies, took a picture at a professional studio in 1959, and composed a poem for the occasion (see Figs. 5 and 6).

[32] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 79.

Fig. 4 Pictures Taken during the Grave Relocation of the Wu Ancestors

Note: Ashes of Qu Fengzhu were collected and placed in one of the containers covered with red fabrics. The two containers covered in white were labelled Wu Qingshi and his wife. Courtesy of Wu Minli, Qu Fengzhu's great-granddaughter.

Fig. 5 Qu Fengzhu's Two Sons, Wu Qingshi and Wu Qingpan

Note: This picture was taken in 1959 to commemorate the 100th *sui* birthday of their late mother. Courtesy of Octa Woo.

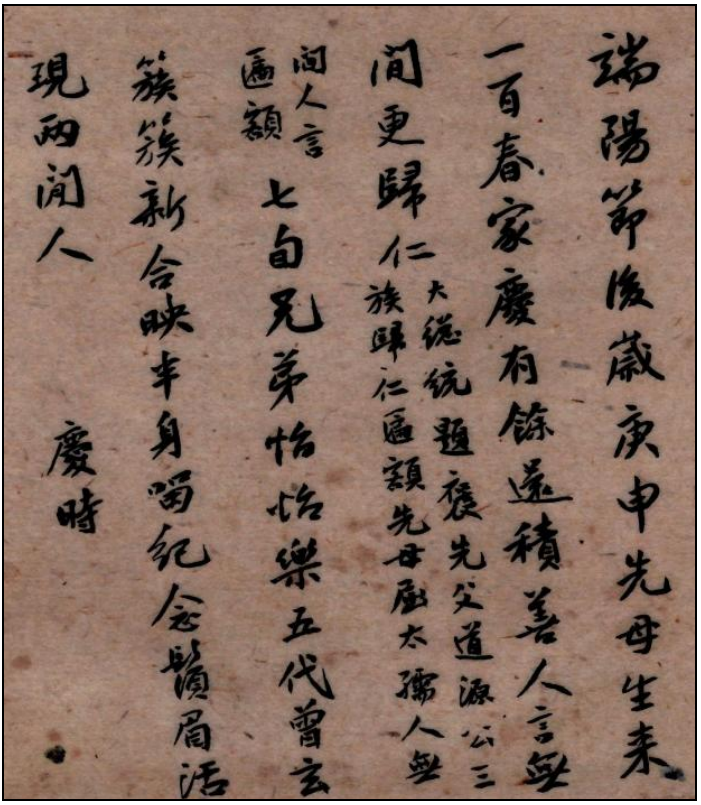

Fig. 6 The Poem Written by Wu Qingshi on the Back of the Picture, Composing to Honor Qu Fengzhu's 100th *sui* Birthday

Qu Fengzhu's Works

The most important work by Qu Fengzhu is *Zhijia yaoyi* 治家要義 (Basic principles of household management), a household instruction manual and a lesson book for her children. It was published in 1928, the year following her death, with her two sons listed at the end as proofreaders and publishers.[33] *Zhijia yaoyi* is included in several family collections compiled by Wu Qingshi. There are quite a number of different editions of the Wu family collections, and *Zhijia yaoyi* appears in some, including the above-cited *Wu jia chuji* 鄔家初集 (A preliminary collection of works by the Wu family), and also *Wu shi*

[33] Qu Fengzhu, *Zhijia yaoyi*, vol. 1, 3b.

congke 鄔氏叢刻 (A printed collection of works by the Wu family), *Wu shi congshu* 鄔氏叢書 (Collection of works by the Wu family), and *Banfanlou congshu* 半帆樓叢書 (Collection from the Semi-Sail Tower). Actually, the main text of *Zhijia yaoyi* is very short in length and is also included in the 2011 family genealogy.[34]

In fact, Wu Qingshi has authored a book to educate his own family too (he was survived by nine sons and six daughters[35]). The title of his lesson book is *Qijia qianshuo* 齊家淺說 (An elementary introduction to family management) with the preface dated 1929. Qingshi makes it very clear in this book that he deeply honors his mother's work *Zhijia yaoyi*, and he believes that his mother had successfully raised her offspring to practise what was said in the book. He would therefore urge his next generation to read the book thoroughly and put the stated rules into practice (*qu cishu shudu er shixing zhi* 取此書熟讀而實行之).[36]

Besides *Zhijia yaoyi*, Qu Fengzhu also authored other limited works. Wu Qingshi records that his mother had a collection of poems entitled *Wutongju shicun* 五桐居詩存 (Collected poetry from the Wutong House of Qu Fengzhu), but only a hand-copied edition (*chaoben* 鈔本) was available to him.[37] Unfortunately, this title can no longer be traced in today's libraries. While Qu Fengzhu's *Zhijia yaoyi* occupies an entry in major catalogues of women's writings, such as those by Xian Yuqing 冼玉清 (1895–1965) and Hu Wenkai 胡文楷 (1901–88), her collected poems are not recorded, probably owing to their very limited circulation.[38] Regrettably, perhaps only five poems by Qu Fengzhu are known to general readers. One poem, "Chaoshu" 鈔書 (Copying books), is contained in *Guangdong shihui* 廣東詩彙 (Collected poetry from Guangdong)[39] as well as *Guangdong lidai shichao* 廣東歷代詩鈔

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[34] Wu Yongxiong, *Wu shi Guangda tang zupu*, 84–85.

[35] Ibid., 193.

[36] Wu Qingshi, *Qijia qianshuo*, contained in *Wujia chuji*, vol. 1, 1b.

[37] See the list of works cited in Wu Qingshi, *Qu Dajun nianpu*, 295.

[38] See Xian Yuqing, *Guangdong nüzi yiwen kao*, 8, and Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü zhuzuo kao*, 832. Note that in both Xian's and Hu's catalogues, the character for *yi* in *Zhijia yaoyi* is mistakenly recorded.

[39] See Wu Qingshi and Qu Xiangbang, comp., *Guangdong shihui*, vol. 128, 238.

(A collection of poetry from Guangdong throughout history).[40] This poem, together with some other works by the Wu family members, gains appreciative mentioning in Yuan Zuguang's 袁祖光 (1867–1930) *Lütian xiangxue yi shihua* 綠天香雪簃詩話 (Remarks on poetry from the Green-Sky and Fragrant-Snow House),[41] and Wu Qingshi responds with gratitude about this in his *Tingyulou suibi*.[42] Qu Fengzhu's "Chaoshu" poem is also cited in another work of literary criticism, *Yuedong shihua* 粵東詩話 (Remarks on poetry in Eastern Guangdong), authored by Qu Xiangbang, who was Qu Fengzhu's nephew. Qu Xiangbang regards his aunt Qu Fengzhu as one of the two most outstanding poetesses in late Qing Guangdong.[43] Whether this is a comment built on personal sentiments or not is, of course, subject to personal interpretation. The remaining four surviving poems by Qu Fengzhu are kept in *Nanshan jiahua*, a collection of congratulatory works in honor of the 60th wedding anniversary of her father-in-law, Wu Qizuo. It is a set of four poems written to thank relatives and friends for sending in writings for the occasion. Qu's works are grouped in the same *juan* containing all other pieces composed by members of the Wu family.[44]

There is yet another work to which Qu Fengzhu may claim partial authorship. Wu Qingshi authored a chronicle of Qu Dajun's life, which underwent several drafts before its final version (dated 1963) was eventually published by the Guangdong People's Press in 2006. Wu Qingshi reports clearly that he is interested in working on this chronicle because of his blood relation with Qu Dajun, as his mother was Qu's descendant. He also mentions that his mother did pass a lot of information, discussions, and comments on Qu Dajun to him. He gathered all those details and names the collection as *Qu Dajun yiwen* 屈大均遺聞 (Preserved memories on Qu Dajun), attributing the authorship to Qu Fengzhu. In the final draft of the chronicle, Wu Qingshi cites his mother's *Qu Dajun yiwen* altogether 32 times to supplement facts and offer observations, including some insider stories that were passed from generation to generation within the Qu family and Qu Fengzhu's narration of Qu Dajun's

[40] Yu Zuming, *Guangdong lidai shichao*, vol. 5, 494–95.

[41] Yuan Zuguang, *Lütian xiangxue yi shihua*, 7397–98.

[42] Wu Qingshi, *Tingyulou suibi*, vol. 3, 7b–8a.

[43] Qu Xiangbang, *Yuedong shihua*, vol. 2, 5b–6a.

[44] See Qu Fengzhu, "Shenxie," in *Nanshan jiahua*, vol. 2, 104ab.

spouses. Wu Qingshi also officially lists *Qu Dajun yiwen* in the bibliography of the published chronicle.[45]

Advice on Seeking and Managing Wealth in *Zhijia Yaoyi*

The household instruction manual *Zhijia yaoyi* is a thin volume of nine double leaves (see Fig. 7). The cover inscription is done by Qu Naikuan 屈乃寬, another nephew of Qu Fengzhu who was also represented in *Guangdong shihui*.[46] Prior to the main text are three pieces of courtesy writing. The

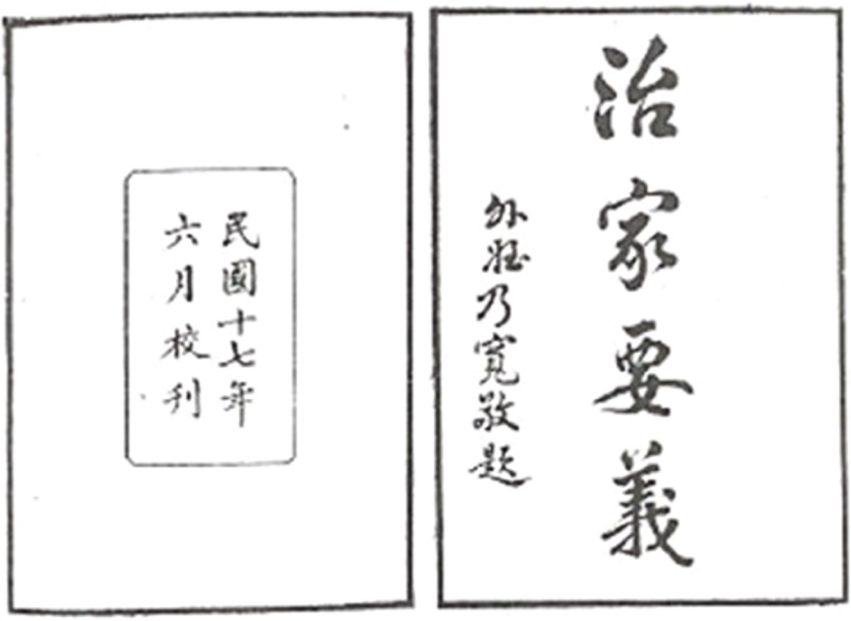

Fig. 7 Qu Fengzhu's *Zhijia yaoyi*, included in *Wu jia chuji* (a reprint of the 1928 edition in 1931, housed at the National Library of China).

[45] See the list of works cited in Wu Qingshi, *Qu Dajun nianpu*, 290. On Qu Dajun's taking nine women as his wives or concubines, see Weijing Lu's "Qu Dajun and His Polygynous Relationships," 81–116. According to Lu, polygyny was "a vital and multi-purpose device that Qu used to fulfill his needs and desires to expand his prestigious ancestral line, satisfy sensual and sexual appetite, and enhance his bodily vitality through the arts of the bedchamber."

[46] See Wu Qingshi and Qu xiangbang, comp., *Guangdong shihui*, in *Qingdai gaochaoben*, vol. 3, 126; vol. 147, 443.

preface dated 1928 is delivered by Qu Xiangbang, in which he summarizes the themes of *Zhijia yaoyi* and argues that this work will not only benefit the Wu family, but is valuable to the general public too.[47]

Following Qu Xiangbang's preface is a reprint of a message to celebrate Qu's 61st *sui* birthday written by a relative Liang Guangzhao, cited above. It must be pointed out that Liang Guangzhao is the great-grandson of Liang Jingguo 梁經國 (1761–1837), merchant and founder of Tianbaohang 天寶行,[48] one of the thirteen-*hong* of Canton (Guangzhou Shisanhang 廣州十三行).[49] Two of Liang Guangzhao's sons, Liang Fangzhong 梁方仲 (1908–70) and Liang Jiabin 梁嘉彬 (1910–95), were famous historians. In fact, Liang Jiabin subsequently became Wu Qingshi's student. With the Liang family's involvements in commercial activities, it would be interesting to read Liang Guangzhao's criticism of Guangdong women as materialistic. He comments that many Guangdong women are eager to seek vanity while not paying attention to

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[47] See Qu Xiangbang's *xu*, Liang Guangzhao's *shouxu*, and Wang Fengxiang's *pinglun*, at the beginning of *Zhijia yaoyi*.

[48] Liang Jiabin, "Liang Guangzhao zhuan," 48–52; Huang Qichen and Liang Chengye, *Liang Jingguo Tianbaohang shiji*.

[49] See Hosea Ballou Morse, *The Gilds of China: With an Account of the Gild Merchant or Co-hong of Canton*, 30; Liang Jiabin, *Guangdong Shisanhang kao*; Weng Eang Cheong, *Hong Merchants of Canton: Chinese Merchants in Sino-Western Trade*; Pang Xinping and Huang Qichen, *Ming Qing Guangdong shangren*; Tang Wenya, ed., *Guangzhou Shisanhang cangsang*; Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845*; Li Guorong, *Qingdai Guangzhou Shisanhang jilüe*; Yang Honglie, *Guangzhou Shisanhang shangbu wenhua yizhi kaifa yanjiu*; Qin Bo, *Diguo shanghang: Guangzhou Shisanhang*; Zhang Wenqin, *Guangdong Shisanhang yu zaoqi Zhong Xi guanxi*; Ma Chujian and Lai Zhicheng, *Guangdong Shisanhang yu Zhong Xi wenhua fazhan zhi guanxi*; Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade*; Tan Yuanheng, *Guomen Shisanhang: Cong kaifang dao xianguan de nizhuan*, 31; Fan Xiaojing, *Shisanhang gushi: 1757–1842 nian de Zhongguo yu Xifang*; Leng Dong, Zhao Chunchen, Zhang Wenqin, and Yang Honglie, *Guangzhou Shisanhang lishi renwen ziyuan diaoyan baogao*; Tan Yuanheng, Song Yunqi, and Tang Jialu, *Shisanhang xisu yu shangye jinji yanjiu*; Chen Guodong, *Qingdai qianqi de yue haiguan yu Shisanhang*; Tan Yuanheng, *Haiguo shangdao: Shisanhang houyi de lishi baogao*; Paul A. Van Dyke and Maria Kar-wing Mok, *Images of the Canton Factories 1760–1822: Reading History in Art*; Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Success and Failure in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade*.

learning how to be good daughters, wives, and mothers (*ganshi meifu youxi er wai, weinü weifu weimu zhi dao wuwen* 甘食美服遊嬉而外，爲女爲婦爲母之道無聞). It is in this spirit that he fully applauds the values advocated in *Zhijia yaoyi*.[50] Liang Guangzhao could have exaggerated Guangdong women's overall desire for material comfort, as historians often recognize the diligent efforts of the *zishu* ladies and the economic independence they enjoyed. Nevertheless, Liang's comments do invite us to rethink how local culture impacted family education.

After the message of Liang Guangzhao comes Wang Fengxiang's 汪鳳翔 (千仞) commentaries dated 1931. Wang addresses Wu Qingshi as a fellow schoolmate (*tongxue* 同學) and he states that he fully agrees with the views of *Zhijia yaoyi*. He positively comments on the work and even argues that *Zhijia yaoyi* may serve as a textbook for students in women's colleges. To understand Wang's interesting suggestion, we must put his background into context. He spent a significant number of years in foreign countries such as England and Singapore to embark on medical education and to develop his career. He contributed to the establishment of a hospital and a college for women. His wife Liu Peizhen 劉佩箴 was also active in promoting women's education.[51] With such an interesting background, we could appreciate in better depth Wang Fengxiang's proposal of using *Zhijia yaoyi* to support school education.[52]

The main text of *Zhijia yaoyi* basically consists of six paragraphs.[53] In the first paragraph, Qu Fengzhu gives an introduction, speaking in the authoritative voice of a widowed mother who has overcome challenges and brought up all her children in the absence of their early-deceased father. She argues that although the most difficult time has passed, one must remember adversity during prosperity. Therefore, Fengzhu says that she is now giving her children lessons on how to manage a family, and therefore asks them to listen

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[50] See Liang's *shouxu* in *Zhijia yaoyi*, 2a.

[51] Ma Junwu 馬君武 (1881–1940), "Ju Wang Qianren zhai," 398; Li Renfu, "Ting Kang Youwei xiansheng tan shufa," 43–44; Liu Jiawei, "Guangzhou diyi jian nüxue—Kunwei nüxue chuangban jingguo," 128–29; Xia Kun, "Cong nüxue dao nüjie: Wan Qing Guangzhou nüxing qunti de fazhan mailuo, 293–96.

[52] See Wang's *pinglun*, in *Zhijia yaoyi*, 1b.

[53] Ibid.

carefully (*rudeng qi diting zhi* 汝等其諦聽之).

The second to fifth paragraphs are used to illustrate the four rules that Qu Fengzhu has set for her children to follow: Do not buy on credit (*bushe* 不賒), do not borrow money (*bujie* 不借), do not be greedy (*butan* 不貪), and do not conspire to take advantage (*bumou* 不謀).

Qu Fengzhu's aversion to buying on credit and borrowing money can be understood in the context of the commercialized environment of Guangdong in which she lived. She attempted to lead her family in resisting materialistic temptations in a modernizing world. In the second paragraph, she comments on merchants encouraging customers to make purchases on credit, thus trapping people to take more than they need, possibly forcing them to sell belongings to pawn shops or finally go bankrupt. Therefore, she claims that buying on credit could be disastrous. Emphasizing her *bushe zhuyi* 不賒主義 (principle of no buying on credit), Qu Fengzhu explains that if she has no cash she will not go shopping, even if she is facing hunger and cold. However, she emphasizes that she feels no pressure at all at the end of the year because she has no debts to settle. She maintains that the spiritual comfort she enjoys is much more pleasurable than any that possessing extravagant fashions or deluxe food (*xianyi meishi* 鮮衣美食) could offer. Following a similar logic, Qu Fengzhu is also against borrowing money. She emphasizes that by borrowing money one may solve financial difficulty in the short run, but more problems will be generated in the long run because of the amount of accumulated interest added to the original loan. She argues that, taken to the extreme, borrowing money could be suicidal, causing people to suffer from *qingjia dangcan* 傾家蕩產 (families ruined and properties gone). Qu Fengzhu's strong feelings against *she* 賒 (buying on credit) and *jie* 借 (borrow) somehow speaks to prevailing behaviors in the late Qing and early Republican period, as previous studies on the highly-developed pawn industry have shown.[54] Some scholars have also pointed out that pawn shops flourished in the greater Canton area, to the

[54] Yang Lien-sheng, *Money and Credit in China: A Short History*; Luo Bingmian, "Jindai Zhongguo diandangye de shehui yiyi jiqi leibie yu shuijuan," 125–57; Pan Minde, *Zhongguo jindai diandangye zhi yanjiu: 1644–1937*; Liu Qiugen, *Zhongguo diandang zhidu shi*; Chang Mengqu and Qian Chuntao, *Jindai Zhongguo diandangye*; Huang Jianhui, *Zhongguo diandangye shi*; Qu Yanbin, *Zhongguo diandang shi*; Cheng Zeshi, "Guanzhi yu xumin: Qingdai diandang ye shengli," 108–20.

extent that the number of pawn shops exceeded the number of rice stores.[55] In fact, statistics provided by a 1934 publication reports a total of 170 pawn shops in Canton, 156 in Nanhai, and 49 in Panyu.[56] Perhaps this helps to explain Qu Fengzhu's strong advice on doing away with *she* and *jie*, and her relatively conservative position in wealth management.

Qu Fengzhu's third rule is to not be greedy. In saying so, Fengzhu is not implying that wealth is evil. She tells her readers that they should claim ownership of properties that authentically belong to them, but not to acquire beyond their own entitlement (*fan yu caiwu, yingqu zequ, buyingqu ze buke tan* 凡遇財物，應取則取，不應取則不可貪). She believes that greedy acts will harm and offend people and will arouse anger that may eventually lead to acts of revenge. Therefore, she advocates not being greedy as a precious virtue. Qu Fengzhu also asks her children never to plan on taking advantage of rich people or seizing their properties. She says people may have all kinds of reasons for being wealthy, including genuine and persistent hard work. People who are not wealthy should not be jealous of the rich and plan evil conspiracies. Constructively enough, she encourages her readers not to *mou*, but to use their wisdom and efforts to brainstorm ways to produce and accumulate wealth (*yanjiu shengcai zhi dadao* 研究生財之大道), so as to lead a better life. In a flourishing commercial world, Fengzhu's arguments on wealth management somehow incorporates moral education. This makes her words carry weight and significance.

Putting her four rules together, Qu Fengzhu summaries her advice into two characters: *qin* 勤 (diligence) and *jian* 儉 (frugality). In the last paragraph, she concludes that if her future generations could be industrious and thrifty, the family economy will be sustained and members will flourish, therefore achieving the scenario of *jia zi ri qi* 家自日起 (the family will prosper day after day).

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[55] Xu Lina, "Yangcheng diandang ceng fengguang, Qingdai dangpu duoguo mipu," 46–47; Chen Hongjun and Li Keyi, "Guangzhou de dangpu he diandangye," 16–20; Zhu Zekun and Wu Lingling, "Wu zhong shengxi: Yongzheng shiqi dui Guangdong minjian jiedai xingwei de tiaokong," 120–27.

[56] Ou Jiluan, ed., *Guangdong zhi diandangye*.

Conclusion

Among works produced by mothers to educate their children, the household instruction manual *Zhijia yaoyi* produced by Qu Fengzhu is quite special in the sense that it basically focuses on the management of household wealth. Whereas many women from elite families in late imperial China emphasized the importance of their sons studying hard in order to secure a place in the government or to live with dignity,[57] Qu Fengzhu focused on seeking and managing wealth properly to sustain the family finances. Living in the greater Canton area, surrounded by commercial activities and East–West interaction opportunities, as well as witnessing the political and social transition from the imperial era to the republican era, Qu Fengzhu gave very pragmatic advice to her offspring without elaborating much on high-sounding truths and principles. In the final years of the nineteenth century, the famous scholar-reformer Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873–1929) advocated passionately that women bear the same responsibility as men in contributing to the nation's production of wealth.[58] While it is not clear if this powerful narrative had indeed inspired Qu Fengzhu to formulate her principles on wealth management, it is reasonable to believe that the growing circulation of contemporary ideas and the fact that women continuously stepped into the public world could have influenced the advice Qu Fengzhu passed to her next generation.[59] Moreover, owing to Guangdong's unique local culture and commercial environment, conducting a comparison of Qu Fengzhu's instructions with advice delivered by mothers in other geographical areas of late imperial and early Republican China may

[57] For a quick reference, see Hsiung Ping-chen, "Constructed Emotions: The Bond between Mothers and Sons in Late Imperial China," 87–117.

[58] Liang Qichao, "Lun nüxue," 87–99.

[59] A wealth of scholarship has explored women's strong involvement in the public world during the late Qing and early Republican period. For instance, see Bryna Goodman and Wendy Larson, eds., *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China*; Grace S. Fong, Nanxiu Qian, and Harriet Thelma Zurndorfer, eds., *Beyond Tradition & Modernity: Gender, Genre, and Cosmopolitanism in Late Qing China*; Ma Yuxin, *Women Journalists and Feminism in China, 1898–1937*; Joan Judge, *Republican Lens: Gender, Visuality, and Experience in the Early Chinese Periodical Press*; and Xia Shi, *At Home in the World: Women and Charity in Late Qing and Early Republican China*.

furnish us with much food for thought.

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