Trends in Publishing Primary Sources and Other Research Data in Mainland China

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Keywords (關鍵詞): Publish; China

With the ever increasing scholarly exchange between Mainland China and the rest of the world, the environment of research in Mainland China has become more open and quality of research significantly enhanced. Consequently, the publication of primary research sources has also broadened in scope and extends further back into history. Research materials are published in more diverse genres and languages. This article intends to synthesize the trends in recent developments in the publication of research materials in Mainland China.

PUBLICATION OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

In recent years, the publication of archival materials has been standardized to provide more open access to the public. Such publications have asserted significant impact on the research and understanding of various periods of Chinese history. Some of the major publications are the archives of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Republic of China, and of the South Manchuria Railways Co. In addition, less known archives and rare historical materials have also been discovered and systematically collated and published. The following are examples of such rare archives.

The Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Shanghai Municipal Council was published by Shanghai Classics Publishing House in 2001. It includes twenty-eight volumes of the English archives of the Municipal Council from 1854 to 1943 held in the Shanghai Archives. The Board of Directors of the Municipal Council was the highest governing and policy-making authority of the foreign settlements at Shanghai. This series also records many significant events that happened in China during the period and thus is considered by many the “encyclopedia of the history of the Shanghai settlements.”

Another such publication is the Collection of Reports of the Japanese Guangdong Military Police, published by Guangxi Normal University Press in 2005. The publication includes four series in eighty-four volumes. In 1945, right before the end of World War II, the Japanese Guangdong Military Police committed massive destruction of archives in their headquarters in Changchun. They burned most of the documents and buried those they did not have time to burn. In the 1950’s, the archives that had been buried were discovered during road construction in Changchun. These archives were dug out and stored at the Changchun Police Department and later moved to the Changchun Archives. In 2004, these archives were collated by the Changchun Archives and were
classified into categories such as monthly magazines, semi-monthly journals, ten-day newspapers, dailies, etc. Each category was compiled into volumes, photocopied, and published. Those published include over fifty reports such as Monthly Report on Communication and Inspection, Monthly Report on Intelligence and Strategy, Monthly Railway Police Intelligence, Monthly Anti-Spy Report, Monthly Report on the Investigation into the Soviet Union, Monthly Report on the Situation of the Soviet Army, Monthly Report on Epidemics and Fire Disasters. These primary sources have not been used by scholars. They are extremely valuable for the understanding of Japanese occupation in Manchuria and the Sino-Japanese Relationship during the Sino-Japanese conflict.

PUBLICATION OF FOLK AND ETHNIC LITERATURE

In recent years, scholarly inquiries have begun to focus more and more on the grass-roots society. There has been a strong interest in publishing original materials on local culture as well as folk literature and history. Several noteworthy collections have been published including the following examples.

Chaoshan Qiao Pi (Correspondence of Overseas Chinese from Chaoshan County), a typical example of such folk literature, is compiled by the History and Culture Research Centre of Chaoshan County of Shantou City in Guangdong Province. In southern Fujian dialect, “Pi” means “letter.” “Chaoshan Qiao Pi” are letters sent home by Chaoshan natives who resided in foreign countries. These letters included materials such as remittance warrants with short postscripts. These are original and valuable research materials about the life of these overseas Chinese and how they kept in touch with their families in Chaoshan through the privately arranged postal service. The Historical Research Center of Chaoshan has completed the compilation of about 80,000 pieces of Qiao Pi.

Huizhou Documents is another significant publication. “Hui Xue,” the study of Huizhou, bears many local characteristics. In 2005, the first compilation of Huizhou Documents in ten volumes was published by Guangxi Normal University Press. The series of Huizhou Documents has more than 5,000 documents discovered after the 1990’s. These documents are belong to fifty households. The largest household possessed 1,200 pieces. These documents cover the final years of the Ming Dynasty (1369-1644) to 1952.

Qingshuijiang Documents is another local culture publication. Since the Ming Dynasty, the Miao and Tong ethnic minorities in southeast Guizhou have been engaged in the timber trade. They felled trees and transported the lumber to other places. The documents record their economic and cultural activities and include deeds, papers, account books, pedigrees, folk songs, folktunes, inscriptions, and so on. There are more than 100,000 pieces of Qingshuijiang Documents and only about 10,000 pieces have been collected; among those are documents about ownership transfers of timberland and forests, rental of mountains, partnerships in forestation, mediating property disputes over forest tracts, lawsuits, account books of household income from forestry and agriculture, medicine, regulations on marriages, and so on. These documents span 1715 to 1956. From 2001 to 2003, some of the Qingshuijiang Documents that had been collected earlier were published in Japan, entitled Collection of Deeds and Papers Involving the Miao Nationality’s Forestry in Guizhou Province, 1736-1952. It has three volumes including over 800 pieces, mainly forestry deeds preserved by ancestors of the Miao ethnic people in the villages of Wendou and Ping’ao of Jinping County of Guizhou Province. The Qingshuijiang Documents are now published by the Historical Anthropology Research Center of Zhongshan University and Jinping County of Guizhou Province. Eight thousand pieces are included. These documents
will be vital for research about the historical culture and social economy of the southwest area in China, and they will be assets in research on the minorities residing in the southwest.

Other publications of ethnic minority history and documents include the following. The Complete Works of Translated and Annotated Ancient Books in the Dongba Script of the Naxi Ethnic People was published by Yunnan People's Press, 1999-2000. This collection has one hundred volumes, covering 897 titles of Naxi ancient books written in Dongba hieroglyphs. These books discuss philology, linguistics, religion, archeology, anthropology, ethnology, ethics, historiography, philosophy, literature, painting, dancing, chronometer, geography, agriculture, medicine, military affairs, and other topics.

The Collection of the Olunchun Ethnic Archives in the Manchu and Chinese Scripts was published by Minzu Chupanshe in 2001. The Collection of Mongolian Archives Preserved by the Inner-Chambers of the Ch'ing Court was published by the People’s Publishing House in 2004.

The Chinese Shui Book, a hundred-volume set, is known as the “Shui ethnic people’s Book of Changes.” It is written in the Shui script and records the Shui ethnic people’s achievements in ancient chronometrics, geography, religion, folk customs, ethics, philosophy, esthetics, and law. In addition to the Chinese Shui Book, others that also have been published are the Documents of the Yi Ethnic People in the Yi Script, which includes subjects such as history, philosophy, literature, and customs of the Yi people. Under the auspices of the Chinese government, there were organized efforts to collect the Yi records. People could offer to register, collect, translate, and collate the Yi records, which were scattered among the Yi families. Furthermore, in the areas of Bijie, Guizhou Province, Liangshan in Sichuan Province and Chuxiong in Yunnan Province, where the Yi people were concentrated, a special teams was formed with the mission of translating and collating Yi documents. As a result, books such as The Origins of the Yi Nationality and The History of the Yi Nationality in Southwest China were published.

**Special Chinese Publications Held Outside China**

Collating and publishing Chinese rare books that are held in foreign countries is another aspect of the thrust to collate and publish research materials. The most significant publications are The Photocopy Series of Chinese Ancient Books Printed in the Song and Yuan Dynasties Held in the Imperial Library of Japan (Xianzhuang Publishing House, 2002); the Collection of Chinese Rare Books Held in Harvard- Yenching Library (Guangxi Normal University Press, 2003); Manuscripts of Hu Hanmin’s Un-Published Correspondence, including Hu Hanmin’s correspondence and telegraph messages held at the Harvard Yenching Library (Guangxi Normal University Press, 2004); and Unpublished Manuscripts of Ju Zheng’s Diaries and Correspondence (Guanxi Normal University Press, 2004). This last series collected Ju Zheng’s diaries, correspondence, notes written in prison, drafts of poems, scrolls of paintings and calligraphy, and so on. These are newly published materials that are not included in The Complete Works of Ju Zheng (Academia Sinica, 1998).

**Reprint Research Materials on China in Western Languages Held Outside China**

Correspondence of Christian Missionaries in China was published by Elephant Press in 2001. This publication includes more than one hundred letters, meeting minutes, and reports of Christian missionaries in China. These materials were first published in France in the eighteenth century for the purpose of introducing China to the West. They reflected the Chinese society during that time through the eyes of the missionaries. Lack of access, Chinese scholars were not able to use these materials. With the assistance of the French Library, these materials were
translated into Chinese and are now available to Chinese readers and scholars.

*John Fryer’s Papers* includes more than two hundred pictures. John Fryer, a British missionary, was in China in the second half of the nineteenth century and spent thirty-five years in China. He translated many Western science books into Chinese. *John Fryer’s Papers* includes four parts: Early Years in China, Years in Kiangnan Arsenal, Years in Berkeley, and Chronologies.

**REPRINT OF PUBLICATIONS OF THE REPUBLICAN ERA**

Major reprints of the publications in the Republican period include the following. *Historical Materials of Chinese Old Customs, 1859-1948*, 170 volumes, was published by Jinghua Publishing House in 2001. This publication includes statistics and reports from more than thirty provinces and more than sixty cities of China spanning the late Ch’ing dynasty, the Northern Warlord regime, and the Nationalist government, the puppet Manchu regime, and the Wang Jingwei puppet regime.

The *Collection of Social Investigations During the Period of the Republic of China* was published by Fujian Educational Press in 2005 in twelve volumes, including 193 social investigation reports by Chinese pioneer sociologists.

*The South Manchuria Railway Co. Investigative Reports* was published by Guangxi Normal University Press in 2005. It includes two series with twenty-four books in each. This publication contains investigative reports on the economy, agriculture, villages and peasants, industry and mining, commerce, communications and transportation, and political administration.

**CONCLUSION**

Significant progress has been made in publishing primary research sources in Mainland China; however, much more needs to be done. While the accelerating and broadening scope of research and scholarship in Mainland China demands more research materials and such materials exist in abundance, the work of collating and publishing them is still lagging behind. The abundant materials are scattered and it is a great challenge for the publishers to identify, collect, collate, and publish them. The publication industry in China can make a difference by actively engaging in such work. Publishers need the participation and support of the scholarly community as well as government involvement.

**REFERENCES**


