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BOOK REVIEWS


From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century China suffered over a hundred years of wars, rebellions, and revolutions. During this period many Chinese archival sources were lost through destruction, neglect, looting, and sales. Despite these unfortunate happenings, enormous quantities of Chinese archives survived.

Before Ye Wa and Joseph Esherick wrote the book under review here, two important reference tools on Chinese archives and archival sources were published. The first of these was Zhongguo dang'anguan minglu 中国档案馆名录 (Directory of Chinese National Archives), which was published in 1990. The main purpose of this directory was to give a comprehensive introduction to archives at all levels. The Directory covers 3,238 archives which existed as of the end of 1987 and includes those dating from the T'ang, Yuan, Ming, and Ch'ing Dynasties, the Republican (Kuomintang) period, and archives created since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Archives above the provincial level are introduced in the form of short articles and pictures. Archives below provincial level are mentioned by name and address under the province, autonomous region and municipality. The Directory does not include archives in Taiwan. A very useful index to the archive is arranged in pinyin alphabetical order by the first character of the Chinese place name where the archive is located.

In 1995 Zhongguo dang'an wenxian cidian 中国档案文献辞典 (A Dictionary of Chinese Archival Documents) was published. This dictionary includes 3,985 entries covering over two thousand years from pre-Ch'in to 1990. Included are imperial edicts, imperial admonitions, memorials of high officials, records of imperial lives, veritable records, state regulations, rules and precedents, diaries, correspondence, telegraph messages, and official bulletins. Though this dictionary includes many primary sources and provides a description and source for each work, it is not a guide to the various archives which house the sources in China.

To make up for the lack of a comprehensive guide to Chinese archives in English, Ye and Esherick wrote their Introductory Guide. Their first step in compiling it was to survey archive users to learn about the contents and accessibility of Chinese local archives. After receiving information on accessibility and limitations on access from these archive users, the authors
gathered supplemental data from Chinese publications, including publications from archives, handbooks, journals and reference books on archives, and local gazetteers. The authors' very useful introduction to the Guide should help archive users understand the nature and content of archives and how to use them. It includes sections on Sources on Chinese Archives, A Brief History of Chinese Archives, Local Archives, Archives in the Republican Period, Old-Regime Archives in the PRC, the Archive System of the PRC, Archival Access, and Principles of Archival Organization. The Guide divides archives into four main categories: historical archives, revolutionary history archives (records of the Chinese Communist Party before 1949), contemporary archives, and printed materials (published books, journals, newspapers, newsletters, and pamphlets). Archives are grouped by province and municipality. Each archive has a separate entry that gives the date of establishment of the archive and a brief history, size of the archive, information on catalogs available, if any, and whether the archive is open. This latter information is particularly useful, because researchers in China frequently experience difficulty in gaining access to archives. The final portion includes specific information on the contents of the archives. For most provincial and some municipal archives, the address of the repository is given. All sources of data are carefully documented. PRC Chinese names, titles, and terms are generally rendered in pinyin, with the exceptions of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, and Kuomintang. In the case of Taiwan, place names are given in Wade-Giles romanization, but personal and institutional names are rendered in pinyin romanization. This causes some confusion in the case of an institution having a place name as part of its name.

The authors include Taiwan archives in their Guide. Their introduction to Taiwan archives seems to largely follow the book entitled T'ai-wan ti ch'u Han hsueh tzu yuan hsuan chieh 臺灣地區漢學資源簡介 (An Introduction to Selected Sources for Chinese Studies in Taiwan) published in 1988 by the Center of Chinese Studies. Archives in Taiwan amount to about ten per cent of all Chinese archives. There are two types: archives brought from the mainland in the 1940's and archives originating in Taiwan. The Taiwan holdings are particularly important for political and diplomatic history. The Ch'ing archives on Taiwan are generally more convenient to use and limitations on research access are less severe.

The Guide includes an extremely useful reference section which lists archival publications, books, and articles on archives and archival sources. Unfortunately, the Guide lacks an index.

*Chinese Archives: An Introductory Guide* is an essential reference tool for archival researchers. Ye and Esherick should be commended for their accomplishment. Archival researchers should
Archives and A Dictionary of Chinese Archival Documents. For detailed information about individual archives, the researcher should consult the guide (chih nan 指南) to the particular archive.

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