

# An Archival Revolution: The Formation and Transformation of Archival Science in Modern China

**Jing Yan**

Ph.D. Candidate at Renmin University of China;  
Visiting International Research Student at SLAIS, UBC.

yanjing2015@ruc.edu.cn

## INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATIONS

- In recent years, academic research in China has emphasized systemic innovation at the macro-level. China has been emphasizing academic innovation with Chinese characteristics, and in Chinese context, in order to move beyond the logic and methods of “Western Centralism”(Xianming Ye 2015).
- At the meso-level, there has been growing interest in the history and evolution of disciplines. General work in this research field had been undertaken in China since the Qing dynasty(1676). Distinguishing the origins and sorting out the frameworks of a discipline enable the development of a coherent body of work.
- Finally, at the micro level of archives and archival science, understanding their evolution is of great significance to enrich Chinese archival theory, and to improve the interpretation of social functions and theoretical values of the archival profession (Baokang Wu 1982). An understanding of the origins and development of archival science in China will enrich Western archival science theoretically and methodologically.

## RESEARCH DIRECTION

My initial research sought to define the revolutionary changes in archival science in modern China, and explore the special historical background of political, societal, cultural elements that shaped and affected the formation and transformation of archival science in Modern China.

## RESEARCH METHODS

- Literature review and content analysis: The study will incorporate the analysis and interpretation of historical manuscripts, archives, books and journals in order to make out the main characteristics and developing patterns of formation and transformation; by doing so, we will discover the frameworks of archival science in modern China.
- Oral history and textual research: Distinguishing authentic and inauthentic historical materials is essential to historical research. The oral history method will rely on interviewing persons who experienced the formation and transformation of archival science in modern China, complementing and expanding the insights from textual materials.

- Synchronic and diachronic approach: The research aims to clarify the development of Archival science during the period of studies from a synchronic perspective, and then make concrete inquiry into archival education, institutions, dissemination, scholars, discussions and debates from a diachronic approach.

## REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

### Revolution 1: the Recognition of Archival Science as an Independent Discipline

- The Specific Research Methods - Dialectical Materialism & Historical Materialism
- The Specific Research Objects - From Official Archive Office to National Archives
- The Specific Research Academics - Theoretical Circle and Practical Departments

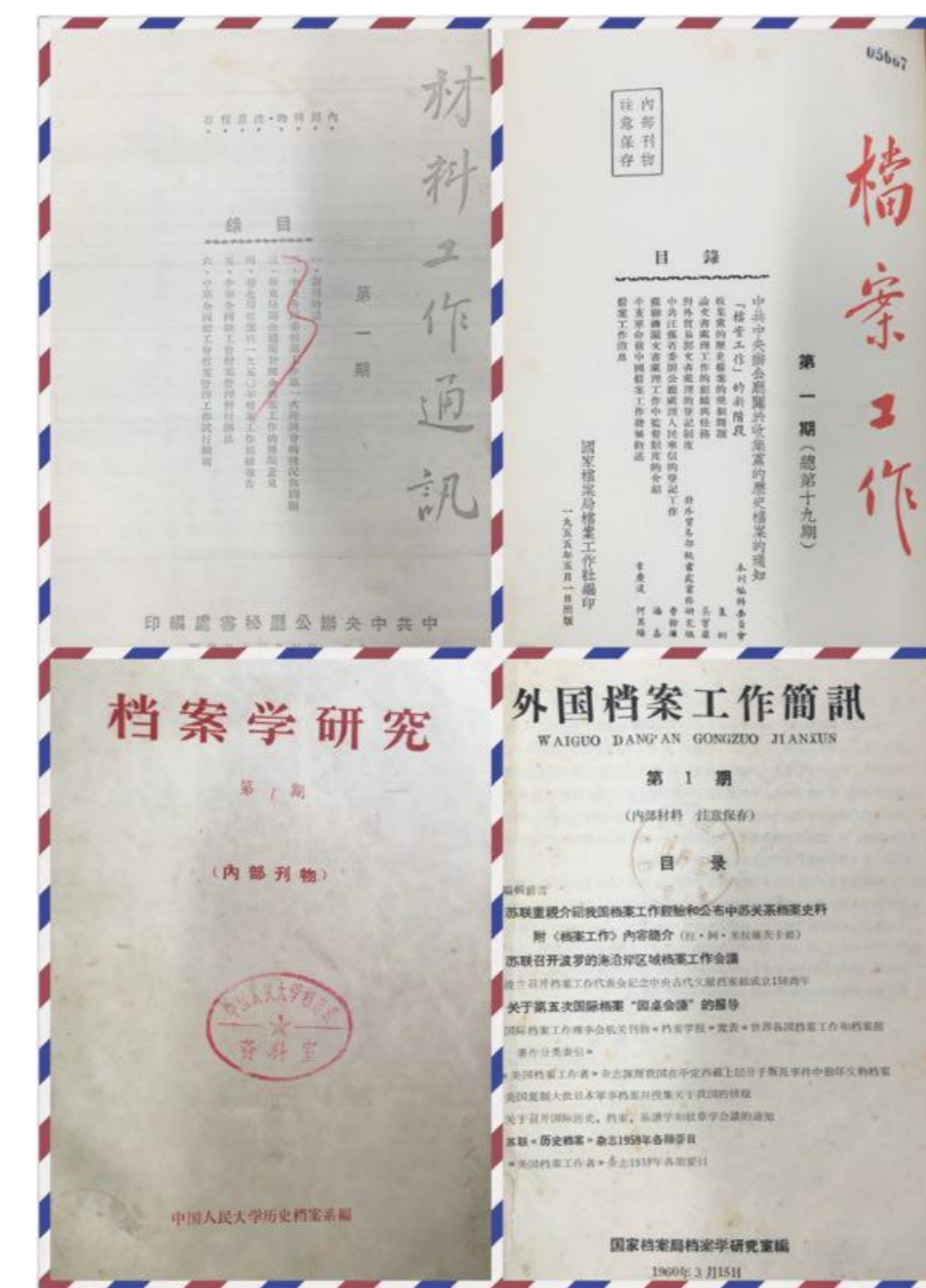
### Revolution 2: the Foundation of University Archival Studies

Time	Educational Institutions	Funding Agencies	Notes
1950	Archives Management Training Courses at the Books Division of Boone University at Wuchang	The People's Government in Hubei Province& the Military and Political Committee in South Central China	Only last for one phase due to the absence of teaching materials and faculty
1952.11.15	Special Training Courses at Renmin University of China	General Office of the CPC	Developed into a large-scale training course in 1953
1955.4	History and Archives Department at Renmin University of China	Ministry of Higher Education	The beginning of undergraduate education
1956.3.16-1958.3.1	Professional Lectures Series to Archivists in Central Government Agencies	The State Archives Administration of the People's Republic of China	Mainly focus on the Soviet theory and practice
1958.9	Special Training Courses in Technical Archives at Renmin University of China	Renmin University of China	Two-year period
1958	Archival Studies at Tianjin College for Workers and Staff Members	Tianjin Municipal Government	The first archival educational institution for in-service archivists
1960.3.14	Preparation for School of Archives	General Office of the CPC	Suspended due to economic hardship
1964.9.10	Archives Management Training Courses in Border area Hohhot	Provincial Archives Administration of Inner Mongolia Province	Taught in Mongolian

### Revolution 3: the Regularization of Academic Dissemination of Archival Science

#### Academic Journals:

- ✓ *Documentary Works Bulletin* (starting in 1951, 10 issues totally published)
- ✓ *Archival Works* (starting in 1954, 103 issues totally published)
- ✓ *Archival Studies* (starting in 1959, 6 issues totally published)
- ✓ *Technical Documentary Works Bulletin* (starting in 1958, 5 issues totally published)
- ✓ *Technical Documentary Studies* (starting in 1958, 8 issues totally published)
- ✓ *Foreign Archives Newsletter* (starting in 1960, 10 issues totally published ; changed into Foreign Archives References from the eighth issue )



From top to down: *Documentary Works Bulletin*, *Archival Works*, *Archival Studies*, *Foreign Archives Newsletter*.

#### Academic Research Institutions:

- ✓ Archival Education and Research Institute in China - The first research institute for theoretical studies in archival science.

#### Academic Publications:

- ✓ Debates on the basic terminologies of “archives” “records” and “documents”
- ✓ About the crux of archival management practice
- ✓ About the perspective of disciplinary development

## CONCLUSIONS

During the first twenty years of modern China, the development of archival science was greatly influenced by the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, the legacy of archival ideas inherited from the Republic of China period were viewed through a critical lens. Given that archival practice was rapidly progressing and was in urgent need of professionals, many scholars and theorists, including experts recruited from the Soviet Union, worked with Chinese practitioners. These pioneers established the first university archival studies and archival research institutions, launching explorations and debates about archival terminologies such as archival science, archival theory, archival studies, and archival scholarship, archives, records, and documents.

Finally, archival science was recognized as an independent discipline in China, and Chinese archivists began interacting with their European and American counterparts. Chinese archivists, who earned professional status during this period, made much progress and learned greatly over the course of the formation and transformation years.

## SELECTED REFERENCES

- Xianming Ye. (2015). Move Beyond the Logic and Methods of “Western Centralism” of Chinese Academic Discourse System. *Journal of Party School of the CPC*, 8, 69-75.
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