

others, these include the minutes of meetings held by enterprises and public institutions, production brigades, rebel organizations and trade unions.

Materials relating to individuals and households:

- 1: Personal letters—over 310,000 items.
- 2: Personal diaries and work memoirs—over 3200 sets.

Primary Level Archives of Rural Areas and Research on Shanxi Society in the Era of Collectivization

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In practicing the study of contemporary Chinese history, one ought to integrate both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches. However, integrating these two approaches presents new challenges for those frameworks and methodologies we use for organizing history, and also for the processes we use to unearth and utilize materials. As such, an 'information revolution' is required within the rapidly expanding field of research on contemporary Chinese social history.



1. From “one-man operation” to “collective survey”: On collating the collection’s historical records
 - 1) Materials were initially collated on an individual basis. Many of these individuals were staff from the Research Center for Chinese Social History at Shanxi University. Beginning with their hometowns, staff carried out surveys and collated materials in areas which they were well accustomed to and in which they had a strong social network.
 - 2) In addition to these individual surveys, we also carried out larger-scale investigations in which organized teams were dispatched to collect materials. We began these operations in villages, and then went on to expand our operations to cover larger areas such as counties and cities.
 - 3) The historical archives of rural areas are complicated and diverse. As a data set, they are a vast jumble, and were collected from all over Shanxi province. In terms of their content, in addition to villages and townships, these materials also cover factories, irrigation works and forestry centers.
2. Demonstrating the content-richness of original materials: On organizing and publishing the collection
 - 1) Twenty villages were selected from over ten million records. The materials were selected on the basis that (a) they were temporally coherent, and (b) that their content was laid out in a systematic manner.
 - 2) Systematic organization of materials: we began by classifying our materials using ‘villages’ as our basic unit. We then moved on to developing a catalog and creating digital files, whilst at the same time attaching reference numbers to each item. The final part of the process involved putting our files into storage. Based on the catalog we had already developed, we enclosed the materials in individual sleeves and then placed them in filing cabinets, numbering them as we went along.

3) We selected 20 villages that encompass approximately 100 volumes of material. The material was then compiled and published. Work on the digitization of these materials is still ongoing.

3. Making the voices of people at the grassroots level heard: Insight into basic-level society immanent in text

1) The content of historical records on villages tends to be centered around (1) the output of a village and its villagers, and (2) its social activities. On the other hand, those historical records which focus on irrigated areas, supply and marketing cooperatives and the like feature the content which is very specialist in nature.

2) Many villages kept records of their social composition, complete account books and materials authored by high-level superiors. The materials from each village are individual in their own way: some are rich in content relating to specific individuals, some include information on village activities, some have complete collections of records authored by high-level superiors, some have account books which are completely in order and some have materials which contain detailed classification of, and statistical information on, economic activities.

3) We can divide these records up into approximately 8 different categories: documents relating to grassroots branches of the Chinese Communist Party, administrative documents (including documents relating to high-level superiors), science and technology records, records on specific individuals, records on financial affairs, historical records, internal materials and others which do not fit one of the categories given above.

4. Reflecting back on collectivization: Social transformations in Shanxi's rural areas

1) During the process of gathering and organizing materials, the research methodology and academic line of enquiry that features within Xing Long's book, *Heading towards the Fields and Society*, gradually came into being. In essence, it also functioned as a key problematique with rich connotations, constituting a trinity comprised of historical materials, research content and theoretical methodology. All were interdependent, embodied the other and were tightly interrelated.

2) Key pieces of related research make comprehensive use of governmental documents, grassroots government documents (such as public notices and documents relating to rural areas) and account books. This research takes into consideration the macro context of the development of political history, while also paying sufficient attention to villages and the like on the micro level. Taking villages, communes, county areas or independent waterways and irrigation systems as their point of investigation, they have touched upon areas such as irrigation and water conservancy construction projects, agricultural technology, the emancipation of women, medical treatment and hygiene and everyday life.

Second Session Comments

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The theme of the second session was 'the general public, groups and the state', in which issues mainly related to the general public and the state were dealt with. A few moments ago the current situation regarding the collation and organization of non-governmental letters and grassroots records from rural areas was discussed separately, and particular reference was made to their important role in research on contemporary China. Not only did the two professors make great efforts to collate non-governmental materials, but also carried out the relevant fieldwork, too. In their fieldwork, they conducted investigations into the authors of the letters they collated, and the villages where the grassroots records had been produced, corroborating them using other textual evidence.