

# Archives in the People's Republic of China

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## Introduction

BETWEEN 19 APRIL AND 9 MAY 1982 members of the Society of American Archivists' study tour to the People's Republic of China, including two Canadian colleagues from Alberta, traveled from Beijing (Peking), in the north to Guangzhou in the south, visiting archives and touring museums, historic sites, and other attractions in nine cities. Seven archives were visited: the First Historical Archives of China (Di Yi Lishi Danganguan) and the Imperial Records Storehouse (Huang Shi Cheng) in Beijing; the Kong Family Archives (Confucian Archives) in Qufu; the Shandong Provincial Archives in Jinan; the Second Historical Archives of China (Di Er Lishi Danganguan) in Nanjing; the Shanghai Municipal Archives; and the

Guangdong Provincial Archives in Guangzhou.<sup>1</sup> In addition, six museums, seven tombs and excavations, five parks and public gardens, eighteen historic sites or buildings, and assorted other institutions and enterprises were visited. The latter included a paper mill, a jade-carving factory, a silk embroidery institute, a silk-weaving factory, a cloisonné factory, a social welfare house, a normal school, a hospital, and an agricultural production brigade.<sup>2</sup>

Such a three-week whirlwind tour of China has its own rewards, and all members of the group derived their own pleasures from it. But the time is too short, the subject too new, the cultural adjustments too great, and the language barrier too formidable for more than

<sup>1</sup>Pinyin romanization of Chinese names is used throughout this article (except for the following cases: Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen, Yangtze, and Kuomintang), even though we discovered that the Chinese themselves are not meticulously consistent in its use.

<sup>2</sup>The variety is explained in part by the fact that the tour was jointly hosted by the State Archives Bureau and the China Travel Service, and was booked through Special Tours for Special People, Inc., in New York.

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superficial impressions to be gained. It is hard to develop critical judgment under such conditions, and it is difficult to pursue questions beyond the stage of rudimentary understanding.

Nevertheless, we know so little about Chinese archives, and there is so little published on them in English language sources, that even fleeting impressions may be useful in preparing for more serious work in the future.<sup>3</sup> In this instance, international friendship and cooperation among archivists were certainly well served by our Chinese hosts. Archives seldom visited by foreigners were opened to us. We asked many questions, and within the limits of translation and time available we received full and candid answers. Zhang Tianming and Shi Lin of the State Archives Bureau (Guojia Dangan Ju) worked tirelessly to prepare our hosts at each archives to meet our interests and to answer our questions. Beyond this, we all developed respect and affection for our two Chinese archival colleagues who travelled with us, and for Yin Guomei, the national travel service guide who did splendid work in arranging all travel, lodging, food services, and tours. They shared our professional concerns and travel problems, but they also shared our laughter and on occasion our distress in a spirit of comradeship and candor that greatly contributed to the success of the tour.

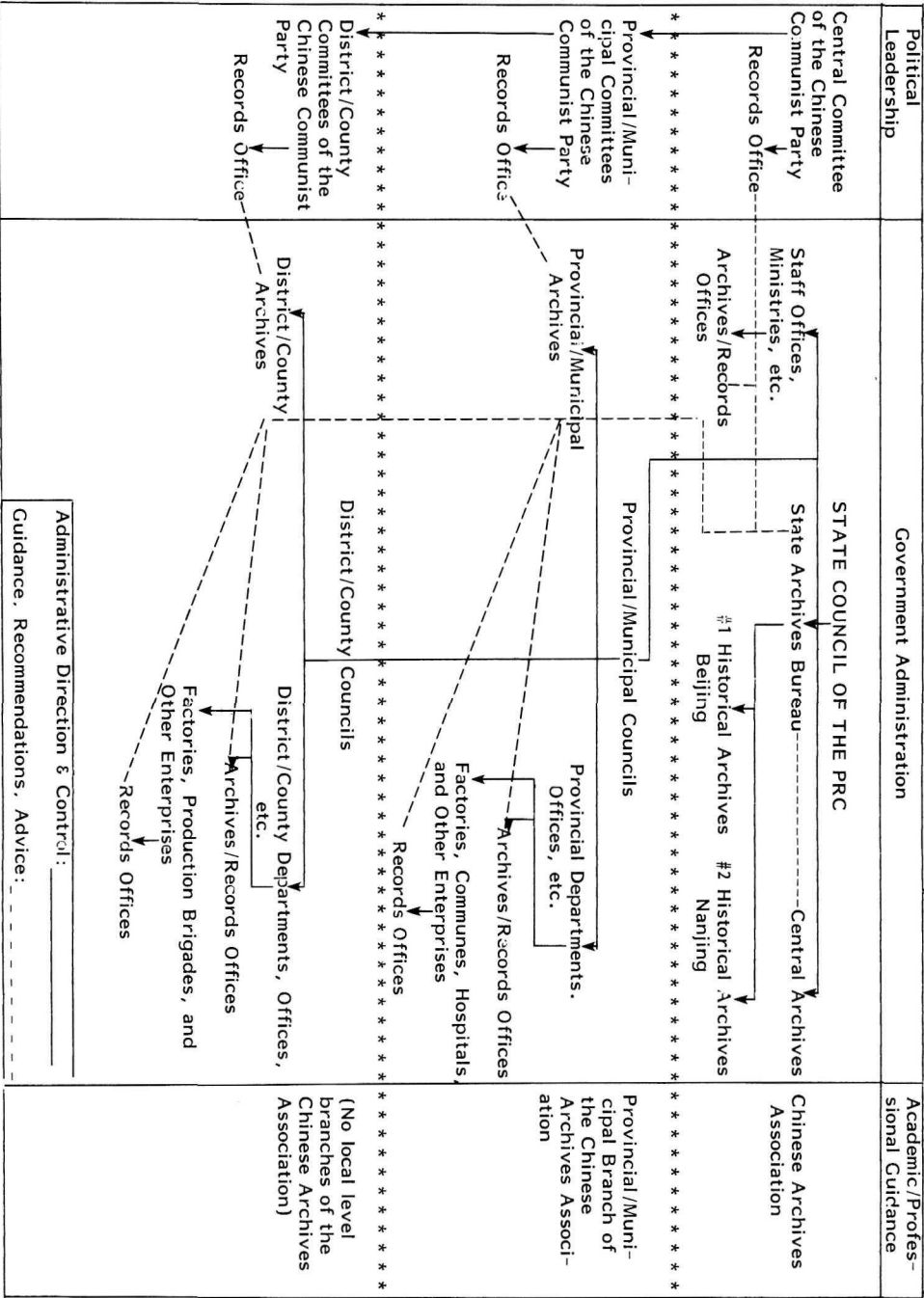
### **Archives and Administration in the People's Republic of China**

We went to China assuming that the State Archives Bureau simply runs all the archives in China. In fact, the reality is much more complicated and diverse, as we came to realize through the many

briefings and discussions with Chinese archivists. Although the State Archives Bureau is clearly the preeminent and predominant archival agency in the People's Republic for professional guidance and standards, and although its position directly subordinate to the State Council gives it great prestige and authority, it plays a much more limited direct administrative role than we expected to find. It would appear that the State Archives Bureau has administrative direction and direct management control of only the two national historical archives, in Beijing and Nanjing (each of which is described in detail later in this article). The State Archives Bureau, in addition to managing the two national historical archives, advises the State Council on archival matters, recommends national archival policies and programs for consideration by the State Council, provides archival and management advice to various levels of government, and reports to the State Council on archival developments nationwide. It does not provide direct control, however, in a number of critical areas.

The State Archives Bureau does not administer the Central Archives of the People's Republic of China (Zhongyang Dangangan). This archives, which we were not allowed to visit, is directly under the management and direction of the State Council. It is the principal repository for the records of the central organs of the Chinese Communist Party, certain records of various people's governments established in "liberated areas" prior to 1949, records of various revolutionary groups prior to 1949, and, of course, records of the government of the People's Republic after 1949. According to the current policy promulgated

<sup>3</sup>The only English-language article that I have come across dealing with Chinese archives in depth is Beatrice Bartlett's "An Archival Revival: The Qing Central Government Archives in Peking Today," found in *Ch'ing-shih Wen-i'i* (Topics in Ch'ing History) 4.6 (December 1981): 81-110. Bartlett is currently preparing a research guide to several Chinese archives.



by the State Council, records are to be transferred to central archives at various levels when they become 30 years old; actually this transfer is slow in getting underway, and the holdings of post-1949 records by the Central Archives is said to be quite small. In China, just as in the United States, we discovered that lack of proper storage space and the reluctance of operating agencies to part with files make for less than prompt and total compliance with scheduled transfers to archives. This is true not only at the center but also at the provincial and municipal levels.

There are archives of a sort (what we might call records offices) in each staff office, ministry, or other organ of the central government and Communist Party apparatus. Although these receive advice and archival guidance from the State Archives Bureau (by what mechanism is not entirely clear), and although their regulations for records retention and disposal originate in State Archives Bureau recommendations, each records office is managed by and is primarily responsible to and responsive to the needs and policies of its operating principal.

A similar relationship exists between the State Archives Bureau and archives of government organs below the national level. Provincial archives and archives for the autonomous regions and special municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin) are subordinate to and take their direction from the respective provincial, regional, or municipal government councils. While the State Archives Bureau offers advice, while regulations governing local archives are consistent with those promulgated by the State Council for archives nationwide, and while it is clear that the approval of the State Archives Bureau is important in realizing plans requiring investment or impact beyond the

local levels, the State Archives Bureau does not manage or administer the local archives. Further down the line, archives of counties, districts, cities, and towns have the same relation to their superior provincial, regional, or municipal archives as the latter have to the State Archives Bureau in Beijing. Moreover, many institutions, factories, communes, and commercial enterprises are owned and operated by the government, so their records, too, are potential accessions for government archives at each level. Some of these enterprises are directly subordinate to central government ministries, and others to provincial or municipal departments. To date there does not seem to have been a great effort on the part of the Chinese to deal with the potential explosion of archives management should these myriad "archives" be transferred to central repositories in accordance with the 30-year rule. For the most part these records remain with operating units.

American readers need to remember that in China a Communist Party structure operates parallel to the administrative government structure. Each central government ministry and office, and each provincial government or district or county government, has its own Party committee, with its own records and its own "archives" or records office. Once again, the State Archives Bureau offers advice, through the State Council and the Party Central Committee, for the management of Party records, but it does not itself manage or control Party records.

Within each repository the local administration is about what one might expect when practical needs begin to take over from general policies, governmental structure, and political ideology. Each repository appears to have a certain overhead of staff and administration tending to the overall management



of the place; a "compilation" section that is involved in preservation, arrangement, and description; a research section that responds to reference inquiries and participates in the writing of official histories; and a technical section that is concerned with temperature and humidity controls, research into preservation methods, microfilming, and development of equipment or facilities. Various combinations of these are found in each archives, but the basic purposes and functions remain the same from place to place.

It is not difficult, then, to see how the Chinese can boast of more than 2,600 archives and more than 200,000 archivists. When an archivist in Shanghai spoke of "the broad masses of archivists" he was trying to convey to us the proletarian and grassroots character of the archival profession, but we immediately became bemused by the vision of an army of archivists 200,000-strong speaking to the record-makers with a single and determined voice for the interests of archives!

Finally, in addition to the official government and Party structures, the Chinese have recently added another parallel structure, that of the Chinese Archives Association (*Zhongguo Dangan Xuehui*), established in November 1981. There is one national association, complemented by provincial and municipal associations throughout the country. The Chinese Archives Association is intended to provide the professional identity and incentives for archivists to exchange experiences, improve work methods, research archives history and principles, and publish papers on archival theory and practice. (The details of the professional archives organizations are spelled out in the section on the Shanghai Municipal Archives, below, where we received the fullest briefing on the sub-

ject.) The association gives a professional and academic dimension to a structure that already has its political leadership and administrative management structures in place.

The organizational structure of the State Archives Bureau and the other entities mentioned above is displayed in the accompanying chart.

### Archival Work—The State of the Art

Archival work (*dangan gongzuo*) in the People's Republic of China appears to be characterized by an overwhelming urgency to recover from the ill effects of the 10 to 12 years of neglect suffered during the Cultural Revolution (approximately 1966–1976), when most archives were simply closed down. Although there was apparently little damage to records, the hiatus in work and the dislocation of personnel meant that work was neglected; archivists could not practice their craft, facilities were not well maintained, and operating units were not conscientious about keeping the records necessary to good archives. A second point of urgency is the rush to modernize facilities and management practices in accordance with the national policy of modernization in all fields. Beset, like archives the world over, with insufficient space, old buildings, deteriorating original records, an explosion of new records on cheap paper in the 20th century, and insufficient resources, the Chinese have clearly established some priorities that must be remembered if we are to understand Chinese archives properly.

Archives exist primarily to serve the interests of the government, and this is even more pronounced in China than in the United States, where responses to reference requests from private individuals are a large part of the routine of the National Archives. In China the archives are primarily the repositories of

national treasures and government records, and the government's needs have priority in reference service, sometimes to the exclusion of other research interests.

One of the government's interests is in being the first to publish the archives. In the case of the People's Republic of China this results not only in selective publication of the texts of documents in the archives, but also in the publication of official histories based on the archival resources. Access to records of the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1644 and 1644-1911) by foreigners is fairly common, largely because much of that history has already been published, or because the government's stake in permitting foreign research is higher than its stake in being first on the street with an official interpretation. It is more difficult, although not always impossible, for foreign scholars to obtain access to materials when the research topic competes with work that is currently being done by official historians, or work that they have not yet begun.

The Chinese government is particularly sensitive about foreign access to information that might be classified as a state secret. The definition of just what is and what is not a state secret is not clearly fixed, and foreign researchers must be careful. In general, matters concerning foreign policy and national defense, and data on national economy and Communist Party affairs that the People's Republic has not itself published previously, are off limits. In some respects this policy is not unlike that encountered in other countries, including the United States, but the Chinese sensitivity extends further into history with respect to foreign relations and border defenses, and in the more current data it extends into matters of vital statistics and information about the economy and society that have not yet been made public. And that, for many Americans, is a substantial difference that frustrates



Chinese archivist at work, First Historical Archives, Beijing. He is a master of the art of filling in holes in documents with new paper. *Photograph by Jane K. Gibbs.*

their research interests. Americans who go to China to study must be aware of this situation and be very careful and tactful, and, yes, respectful of the Chinese position, if they wish to receive sympathetic treatment in return. Those who act with care will find the Chinese archivists most friendly and helpful.

A large share of Chinese archival resources is devoted to restoration of documents and to what they call "compilation" (roughly analogous to "arrangement" in American archival terms).

Finally, the whole scope of management and buildings operation, including plant improvement and stabilizing the environmental conditions, demands a large share of Chinese archival resources. In each place we visited there were clearly problems of plant and equipment and work organization. Many of the devices employed were simple, manual ones. Where some more sophisticated devices were in use, we

were unable, in our short stay, to determine their long-range effectiveness and reliability.

Beyond these observations, there seem to be several areas in which the Chinese have only begun to venture, and where they clearly need additional resources, experience, or expertise.

There is nothing yet approaching a national guide to archives and the holdings of archives, although we were told that Chinese archivists are going to participate in compiling the Asian regional archives guide now under preparation. Most internal finding aids are little more than shelf-lists, and in some cases lists are not compatible even within a single archives. Much work needs to be done in description to bring together a mass of disparate information in an organized fashion so that reference inquiries may be more efficiently answered and more completely fulfilled. Automatic data processing alone is not the answer. Basic concepts of information presentation and organization have to be established and tested, and the mass of data has to then be put into a machine-readable form before it can be sorted into categories and analyzed and before calculations can be made for a comprehensive and detailed description in modern terms. (Again, the Chinese are not alone in this, obviously, but the mass of data, and the need for an effective means of translating characters into machine-readable information, are added difficulties for the Chinese.)

While the Chinese are doing some rudimentary microfilming, much of their equipment is still of the simple planetary type, much of it old, and we did not get the impression that a great deal of micrographic work is being done. Some work is being done for image preservation, and it is possible for researchers to order microfilm copies of records, and there is some attempt to microfilm whole series and record

groups. However, the volume of activity is small compared to American activity in the field and compared to the potential of the huge mass of Chinese archives for such treatment.

Despite the fact that there are many hundreds of thousands of documents in Chinese archives, the archives are in some ways incomplete. In Shanghai, for example, we were told that the material actually accessioned and in custody amounts to only a small portion of the potential holdings transferable to the archives under the 30-year rule. While there has been some attempt to acquire the records of nationally prominent figures (e.g., the correspondence and files of Madame Sun Yat-sen) and the records of revolutionary and mass organizations such as labor unions, and while this work is officially encouraged by the State Archives Bureau, there seems to have been little progress along these lines. Lack of storage space is one of the main problems. Because priority is given to government records and records of the revolution, little attempt has been made to canvass for or acquire records of pre-1949 commercial firms, industrial enterprises or institutions, or social service organizations. The problem is not that the Chinese archivists would not like to acquire such records. Indeed, they seemed eager to do so, but limited resources play a large role in what they are able to do. Some records of the period 1911–1949 were taken to Taiwan by the Kuomintang, and American scholars wishing to be certain of complete research coverage must go to both Taipei and Nanjing. The archivists in Nanjing seemed to have little clear grasp of just what proportion of the records of the Republic are in Taiwan and what proportion are held in Nanjing. Finally, for earlier centuries, records antedating the reign of the Qing emperor Qianlong (i.e., before 1735) are much more sparse and fragmentary than

subsequent ones.

Archives in China—at least those we visited—seemed to be devoted almost entirely to paper records. Such still photographic material as might be associated with paper records is kept with those records, and there are a few motion picture films and tape recordings. There seemed to be little, however, in the way of an audiovisual archives in any of the places we visited. We learned from Zhang Tianming last year that there is a film library or film archives in the Ministry of Culture in Beijing, and perhaps in the future other archives will take on more and more audiovisual material, with the attendant need to broaden skills, methods, and facilities to accommodate them.

Likewise, no archives appeared to be in the business of acquiring machine-readable records. Doubtless there are operating units—scientific institutes and factories, for instance—that use computers and generate machine-readable records, and at some point the Chinese archivists are going to have to face the problem of what to do with them, but none of the archives we visited mentioned any planning beyond a general and vague awareness that something would have to be done in the future. They were, however, clearly interested in the potential of automatic data storage and retrieval and processing to assist in the control of archival management and description. There did not seem to be any immediate prospect for any applications.

Nor did we get a very good grasp of archival training in China. We were told that eight colleges have some sort of archival training program, but little information was available on course contents or curriculum emphases, standards, or theoretical principles. Renmin University in Beijing and Fudan University in Shanghai seem to be leading institutions

in the field. At Renmin University the program is associated with the history department and the institute for the study of the Qing Dynasty. At Fudan University the program is a two-year course in archival science leading to certification as an archivist.

In general, we found Chinese archivists to be professionally aware, deeply concerned about the records under their care, dedicated workers, and eager to get on with the job and to have professional exchanges with American colleagues. They are hampered, however, by large quantities of material that need to be brought under preservation, arrangement, and description control, and by a lack of space and adequate technical resources to do the necessary work.

### **Beijing: Archives in the Capital City**

Upon our arrival in Beijing our Chinese colleagues welcomed us warmly, and throughout our stay in Beijing—and indeed for the entire trip—we were given first-class treatment. Highlights of our stay in Beijing were visits to the First Historical Archives of China (Di Yi Lishi Danganguan), the Imperial Records Repository (Huang Shi Cheng), an afternoon series of seminars, and a reception and banquet in the Great Hall of the People (Renmin Dahui Tang). In addition, we toured the Imperial Palace (Gugong), the Summer Palace (Yi He Yuan), the Temple of Heaven (Tiantan), the Ming Tombs, and the Great Wall at Badaling. We were also taken through the Mao Zedong Memorial where the late Chairman rests in state. It was an exciting, if exhausting, four days.

The First Historical Archives is located inside the western wall of the old Imperial Palace; the archives building was constructed in 1974–75 specifically to house the archives of the Ming and Qing dynasties that were formerly

known as “the Palace Archives.”<sup>4</sup> The hallways of the masonry building at first seem rather dark and possibly dank, but the workrooms are light and airy and the stack areas or storage vaults (*kufang*) appear to be quite dry. Upon arrival we were immediately ushered into a large front room to the south of the main entrance, where cups of tea were set at each place on long tables. After much snapping of photographs by both sides, we sipped tea as Huang Xiaoceng, Director of the First Historical Archives, gave us a briefing. He welcomed us warmly, described the archives and its holdings and operations, and then conducted us on a tour of the facility, chiefly of the document restoration workrooms and the stack areas.

In the process of document restoration, the Chinese seem to rely chiefly on a single process of adding new backing to old and deteriorating documents and then binding the documents into sturdy volumes for storage. The relatively simple methods employed owe much of their success to the high quality of the original paper and inks of the old documents. Each document is brushed down flat, face down, on an enamel-topped work surface and is thoroughly wetted with water and a thin paste until it is translucent and without air bubbles. Excess bits of old dried paper and other foreign matter stuck to the paper are carefully removed with brush or spatula or knife, and the new backing is laid over the old document and again is brushed carefully flat with a wide, stiff brush to remove air pockets. When the two sheets, old and new, are partially bonded but not yet dry, they are very carefully peeled up from the work surface and hung on boards covered with paper or cloth to dry. Once dry, the pages are trimmed, placed in proper

order, and then sewn into bound volumes.

The bound volumes become file units and are arranged in proper sequence, usually by the operating office that created or received the documents, and placed in *quanzong*, roughly corresponding to our notion of a record group. Each *quanzong* contains the records of a major government entity or group of entities sharing similar functions or records of a particular kind, such as memorials to the throne or edicts from the throne. Within each *quanzong* the documents may be further divided into series and subseries by working units, although the Chinese do not appear to have a typology for the hierarchy of arrangement. Within each fond (as it were), the documents appear to be arranged in simple chronological order.

In the process of reconstructing documents into sequences and placing them in proper series and *quanzong*, mere knowledge of modern Chinese is clearly insufficient. The literary Chinese in which most of the documents are written is quite different from the modern common language of conversations and newspapers. Furthermore, some of the documents we noted being restored were in Manchu script, and we were told that some are written in Mongolian. Clearly, mastery of language is necessary for at least some of the “compilation” work at the First Historical Archives. We learned that many of the people working on the documents had not only been doing this work for most of their adult lives, but that some were children of those who had done it before them. Their work was interrupted between 1966 and 1976 by the Cultural Revolution, and only in the past six years have they begun to get their hands back in again and to make progress on the work

<sup>4</sup>For a fuller description of the First Historical Archives, see the aforementioned article by Beatrice Bartlett, and also several of the articles, in Chinese, mentioned in her footnotes.





Typical stack area, First Historical Archives, Beijing. *Photograph by Jane K. Gibbs.*

that has to be done.

The stack areas of the First Historical Archives are dimly lit with incandescent bulbs. Surprisingly, we were allowed to take flash pictures in both the stack areas and in the areas where the documents were being restored. The basic durability and stability of the materials no doubt gave our hosts some reassurance that the temporary intrusion of American flash bulbs could not damage what 50 years of civil war and international conflict had failed to obliterate. A hygrothermograph was noted and the Celsius readings appeared to be within the nominal range of archival tolerance, but we could not really verify the conditions over long periods of time. Nor could we ascertain if there had been any change since Beatrice Bartlett noted that the stack areas were unheated in winter. To the casual glance the "control" of environmental conditions seemed to owe more to the building structure and to the placing of document

volumes in individual metal cases (each about three cubic feet in capacity) than to air control systems. Thick stone walls and elevation of the stacks well above ground provide nominal protection against temperature fluctuations and the dampening effect of groundwater. However, there seemed to be little or no attempt at controlling ambient air, and given the pollution levels and the amount of wind-blown dust in Beijing, ambient air is probably a significant factor that the Chinese should try to control. The stacks smelled of camphor, and we were told that essence of camphor was regularly used as a fumigant to protect paper against infestation by pests.

The main research room was a large room, resembling one of the older classrooms or lecture halls of an American college, and was fairly well lighted with windows on two sides. A dozen or more researchers were seated at tables, working quietly on manuscript

materials before them. On the day we visited, all happened to be Chinese, but a dozen or so American scholars are known to have made good use of the facilities at the First Historical Archives.

Near the research room we were shown a display of publications of the First Historical Archives and the State Archives Bureau. Most of these were official histories, selective documentary publications, or issues of *Lishi Dangan* (Historical Archives), a new journal. A complete set of these publications was presented to the Society of American Archivists before our departure from Beijing. All are in Chinese.

Upon leaving the building we were assembled on the front steps for a group photograph together with members of the archives staff and representatives from the State Archives Bureau. Nearby was a large number of staff members of the First Historical Archives doing exercises in the courtyard during their morning break. A loudspeaker blared music and instructions. Some of the staff were

actually doing the exercises, but others were playing with Frisbees or batting a shuttlecock back and forth with badminton racquets. It was all very casual and "laid back," most unlike our stereotyped expectations of rigid drill by uniformly-dressed Chinese. There seemed to be a good deal of individual choice about what sort of relaxation or exercise to indulge in, or even whether to do anything at all.

Our second archival treat in Beijing was the Huang Shi Cheng, or Imperial Records Repository (or, in some translations, the Imperial Historical Archives). None of the literal translations quite convey the purpose and contents or character of the place. Set in its own compound within the western wall of the inner palace, this is the building described in Arthur W. Hummel's translation of T.L. Yuan's 1928 article, "Ancient Archival Depository in Peking."<sup>5</sup> We found the building much restored compared with the description in the Hummel-Yuan article, although a con-

<sup>5</sup>*American Archivist* 17 (Fall 1954): 317-318.



The reading room of the First Historical Archives, Beijing. Photograph by Jane K. Gibbs.



siderable quantity of construction rubble still lies along the walls of the compound. The building is entirely of stone, even to the massive stone doors set on stone pintles. It was built originally in 1534–35 by the Ming emperor, Jiajing, expressly as a place to store dynastic records. It was later restored in the 12th year of the reign of the Qing emperor, Jiaqing (1748), and again in 1956 before being once again refurbished recently. It is now open as a tourist attraction under the auspices of the First Historical Archives. The building covers an area of 8,463 square meters and rests on a stone base about two meters high. Inside the thick stone walls there are 152 large chests, each about two cubic meters in volume, set on a stone platform. The chests are of camphor wood and are bound with bronze or copper; they are referred to as “golden chests.” Some of the chests are open, with glass tops set in place, and documents are on display to visitors. The chests contain “authenticated chronicles” (annals approved by the emperor), imperial edicts, imperial genealogies, and other records of state.

Adjacent to the Huang Shi Cheng itself stands a smaller pavilion containing a stone tablet with an inscription ascribed to the Qianlong emperor of the Qing Dynasty. The inscription exhorts visitors to “ponder the sacred documents diligently” and to use them “as mirrors to examine ourselves.”

The afternoon of our archives day in Beijing was spent at the Hall of the People's Political Consultative Conference, listening to a briefing on Chinese archives by Li Fenglou, deputy chairman of the Chinese Archives Association and deputy chief of the State Archives Bureau. This was followed by presentations by members of our group on the National Archives and Records Service, American archival professional groups, American archives of machine-readable

records, computerization of finding aids, archival training in the United States, American state archives, archives in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and oral history. The exchange was interesting. It helped to set the stage for the rest of the tour, and it gave us a sense of the difficulty of carrying on international and intercultural communication about archives among large groups of people speaking through interpreters.

The briefing by Li Fenglou was a thumbnail sketch, similar to that presented by Zhang Tianming at the SAA annual meeting in Berkeley, Calif., in 1981.<sup>6</sup> Li noted that even as far back as the mythological Xia Dynasty (2000 + B.C.) archives were a feature of Chinese government, and that the history of China is more than 4,000 years long, but that few records have survived because of China's long history of wars and natural calamities. Since 1949, observed Li, the government of the People's Republic has made a special effort to ensure that records are properly kept and transferred to archives, and to train archivists to care for and provide reference service from the records. Archives are organized from the State Archives Bureau downward to the lowest levels in order to help support “socialist construction.” Hundreds of thousands of reference requests are handled each year, most of them from government offices requiring data for their ongoing work, but also inquiries from scholars.

We then divided into three smaller groups for the American presentations, each group being addressed by two or three Americans and including from 50 to about 150 Chinese archivists and university teachers and researchers. The substance of our presentations was hardly sophisticated and perhaps was unexceptional for an American audience, but the Chinese were vastly interested in what American archives and American

<sup>6</sup>*American Archivist* 45 (Spring 1982): 224–226.

archivists are all about, and they asked many questions. The need for translation made the exercise both interesting and a bit frustrating. We found, for instance, that the whole concept of federal government archives versus state government archives in the United States was a bit of a puzzle to the Chinese. Nor was it easy to explain to them, through interpreters, the separation of the Society of American Archivists from the National Archives and Records Service—although the Chinese seem to have no problem understanding the (to us) equally strange relationship between the State Archives Bureau and the Chinese Archives Association. One observation that may clarify this confusion is that the Chinese tend to separate roles into different organizations with overlapping personnel and interlocking directorates, while we in the United States tend to have separate institutions and separate personnel structures with overlapping and sometimes competing responsibilities and roles. In the People's Republic of China, the different roles of political leadership, government management, and professional training and standards are carried out through different organizational structures and different forums, but they are carried out by essentially the same people. The three themes, separated in a formal sense, are integrated through the minds of the operating personnel. It was very difficult to get such subtle differences through direct translation, and these things had to be discovered over time and through dealing with many rather simple declarative sentences within the capacity of various translators. In listening to the translations of our talks, it became apparent to us that the Chinese were having the same sort of difficulty with our concepts as we were having with theirs. Distinctions depending on specific meanings or modified by strings

of conditional and dependent clauses tended to be oversimplified and lost because translations had to be done quickly. We learned our lesson, and before the second series of seminars in Shanghai some two weeks later most of us had reduced our complicated prose to simpler declarative sentences. We left the more complex written texts with our Chinese colleagues so that they could puzzle over them at leisure.

The translation problem is one that future cooperative ventures will have to overcome. It will not be enough for Chinese archivists to learn the American idiom. We, on our side, are going to have to learn to use Chinese skillfully if there is to be any meaningful communication. We have to be assured that the nuances of meaning that we take for granted in our shared experience are effectively conveyed in whatever translation takes place. This can be done only when both sides have a comfortable working knowledge of the other's language.

In a plenary session following the presentations we explored, without coming to any conclusions, possible ways in which future international cooperation might take place. Three possible steps were proposed by the U.S. and Canadian side: further visits such as ours, to become acquainted with each other's archives; work-study exchanges in which archivists from each side would spend time actually working on projects in the other's country; and a possible cooperative venture in publishing documents of early Sino-American relations. Li responded for the Chinese side by remarking that whatever occurred would have to be within the framework and under the auspices of the Sino-American cultural exchange agreement on a government-to-government basis. We also encouraged the Chinese to press forward with the publication of guides

to Chinese archives and toward further participation in international archival catalogs.

Our first full day in China was climaxed by a banquet in the Great Hall of the People, hosted by An Qingzhu, chairman of the Chinese Archives Association Council and director of the State Archives Bureau. Toasts were exchanged between An Qingzhu and Ann Morgan Campbell on behalf of their respective organizations, and international friendship and understanding were praised and encouraged to the accompaniment of sips of *maotai*.<sup>7</sup> Also at the dinner, Claudine J. Weiher, on behalf of the Archivist of the United States, presented to the State Archives Bureau a copy of the jointly published volume *The United States and Russia: The Beginning of Relations, 1765–1815*.

Our trip had begun well. Three more days in Beijing were spent visiting the sights mentioned at the opening of this section, and then we went on to Xian to see the excavations of the Qin Shihuangdi tomb complex, the Banpo neolithic village excavations, and the hot springs where Chiang Kai-shek was captured by Zhang Xueling in 1936. We also visited the Qianling, tomb of Tang Dynasty emperor Gaozu and his empress, and the nearby tomb of Princess Yang. After an overnight trip by train to Xuzhou, where we visited the Huai Hai battle monument and museum and the Xuzhou museum (including a Han Dynasty jade funerary coat), we then went to Qufu, in Shandong Province, for our second archival visit of the tour.

### Qufu: The Confucian Family Archives

Qufu was the home of Confucius (Kongzi), and his first-son lineal descendants were magistrates of the local prefecture for all of the 77 generations

between Confucius' death in 476 B.C. and the departure of the last magistrate for Taiwan in 1949. A small city, Qufu nonetheless boasts a magnificent Confucian temple (Kong Miao); the mansion, courts, and prefectural halls of the Confucian descendants (Kong Fu); and the graveyard where Confucius and 76 of his lineal male progeny and a host of other relatives are buried (Kong Lin).

Housed in one of the many buildings within the courtyards of the Confucian mansion compound are the Kong (Confucian) Family Archives. They are administered by the Bureau of Cultural Relics of the Ministry of Culture, which also manages the Confucian Mansion proper and the nearby temple, and are in the care of Kong Fanyin, a descendant (via a cadet branch) of Confucius. He is also a deputy director of the Qufu Historical Relics Museum. The Confucian Family Archives contain not only the genealogies of the descendants of Confucius and the household accounts and other records of the family, but also include records of the magisterial court of the local prefecture.

After a briefing, Kong opened his archives for our inspection. Wooden shelves and boxes of camphor wood contain hundreds of bound volumes of documents, many of which were hand copies of earlier documents no longer extant. We noted that in many of the documents there were emendations, and Kong told us that it had not been uncommon for later generations of record keepers to correct a text if they believed it to be wrong or the composition uninspired or unfelicitous. A number of these documents are being prepared for publication, beginning with the genealogical records. It is obvious that Kong and his small staff have taken great care of the archives and take great

<sup>7</sup>For those unfamiliar with it, *maotai* is a sorghum-based clear liquor that demands your undivided attention with your first sip and deprives you of reason with the second.

pride in their work. We were given to understand that although both the temple and the mansion had suffered damage from overenthusiastic followers of the "get rid of the old" school during the Cultural Revolution, the archives were untouched.

This brief account cannot begin to convey the charm of Qufu, the experience of lodging in the Confucian mansion itself, or the quiet solemnity of visiting the grave of the ancient teacher and philosopher who had so great an influence on China through the ages.

### Jinan: A Provincial Archives

Jinan (on some maps spelled Tsinan) is the capital of Shandong Province, and in the provincial government compound stands a new building constructed in 1978 to house the provincial archives. Upon arrival we were told that we were the first foreigners to visit the archives, and we were given a warm and friendly greeting by Zhong Chao, deputy director of the Shandong Provincial Archives. The briefing was given by Madame Liu Qi, also a deputy director of the Shandong Provincial Archives. Both also serve as deputy chairmen of the Shandong Provincial Archives Association Council.

In her briefing, Liu noted that they date their archival work from 1958, but that the provincial archives was not formally established until 1963 and that work was interrupted during the Cultural Revolution. The archives did not really begin to function again properly after the Cultural Revolution until the new building was completed and occupied in 1979. The archives is directly subordinate to the Department of Science and Culture of the Shandong Provincial Government Council. The work of the staff of 35 people is divided into two major areas: compilation and research, and administration. The

records in their custody include a few items from the Ming and Qing dynasties, notably scattered records of the Water Conservancy Board (public works water projects), the Food Office, and the Treasury. They have records of pre-1949 revolutionary groups in Shandong as well as records of the provincial government between 1911 and 1949, including material from the Japanese occupation. Many of the pre-1949 records were lost or damaged during the war, and there is no really good estimate of exactly how much was thus lost. There is only one basic shelf list for the 100,000 volumes of records organized into 170 *quanzong*. However, there seems to have been some attempt at writing summary descriptions of the contents of some of the *quanzong*, and an attempt was made to begin a name index to some of the material.

The stack areas were all clean, neat, and well lighted. The total stack space covers about 3,700 square meters of flooring. We noted that the stacks were located in the center of the building, completely surrounded by a service and access corridor, which demonstrated good planning. The construction design spoiled the whole thing, however, by piercing the walls of each storeroom with windows just below the ceiling level. When we asked about this the Shandong archivists with a wry smile that they have the same problems with construction contractors as we do in America!

Access to do research in the Shandong Provincial Archives requires a certificate from one's work unit (*danwei*) demonstrating a legitimate and genuine need for the information being sought. The provincial archives does not deal directly with foreign researchers, and any request for access would have to be considered first by the State Archives Bureau in Beijing. Only after approval by the central office would the local archives become involved in service to the

researcher, and then only within the framework of a work plan and limits agreed upon in Beijing.

Liu stated that there had been 37,000 researchers since 1978, but we suspect that there is some confusion in terms or translation here, and that the figure actually is for reference inquiries of all kinds rather than for people visiting the archives to do research. When we were shown the research room we found it to be small, containing only four desks. Most of the work of the reference staff involves assisting with writing official histories or responding to official government and Party requests for information from the archives.

The archives does have provincial regulations for records retention and disposal, in both long-term and short-term categories. The general classes of records selected for permanent archives are determined by guidance from the State Archives Bureau, and they are basically the same for each province in the People's Republic. The provincial archives does not function as a bureau of vital statistics. Records of births, deaths, marriages, licenses, etc., are kept by the provincial Bureau of Civil Administration. Each bureau and office of the provincial government has its own "archives" (records office), and each level of government below the provincial level, including 110 counties and town and 11 prefectures and municipalities, has its own "archives" or records office. Each level is responsible for its own archives within the general framework of national regulations for local archives and with guidance from the provincial archives.

### **Nanjing: The Second Historical Archives**

Nanjing, on the Yangtze River (Chang Jiang) in southwestern Jiangsu Province, has been at various times a capital

of China, notably at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty in the 14th century and for the Kuomintang government and the Wang Jingwei puppet government under the Japanese in the 20th century. It is the site of the Second Historical Archives (Di Er Lishi Danganguan) of China. The Second Historical Archives is easily the most attractive building we visited. Set in a park-like grounds, the main building was built in the 1930s by the Kuomintang as an archives, and there is an underground stack area in the basement, with the main research room or hall set well up a flight of outside grand entrance stairs. To each side of the landscaped courtyard in front of this older building are two recent buildings, each containing six storage rooms for documents. The modern buildings are designed to blend in with and to complement the older building, making for a very effective and attractive setting.

The Second Historical Archives contains surviving records of the Sun Yat-sen provisional government, the Canton government, the northern warlord governments, the Wang Jingwei puppet government, and the Kuomintang government of the Republic. Shi Xuancen, deputy director of the Second Historical Archives, stated in his briefing that the pre-1949 records are fragmentary, although those for the northern warlord governments are fairly complete. He does not have a very precise idea of what materials are missing or what was taken to Taiwan, nor what the holdings now on Taiwan consist of. The holdings of the Second Historical Archives occupy some 25,000 meters of shelving and are divided into 800 *quanzong*.

Shi stated that the archives are open to research and that they had more than 4,000 reference inquiries in 1981. Foreign researchers must apply through diplomatic channels to the State Archives Bureau in Beijing, and only then,





The Second Historical Archives, Nanjing. *Photograph by Thomas G. Campbell.*

after approval by the central office, will they be given assistance in Nanjing. The holdings are completely cataloged on cards, and they are beginning to publish guides to the archives as well as to do research and writing of official histories. The facility has a total of 135 staff members, of whom 60 are archivists. Forty of the archivists work in the compilation section and 20 in the research section. Other staff members are administrative personnel, technical personnel, or maintenance personnel.

There was a modest microfilming shop in a building to the rear of the main archives building. Three older planetary cameras seemed to be little used, and a film processor in the next room seemed to be out of operation entirely. In one of the stack areas we were shown some new compact shelving on tracks, moved by hand cranks on the ends of the stacks. They worked very smoothly and the staff reported having no trouble with them.

Shi also gave us to understand that the Second Historical Archives is continuing to receive, in bits and pieces, caches of records from all over China that have been discovered to be files abandoned by Kuomintang forces in the later months of 1949 as they were preparing to leave for Taiwan. Since the Second Historical Archives was established in 1952 specifically to be the place for storing and administering the records left behind by the Kuomintang, such records as are found are routinely sent to Nanjing at the behest of the State Archives Bureau. Indeed, the State Archives Bureau periodically broadcasts an appeal for such records to be turned in and sent to Nanjing when they are found. They are added to appropriate *quanzong* as they are received.

#### **Shanghai: The Shanghai Municipal Archives**

After a brief but pleasant stop in the canal city of Suzhou we spent three days

in Shanghai; the visit included a memorable tour boat cruise down the Huangpu River to its confluence with the Yangtze at Wusung. At the Shanghai Municipal Archives, located just a few blocks from the Bund in downtown Shanghai, we received what was perhaps the fullest and most comprehensive briefing of the entire tour from Lo Wen, director of the archives, after being greeted and welcomed by Zheng Shizong, chairman of the Council of the Shanghai Municipal Archives Association.

The repository itself occupies four floors of a nine-story building not originally designed as an archives. The archives was established in 1956 but was not formally dedicated until 1959. Its holdings include both pre-1949 and post-1949 materials of both the government of Shanghai municipality and of the Communist Party of Shanghai. Shanghai, of course, is the city in which the Party was founded in 1921. The holdings also include records from some 10 to 12 local district governments and 10 country governments incorporated into the present special municipality of Shanghai.

As with other archives, work was severely interrupted during the Cultural Revolution, and the work since operations were completely restored in 1979 has concentrated on rebuilding and restoration. Temperature and humidity control are a major problem, and they recently designed and installed a new control system for ventilation. We were shown the control panel of this system and were impressed with their statement that the archivists and staff members themselves had built the system. Lo stated that their objective was to keep the relative humidity within a nominal range of 58 to 65 percent and the temperature between 20 and 25 degrees Celsius. Since Shanghai summer temperatures reach 30 degrees and

winter temperatures fall to about 9 degrees, the system has its work cut out for it. It remains to be seen how well it will work. The control panel is not only designed to operate the ventilation but is also tied in to the fire alarm, fire-control, and intrusion alarm systems, and monitors all of them. It was easily the most sophisticated piece of building systems equipment we saw on the tour.

The Shanghai Municipal Archives is subordinate to the Shanghai Municipal People's Council, although it takes guidance on archival matters from the State Archives Bureau in Beijing. The archives organization of work is divided into five sections: the director's office and administration; two numbered departments engaged in restoration and compilation; a technical department engaged in research on document deterioration and restoration and in microfilming and environmental controls; and a research department engaged in the preparation of official histories and catalogs.

The holdings themselves consist of 820 *quanzong* incorporating some 500,000 volumes of documents occupying nearly 6,000 meters of shelving. The *quanzong* are further grouped roughly, for purposes of administration and general description, into three "super-*quanzong*": records of the Shanghai Municipal Government, records of the Shanghai Communist Party, and records of Shanghai mass organizations since 1949; records of the Shanghai Communist Party, records of trade unions, and records of underground units and other revolutionary groups prior to 1949; and records of the Shanghai Municipal Government between 1927 and 1949 under the Kuomintang and under the Japanese occupation. No mention was made of any earlier material, either for the 1911-1927 period of the Republic or for the earlier imperial governments.



The Shanghai Municipal Archives has made some effort to acquire the personal records of principal government and revolutionary figures. We were given to understand that all archives had been encouraged to do so, but the Shanghai archives seems to have been more active and more successful than others. Their prize “catch” appears to be the papers of Song Jingling (Madame Sun Yat-sen), whose correspondence and other papers cover most of 20th-century China’s history. After her death, the Shanghai archivists were permitted to go to her house and move all her papers to the Shanghai archives. The success of the Shanghai archivists in obtaining such materials was evident in a display of documents they had out for us. It included such gems as a letter from Song Jingling to the famous Chinese short-story writer, Lu Xun, and a memorial written by Lu Xun on the death of Hu Yepin (a revolutionary writer and husband of novelist Ding Ling). There was also a letter from Zhang Tailei to his wife, written in 1921. All these were collected through a general public appeal published in the Shanghai area. In response to the blunt question of whether the owners really had no choice but to offer them up to the archives, we were told that most people regarded it as an honor, a patriotic privilege, to do so, and that a further rationale of persuasion, if any were needed, was that the archives could obviously take better care of the items than could a private owner. Even after repeated questioning it was unclear to us whether such gleanings and collectings were placed in a separate *quanzong* of all such materials obtained from private sources, or were incorporated into existing *quanzong* where appropriate.

Lo noted that while this collection effort is concentrating on government and revolutionary figures, limitations of

space prevent them from making more than a cursory effort to collect other records, such as those of pre-1949 foreign commercial and government interests, although they would very much like to do so. He said he was sure that there were caches of documents located under stairs in old buildings around the city, but that searching for them and doing something about them simply was not practical at the moment. He is faced with a more immediate problem of mastering his own post-1949 responsibilities. Records located in the Shanghai Municipal Archives go up to 1966 only. Of a potential of some 5,000,000 volumes of documents that could be accessioned into the archives, they have in hand only about 25 percent, or about 1,250,000, including the 500,000 volumes already brought under control. The remainder are still in the records offices of operating units. A survey is being conducted to identify the materials that should be transferred so that plans can be made and proposals suggested for dealing with the problem, but action will have to await a solution to the space problem.

The research and reference activities of the Shanghai Municipal Archives follows the same pattern found earlier in Shandong. Researchers require authorization from their units, and foreigners may apply only through the State Archives Bureau. Research and reference is primarily in the service of the cause of “socialist construction,” although pre-1949 materials have been opened up to more general research. Research work done by archives personnel is mainly in support of official history writing, but archives assistance has also been sought in the revision of high school history texts, the devising of captions and labels for museum displays, and in the preparation of movie scenarios and plays or television scripts.

The research staff has been heavily involved in writing a history of the Chinese Communist Party, a work that has already produced more than 750,000 words of text. Archival work in support of this project has concentrated on the records of the revolution of 1911, the May 4th Movement of 1919, and the May 30th Movement of 1925. Other research has been concentrating mainly on biographies of revolutionary martyrs and other similar topics. In 1981 more than 3,000 individual researchers, representing 1,700 groups and operating units, used more than 10,000 volumes of documents. Finding aids are limited to a single card catalog (shelf list), although this catalog has more than 1,000,000 entries. A more general catalog is in preparation, but it has only 60,000 entries so far.

Restoration of documents concentrates mostly on older documents, many of which were received in an aged, yellow, and brittle condition. From April 1980 to the end of 1981 they were able to restore 9,500 pages. Their biggest problems are poor quality 20th-century paper and inks. Although they do some microfilming for image protection, this takes second place in their priorities to working on the problems of restoring the original documents themselves, and they have done only 100 rolls of microfilm to date. At top speed, with minor problems in the materials, their restoration staff can restore up to 75 documents per day, but many items take far longer.

We also gained a much better impression of the nature and role of the Chinese Archives Association from Lo's description of the Shanghai Archives Association. It was established on 10 November 1981, and he described it as an organization of "mass character," stressing the grassroots nature of the organization, which takes its strength

from the working archivists themselves. The Shanghai association is a special organization for the purpose of mobilizing and conducting academic activity among archivists and promoting theoretical principles based on practical work experience. The Shanghai association includes more than 400 archivists from some 35 groups and institutions, most of them government offices or universities.

The Shanghai Municipal Archives Association has a general business meeting every three years at which the association council of 44 members is chosen to run the association between the triennial meetings. A standing committee of the council is elected by the council, and it consists of a chairman, 7 vice-chairmen, a secretary general, 2 assistant secretaries general, and 14 general members. (Those readers familiar with the organization of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic will find this pattern familiar.) The standing committee is considered to be the leadership group for archival work in Shanghai.

The Shanghai Municipal Archives Association's activities include an annual meeting for the purpose of exchanging professional work experiences (not association business), organizing ad hoc seminars on archival topics (such as the presentations made by our group in Shanghai), organizing and promoting academic study groups on archival subjects, managing practical training courses, selecting subjects that require research, encouraging research in needed areas, publishing an archival studies journal, and providing for archival study rooms (not very clearly defined or described).

In the afternoon we again, as in Beijing, met with a large group of Shanghai archival colleagues, and again divided into smaller groups for the presentations

from the American side as before. The questions were many and pertinent, and on the whole the sessions were an improvement over the ones in Beijing, simply because our group knew more what to expect and had a better grasp of the Chinese archivists' positions and interests.

### **Guangzhou: The Guangdong Provincial Archives**

Our last archives stop in China-proper was the Guangdong Provincial Archives in Guangzhou (Canton). We were welcomed by Zhang Chaoxian, chairman of the Guangdong Provincial Archives Association Council, and a deputy director of the Guangdong Provincial Archives. In order to give our readers a sense of the flavor of the various briefings we received, Zhang's talk is given in full below, as translated by Shi Lin of the State Archives Bureau, with only a few minor emendations by the author of this article in the interests of smoothness and clarity.

"Ladies and gentlemen:

"First of all, I would like to extend, on behalf of the Archives Association of Guangdong Province and all the staff of the Guangdong Provincial Archives, a warm welcome to the Society of American Archivists tour group headed by Ann Morgan Campbell, Claudine J. Weiher, and William W. Moss. The relations and friendship between the Chinese and American peoples started long ago. During the visit of former president Nixon in 1972, he held talks with Premier Zhou Enlai which resulted in the issue of a joint communiqué in Shanghai, thereby laying the foundation for developing Sino-American relations. More recently, increasing contacts in economy, science, culture, and so forth, have promoted mutual understanding, friendship, and cooperation between the two peoples, and friendly relations be-

tween archivists in the two countries began to develop healthily as well. In 1980, a delegation of Chinese archivists attended the Second World Records Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, and visited the National Archives in Washington, D.C. In 1981, at the invitation of the Society of American Archivists, China sent its representative to the forty-fifth annual meeting of the society at the University of California, Berkeley. Now this SAA tour group has visited Beijing, Xian, Xuzhou, Qufu, Jinan, Nanjing, and Shanghai, and you have given us a picture of archival work in America, and you have had much contact with archivists in China. We are now happy to have you here in Guangzhou, visiting the archives of the Guangdong Provincial Government. We hope the contacts and cooperation between our two countries will develop further.

"Guangzhou is a big city in southern China and is associated with Los Angeles as a sister city. Recently, a further agreement has been reached, and Baltimore's harbor and Guangzhou's harbor of Huangpu (Whampoa) will become associated as friendly harbors. We are happy to exchange experiences with our American colleagues and to further our friendship.

"I wish you a happy stay here in Guangzhou, and I wish you good health.

"This archives was set up in October 1958 as a scientific and cultural institution to preserve permanently the historical records of Guangdong Province and archives created by the Party and government agencies after the founding of the People's Republic of China. In accordance with the requirements of the State Archives Bureau concerning archival work in the provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions,<sup>8</sup> the job of our provincial ar-

<sup>8</sup>To those familiar with the PRC bureaucracy and its publications, this sounds very much like the title of a formal directive. If so, it would be interesting to see the text.

chives covers the collection, processing, conservation, appraisal, and counting [sic] of the historical archives and of the Party and government archives.<sup>9</sup> We make various finding aids and we publish collections of historical archives for the use of people in all walks of life.

"After its establishment, the archives has done an efficient job of acquiring a great deal of historical material and post-1949 archives of government and Party organs. A normal sequence of work has been established.

"The archives at present has thirty staff members, among whom eighteen are male and twelve are female.<sup>10</sup> Thirteen are graduates of universities while sixteen have only a high school education. Sixteen of the staff have been engaged in archival work for more than ten years, and they are the main force here.

"The archives consist of such divisions as the historical archives department, the government and Party archives department, the compilation, research and publication department, the technical department, the materiel department, and so on, each doing its own bit of archival work.

"The Party Committee and People's Government of Guangdong Province have paid great attention to archival work. After the downfall of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, the government allotted funds so that this new building, with a floor space of thirty-four hundred square meters, could be built, and so that some equipment could be introduced such as microfilming machines, cameras, duplicators, tape recorders, and equipment to control temperature and humidity in the stacks. Thus, conditions are much improved.

"Records preserved in this archives total about one hundred thousand volumes occupying sixteen hundred and thirty linear meters of shelving. Although quite a lot of the pre-1949 archives were burnt and some were taken away by the Kuomintang forces before liberation, we still have acquired archives created during the ruling period of the Kuomintang by the provincial government and over seventy of its agencies, including the divisions of civil administration, finance, education, agriculture and forestry, railway administration, post office, and some universities. We also have archives created by the customs office in Guangdong Province from the later Qing Dynasty to the founding of the People's Republic of China. The above-mentioned historical archives are of great value to the research of economy, politics, military affairs, and culture in Guangzhou before liberation.

"Besides this, we have also acquired and preserved part of the revolutionary historical archives of the Chinese Communist Party from 1929 to 1949. These archives record the revolutionary activities of the Party in the early days. They include valuable records of the first cooperation between the Communist Party and the Kuomintang, and on the first and second civil wars. These records play an important part in the textual research on how the Communist Party led the people of Guangdong in the revolutionary struggle to win the democratic revolution.

"The archives created after liberation by Party and government are fairly complete, and those preserved in the archives are the early records from 1949 to 1966.

<sup>9</sup>Note the deliberate distinction between "historical archives" (before 1949) and "party and government archives" (post-1949).

<sup>10</sup>Our persistent inquiries as to the proportion of women to men in archival work bemused our hosts, to the point that our national guide, Yin Guomei, at one point in reporting the population of water buffalo observed with a grin that forty-five percent were male and fifty-five percent were female.

They are comprehensive records of government and Party leadership in Guangzhou in socialist revolution and construction since 1949. They provide fairly complete and systematic information for research in the development of economy, politics, military affairs, culture, etc., since 1949.

"Most of the archives are still kept in the old repositories due to the fact that we have just built the new ones and therefore work has just begun. The stacks cover thirty-five hundred square meters. There are eleven thousand six hundred volumes of records containing sixty-one thousand nine hundred pages. More than one million words have been published.

"According to a decision by the government, we are going to have the pre-1949 archives and part of the revolutionary historical archives open to scientific research by institutions, universities, Party and government officials, and agencies. People can come to the archives to consult, read, copy, or print the historical materials they need, but we also arrange, compile, and publish some collections of historical records. We are making historical records open to the public gradually."

At this point, Zhang took questions from the floor and then we toured the archives. The Guangzhou facility is a new building, built in the "barracks" shape and style so common to new construction in tropical countries. Again, the problem of ambient air in temperature, humidity, and pollution control seemed hardly to have been grasped, much less coped with, but the building seemed strong and dry. As Zhang indicated, some of the *kufang*, or storage rooms, were completely bare because material has not yet been moved from the old repositories. The move will no doubt be completed in the near future as the archives are located in the provin-

cial government compound. In one of the stack areas we were shown old customs records, many of them in English. In contrast to the northern archives, the Guangdong archives uses a different sort of large document case, apparently of galvanized metal, which may present some problems in the future.

In the microfilming area we were shown the most modern and most sophisticated piece of equipment of the whole tour, a Kodak microfilm camera-processor-reader-printer system with the capability of computerized identification numerals for each frame. The equipment was obtained from the Kodak outlet in Hong Kong, and we were told that the Guangdong archives has a service contract with Kodak and that a member of the archives staff had gone to Hong Kong for training in the operation and maintenance of the equipment in order for the archives to have an in-house capability for troubleshooting the machinery. The installation was relatively recent, within the past year, and they are only just now beginning to develop a systematic program of microfilming materials.

As in Shanghai, the Guangdong archivists had prepared for us a display of several interesting documents. Among them (much to my personal delight) was the diary of Feng Baiju, an anti-Japanese guerrilla leader on Hainan Island and a postwar official in the Guangdong Provincial People's Government. There were also documents written by Ye Jianying and Tao Zhu, former governors of Guangdong Province in the 1950s and early 1960s. These people, along with Ou Mengjue, had figured prominently in my graduate essay on localism in Guangdong Province, written at Columbia University as a requirement for my master's degree nearly 20 years ago. It was very exciting indeed to



see the original writings of people I had known only through secondary printed sources in translation. Feng's diary is the only one of the items to have reached the United States, in a Chinese published version by 1965.

### **Zhongguo Zaijian: China, Au Revoir**

After Guangzhou it was goodbye to China except for a very brief stop in Hong Kong for a very rapid readjustment to Western ways. We left with great regret, feeling that we had only just begun to get acquainted with Chinese archivists and Chinese archives and that there was much more to be learned and enjoyed. But we also left with great pleasure at having had the opportunity and the experiences described above. Readers of this article will have only the barest glimpse of the bare glimpse we ourselves had of China. We packed a great deal of travel and sight-seeing into the 21 days, and our friends, colleagues, and relatives will no doubt be treated to endless travelogues, complete with slides. But, none of us yet knows what it would be like to live in China, to do research in Chinese archives, to work as an archivist in Chinese archives, or to discuss Chinese history and Chinese archives with Chinese scholars and archivists in great detail, seeing their problems as they see them and as they must face them. Until Americans can spend more time—not days but months and years—in China, doing research as a number of Americans have already done, we still will not really comprehend what it is all about.

Our admittedly superficial tour suggests, however, some conclusions that need further testing. The Chinese need equipment, facilities, and modern technology much more than they need instruction in or acquaintance with American archival principles and tech-

niques. They already have a firm base for their own archives work in arrangement, preservation, and description. They need some assurance that the next 10 or 12 years will provide the stability and consistency of support that is needed for a long-range solution to the problems of coping with the masses of material on hand and the greater masses of records potentially transferable to the archives. And they need assurance that the resources to cope with the situation will keep coming. The answers to these questions lie more within China than they do in international cooperation. Americans can help in some areas where the Chinese have little experience, such as the management of collections of personal papers and non-government institutional archives. Americans can help on the technical side in planning buildings and applying environmental controls. Americans can help in making modern equipment available within the terms and conditions of trade agreements, and can train Chinese personnel in their uses. Americans can help the Chinese develop more sophisticated finding aids and catalogs to their holdings. But, do not be surprised if the Chinese learn most of what we have to teach them very rapidly. Do not be surprised if soon the Chinese begin teaching us a thing or two. We can learn from them as well.

As Ann Morgan Campbell said in her toast to the Chinese archivists in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, only if we understand each other's history, honestly and candidly, can we hope to develop a sound basis for future mutual understanding and cooperation between our two peoples. And an honest understanding of history rests, in turn, on good archives and on understanding the archives of each other's country. I hope that this report may in some measure contribute to further contacts and better understanding, that some

young archivist reading this article will begin to study Chinese so as to be able to speak to Chinese archivists in their own language, that American archivists and Chinese archivists will have opportunities to work in each other's archives, and that American archivists will support efforts at international cooperation by making their facilities and expertise

available when Chinese archivists come to visit us as we went to visit them. And, quite candidly, I hope that one day I may return to China as one of those American archivists to enjoy the experience of working in a Chinese archives, and that I will be only one of many.