



1-1-1973

Studies in Asian Genealogy Spencer J. Palmer, ed.

Fred W. Rockwood

C. Keith Allred

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>



Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rockwood, Fred W. and Allred, C. Keith (1973) "*Studies in Asian Genealogy* Spencer J. Palmer, ed.," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 13 : Iss. 1 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol13/iss1/15>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

SPENCER J. PALMER, ed. *Studies in Asian Genealogy*. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1972. 281 pp. \$12.50.

(Reviewed by Fred W. Rockwood and C. Keith Allred. Mr. Rockwood is a law student at Harvard specializing in Chinese legal thought and institutions. Mr. Allred is an Asian specialist for the Genealogical Society.)

Studies in Asian Genealogy is a collection of twenty articles originally prepared by selected Asian specialists for presentation at the World Conference on Records¹ and subsequently revised and edited for publication. The editor has divided these papers topically into the following eight sections: Chinese Genealogical Records, Chinese Written History, Japanese Family Records, Korean Genealogical Sources, Indian Tribal Genealogies, Libraries and Library Collections, Asian Immigrants in America, and Computer Technology and Asian Genealogical Research. An introduction, biographical sketches of the contributors, a glossary, and an index have also been included.

Since this anthology is highly diverse in both style and content, it invites criticism of its format and method of presentation rather than a critique of each article. A scholarly appraisal of each essay would require a high degree of competence and specialization in many divergent areas of Asian research.

Although the subject material varies greatly, the unifying principle among the various articles is the emphasis placed upon Asian genealogical records as an important source of data which can be relevant to research in many academic disciplines. Even though certain Asian specialists have been aware of the value of Asian genealogical records, *Studies in Asian Genealogy* make a valuable contribution to genealogical re-

¹The World Conference on Records was sponsored by the Genealogical Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Research and records specialists from all over the world met in Salt Lake City, Utah, from 5-8 August 1969 to deliver papers and exchange information.

search literature by making the information presented at the World Conference on Records more widely accessible than would have been possible otherwise and by serving as an impetus to more serious research using Asian genealogical records as the source material.

It is doubtful that the articles delivered at the World Conference on Records would have been formally published without the effort of Dr. Palmer and others and, consequently, this information would have been largely denied to the academic community. But perhaps of greater impact will be the motivation among those in Asian Studies who have obtained or are in the process of obtaining the necessary language skills and disciplinary expertise required to make effective and meaningful use of the sources discussed. The book is not, nor was it intended to be, *the* definitive work in the field of Asian genealogy; however, it serves well the purpose of an introductory work for those serious Asian specialists who are preparing to embark on their first encounter with the complexities of original research in non-Western language source materials.

There is one weakness in editing that not only tends to detract from the overall scholarship of the book, but may also reduce the practical utility of much of the information for both the novice Asian researcher as well as the seasoned research specialist. The great geographical variation and the highly specific nature of the information are both factors which challenge the competence of any single reader to critically evaluate the contribution made by each article to the existing literature in its particular area of investigation. There even may be cases in which some readers will be totally unfamiliar with the existing literature in one area, while maintaining a high level of expertise in another. Because of this breadth, the volume sorely needs a critical and evaluative analysis of each article with reference to the present state of knowledge in that particular area of Asian Studies, something more than the very brief summaries which appear in the editor's introduction. This would greatly enhance the value of the book as a unified entity. In the present format, many of the important and unique interrelationships between records in the various Asian nations are lost upon the reader who may feel himself outside his specific area of speciali-

zation. As it stands, the book is not cohesive, since the introduction fails to provide the critical cement necessary to bind the very different articles into a coherent whole. One possible solution to the dilemma would have been the adoption of a somewhat different format in which each article would have been prefaced by certain explanatory remarks and followed by a critical note or comment authored by a specialist competent in the particular field covered by the article. Such a procedure would have relieved the editor of the responsibility of being a universal specialist and at the same time increased the practical utility of each article to the average reader.

However, we hasten to note that the task undertaken was by no means a simple one. Dr. Palmer is to be commended not only for his insight in perceiving the great value of the information presented at the World Conference on Records for scholars and researchers in both Asian Studies and the academic disciplines, but also for his efforts in making that information available to the academic community. From the inception of the project to its final culmination, Dr. Palmer has done a commendable work in dealing with the problems and difficulties peculiar to the publication of non-Western language material. It cannot be expected that any single editor, in undertaking a project of this scope and magnitude, could provide an in-depth critique of all of the various papers, no matter what his capabilities and qualifications.