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Bibliographic Sources for Henan Local History in the People's Republic of China

Odoric Y. K. Wou

In the fall of 1986 I visited Zhengzhou, Henan, to look for materials for my project on the mobilization of Henan peasants in the Republican period. I was also seeking contacts with scholars working on local studies in Henan. My trip proved to be very productive and exciting. Not only did I get in touch with scholars in the Henan Academy of Social Sciences, the Henan Gazetteer Bureau, and the Zhengzhou and Xinxiang Normal Universities, I also came away with a project on the social structure of southeastern Henan, jointly researched by myself and Mr. Wang Quanying, a research fellow at the Academy.

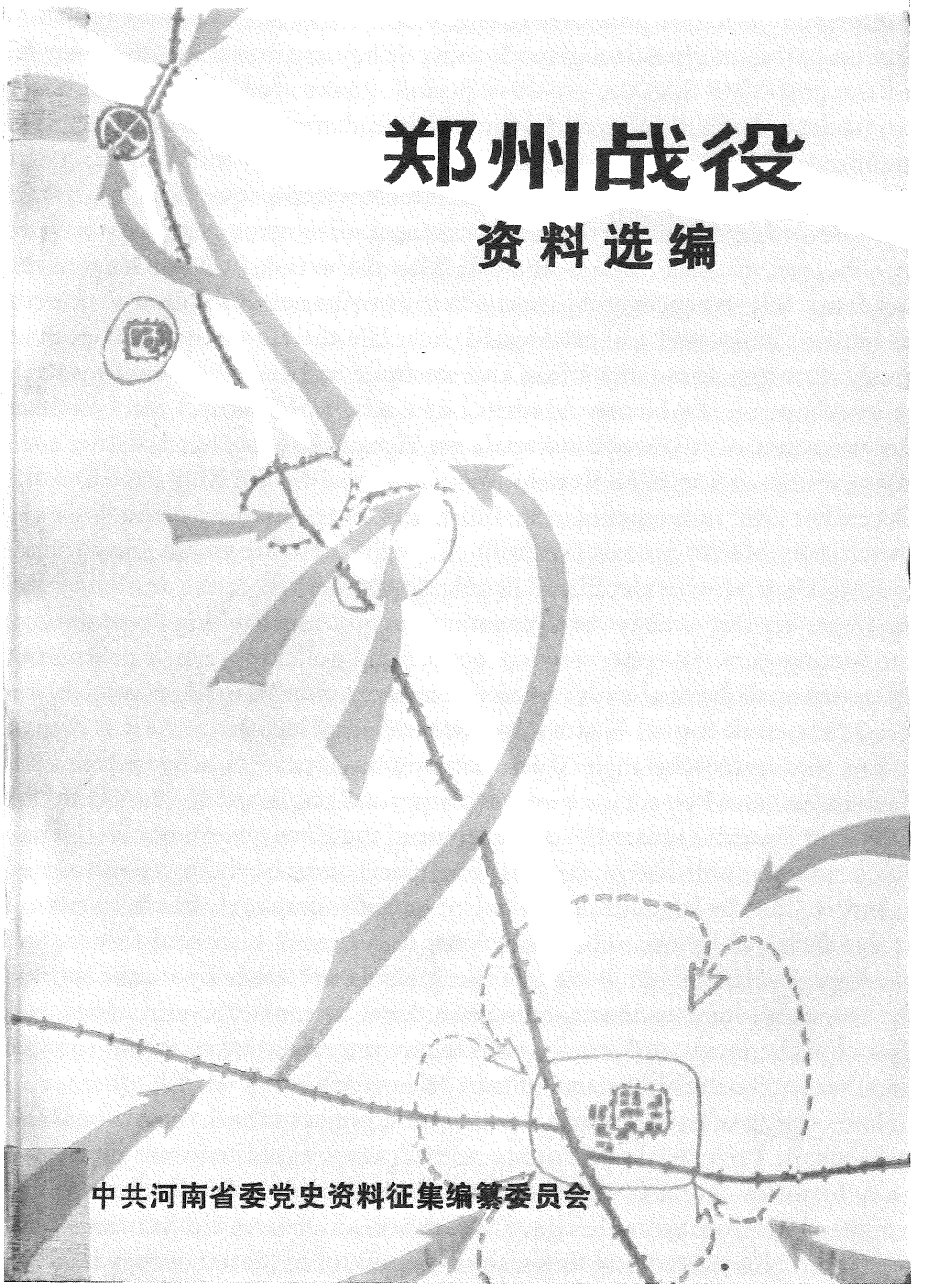
The amount of materials these scholars have amassed since the close of the Cultural Revolution and the reemergence of serious scholarship, is astonishing. But I was not struck as much by the sheer volume as by the thoroughness of their undertaking. In locating two sets of documents hastily buried by the retreating Guomindang at the end of the war, the Communist government took pain to identify responsible officials who could locate the sites. But they found that chests of documents buried near Loyang had rotted over the years and the site at Nanjing could never be pinpointed because on-going construction had given the landscape a face-lift. It is, however, the recent movement in gazetteer compilations and the need for writing the party history before the revolutionary veterans pass away from the scene that have produced the present momentum in research.

The significance of Henan as a locus for scholarly research lies in the fact that the province is called a *sizhan zhi di* (strategic war zone from all directions) or *bingjia bizheng zhi di* (strategic area of contention of warring factions). Important events, major campaigns in particular, have occurred in this area. But warfare takes its toll. Areas repeatedly devastated by wars preserve few documents. This deficit can be compensated by the existence of a large number of participants in the events, who can act as guides to the sources. Moreover, major events are usually reported in newspapers, even at quite a distance from the occurrence.

One major source, familiar to most scholars working on the area, is the collection, *Henan wenshi ziliao*, published by Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang hui yi Henan sheng wei yuan hui (the Henan Committee of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference). Articles in it were written by Guomindang officials and military personnel, particularly those sympathetic to the Communist cause. Unlike the large series, *Guangdong wenshi ziliao* (close to fifty issues are already in print), not to mention *Guangzhou wenshi ziliao*, the *Henan wenshi ziliao* has only nineteen issues.

Of interest to research scholars is the fact that they are all placed on the *neibu faxing* (internal circulation) list, while other provinces are said to have already lifted the ban. There is certainly no lack of material in the *wenshi ziliao* archives. I was told that at the pace they are going now, it would take them two hundred years to get all the materials out. Scholars in the Gazetteer Bureau and the Academy of Social Sciences are making use of, as well as gathering materials for, the collection. So some of these materials do appear in scholarly writings before the actual sources come out in printed forms.

Local gazetteer compilation is a concerted effort among the Gazetteer Bureau (the official title is Henan sheng difang zhi bianzuan weiyuan hui, or the Committee for the Compilation of Henan Local Gazetteers), the Henan Academy of Social Sciences, and various Henan universities. There are three types of gazetteers: (1) the *qu zhi* or regional gazetteers, similar to the traditional *fu zhi* or *zhou zhi* (prefecture gazetteers and department gazetteers), (2) the *xian zhi*, ordinary county gazetteers, and (3) the *xiang zhi* or subcounty gazetteers, for example, the *Xiaoguan xiang zhi* of Gong county. Some of these new gazetteers are available in draft form. Compared to the old gazetteers, they are of inferior quality, at least the few I have been able to see first hand. The Loyang regional gazetteer is nothing more than a geography text. Other county and subcounty gazetteers have a lengthy sec-



Illustrated here is the cover of one volume in a series on Henan party history entitled *Zhengzhou Campaigns: Selected Materials*. This is the original from mainland China.

tion of *dashi ji* (major political events), from which one can glean information on party activities in a given locality. They are, however, more useful for the post-1949 than the pre-1949 period. There are little social and economic data, the kinds of material for which students of local history are now looking.

It is the primary materials for the gazetteers which prove to be of greatest value. In order to compile the new gazetteers, all existing gazetteers have to be collected, combed, and evaluated. This is the task of Ms. Geng of the Academy. Newspapers and journals in the province and in other major cities have to be located and catalogued. Scholars then have to comb meticulously through these materials and compile indices. The end result is churned out by the Henan Academy of Social Sciences and the Gazetteer Bureau series of historical materials on Henan. Source materials for such major events as the 1911 Revolution, the May 4th, the May 30th and the December 9th movements, the Northern Expedition and the Japanese atrocities in Henan are now in print. Though these are mainly newspaper sources, they provide depth and detail. Researchers from the Academy and the Gazetteer Bureau have been roaming the province looking for materials, conducting surveys, interviewing people and soliciting articles. Some of these materials have already come out in their own journal, *Henan shi zhi ziliao* (Materials for the History and Gazetteers of Henan).

Bits and pieces of their work sometimes appear in *Zhongzhou jingu* (Henan Past and Present), a bi-monthly journal published since 1983 by the Gazetteer Bureau. This is the counterpart of the *Zhongyuan wenxian* (Henan Documents), published in Taiwan. The articles may be short, a page or two in length, but the scope makes it an important source no historian working in this field can ignore. The journal not only covers historical figures and incidents in Henan, but also the Yellow River and other hydraulic works, the economy, local products, education, local customs, the minorities, and historical changes in the province. These are materials that enable us to piece together local institutions and culture below the county level.

The writing of party history is an ongoing project at both the national and local levels. Provincial and county authorities are told to write their own party histories. The Zhonggong Henan shengwei dangshi ziliao zhengbian weiyuan hui (Committee for the Compilation of Chinese Communist Party History in Henan) took up that task. The amount of materials they have already gathered is staggering. A couple of years ago, the collection was open

to native scholars who were jointly doing research with the Committee. Once the Committee began publication, however, the archives became out of limits even to these scholars.

The first three volumes of the party history contain a random selection of materials, but after volume 3 it becomes topical. The first part of the Committee's plan is to produce volumes dealing with various topics of Henan party history; there are seventeen now in print. Henan historians are obsessed with dates, places, institutions and campaigns. Thus, we have also an extremely useful volume of party *dashi ji* (major political events), one volume on the Henan party itself, two volumes on the Sino-Japanese War in Henan, two volumes on the revolutionary bases, Zhugou and Xinxian, and two volumes on the May 30th and December 9th movements. The rest deals with the six anti-Japanese Communist bases in the province, namely, the Ji-Lu-Yu (Hebei-Shandong-Henan), the Taihang, the Yu-Wan-Su (Henan-Anhui-Jiangsu), the Yu-E (Henan-Hubei), the Yusi (Western Henan) and the Sui-Qi-Tai (Suixian-Qixian-Taikang). Materials are arranged in four parts: documents (mainly party directives and work reports), reminiscences, newspaper clippings, and articles written by specialists or participants.

Much publishing attention has been paid to the financial affairs and commercial activities within these border regions. We do see various *Geming genju di caijing shi* (Histories of Finance and Commercial Activities in the Revolutionary Base) in the bookstores. They vary from the three-volume set for Anhui to the multi-volume set for Shaan-Gan-Ning (Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia) border area. For Henan, I have been able to find a four-volume set of the Henan section of the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu (Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan) revolutionary base. It is a joint publication of the Henan Department of Finance and the Provincial Party Archives. Topics include agriculture, industry, commerce, monetary situations, taxations, cooperatives, relief programs, rent-and-interest reduction movements, crack troops, and movements for the simplification of administration. Although much material has already poured out from the provincial party archives, my understanding is that the best is yet to come.

County level party histories vary immensely in size and quality. They range from the fifteen-volume set for Xinyang county to the flimsy volume for Guangshan, considering Guangshan county had been a major revolutionary center of the E-Yu-Wan (Hubei-Henan-Anhui) border region. The

best two I have been able to obtain are those of Anyang and Xinyang counties. I used only one volume of the Anyang set; there should be other volumes that I have not seen yet. The Xinyang set is most outstanding, not only in the amount of material collected but in its high quality. Apparently, a vigorous movement has been launched by party historians there to interview people and survey the area. Published summaries and reports often carry lengthy valuable appendices of primary interview materials.

Students of Henan local history should not overlook the travel guides and sightseeing books coming out of China lately. With the recent boom in the tourist industry in China, the authority finds it necessary to gather materials for the compilation of these guide books. Understandably, they emphasize such cities as Kaifeng, Loyang, Nanyang and Anyang, places famous for historical relics and scenic beauty. However, we do find some *mingsheng cidian* (dictionaries of historic sites), giving short descriptions of historical and religious institutions in relatively remote areas. Given the importance of the Buddhist and Taoist traditions in the cultural fabric in the provinces, these historic-site books can be an invaluable source of information about culture at subcounty levels, for example, the ideological makeup of the Red Spears in certain localities. Communist scholars have often discussed folklore, popular legends, and local customs. The legendary stories of Taihang Mountain, *Taihang shan li di chuanshuo*, for instance, give us some idea of local folk traditions. Lately, materials on the Shaolin Temple, a well-known Buddhist and martial art center in western Henan, are pouring out. At present, we have two volumes of documents on the temple itself, two volumes on Songshan, the mountain where the temple is located, a series on Shaolin folklore, and a book on the thirteen martial art masters. Such works probably were the materials gathered for the making of the extremely popular movie "Shaolin ji" (Shaolin Temple).

On the whole, recent access to China has stimulated research and scholarly exchanges even in an inland and relatively underdeveloped province like Henan. Let us hope that this door remains open and generates enough academic freedom to keep the research and information flowing. This will, I am sure, be beneficial both to native historians and outside scholars.

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This shows a detail from the last page of *Zhengzhou Campaigns* (illustrated previously). Words in parentheses say "entrusted publication" (*weituo chuban*). "Entrusted publications" are usually not available in New China bookstores (Xinhua shudian), but are obtained only from the publisher, in this case directly from the Party Archives.

NOTES

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GLOSSARY

bingjia bizheng zhi di	兵家必争之地
dashi ji	大事記
fu zhi	府志
Geming genju di caijing shi	革命根据地财经史
Guangdong wenshi ziliao	广东文史資料
Guangzhou wenshi ziliao	广州文史資料
Guomindang	国民党
Henan shi zhi ziliao	河南史志資料
Henan wenshi ziliao	河南文史資料
neibu faxing	内部發行
qu zhi	区志
sizhan zhi di	四战之地

Taihang shan li di chuanshuo	太行山裡的傳說
xian zhi	縣志
xiang zhi	鄉志
Xiaoguan xiang zhi	小关鄉志
Zhongyuan wenxian	中原文獻
zhou zhi	州志