

# A Study on the Compilation of China's Provinces "The Local Chronicles of China"

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**Abstract:** The local Chronicles of China is a unique Japanese compilation of China's provinces, which provides a detailed account of various aspects of Chinese society at the beginning of the twentieth century. The article on the basis of analyzing the purpose of its compilation, sources of information, composition of its contents, and characteristics of its accounts, has made an evaluation of the book from the perspective of Area Studies, and pointed out its significance as a reference for our future engagement in Area Studies.

**Keywords:** The local Chronicles of China; Toa Dobunkai; Toa Dobunshoin; Area Studies

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## 1. Introduction

Complete Annals of China (formerly known as "Japan", hereinafter referred to as "Complete Annals") is a set of Chronicles on China compiled and published by the East Asia Association from 1917 to 1920. It is also the only <sup>[1]</sup> of China, planned, investigated and compiled by foreigners and published in foreign languages. There are a large number of survey provinces in China, with detailed data and charts, which is of great value for the study of the geography, economy and cultural customs of China in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China. On the whole Annals, some scholars analyzed the influence of the East Asian Society and the East Asian Academy of Letters on China, which are closely related to the whole Annals <sup>[2][3]</sup>, and the significance of the whole Annals in modern social studies <sup>[4][5]</sup>. Some scholars pay attention to the <sup>[1][6]</sup> of the "China Great Travel Survey" organized by the East Asian Instrument Academy. However, in essence, Quan Zhi is the product of the Chinese study of the East Asia Academy, while in Japan, the Chinese study of the Academy belongs to the category of regional research (Area Studies) <sup>[7]</sup>. This paper will take the research object, first of all, the compilation background and purpose, content description and characteristics and influence, to briefly introduce the compilation background and the purpose, implementation process, content description and characteristics and influence of comprehensive investigation, and then from the perspective of regional country research to analyze the characteristics of the academy of Chinese research, finally from the "whole" to explore the significance of our country.

## 2. East Asia and East Asia

Since the editor (publisher) of the Complete Annals is the East Asian Literary Association, and the materials used in the compilation of the book are from the Great Travel Survey Report written by the students of the East Asian Literary Academy,

it is necessary to make a brief introduction of the above two institutions before introducing the Complete Annals.

The East Asian Association was established in 1897 with the 1898 president of the House of nobles. The program is to preserve China, the second is to promote the reform of China and Korea, the third is to discuss and study the current affairs of China and Korea to implement, and the fourth is to arouse public opinion<sup>[3]</sup>. Although the headquarters is located in Tokyo, its main activity organization is located in China. It has five branches in Shanghai, Hankou, Beijing, Fuzhou and Guangdong, specializing in various investigation and intelligence gathering work. Although the East Asia Association is a private organization, it relies on private donations and membership fees, and the Japanese government gives considerable subsidies, and its organizing staff have close relations to the Japanese government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 1901, the East Asian Literary Association established the East Asian Literary Academy in Shanghai. The college initially recruited students from Japan. With the tenet of "teaching Chinese and foreign knowledge and cultivating Chinese and Japanese talents", the college has cultivated many "China Tong students" who master Chinese knowledge and understand China's national conditions. Each year, the college divides its graduates into several teams and goes deep into the Chinese mainland to conduct various thematic field surveys. After the survey, students need to write a survey report and submit it to the university. This survey activity has lasted for decades, leaving a large number of written materials, which also became the main data for the compilation of the East Asian Common Literary Society.

### 3. The Complete Annals of China Province

First, to serve Japan's China strategy. As a subsidiary of the East Asian Literary Association, the Academy is committed to the study of China and attaches great importance to the field investigation to China. During the investigation, the Academy has collected a large number of investigation data, which are the main source of the whole Annals. After compiling the survey data, in addition to the academy and the Society, an<sup>[3]</sup> must also be sent to the Headquarters of the Staff, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Society. From this move, it is not difficult to see that it provides a reference for the Japanese government. Second, in order to promote the development of Japan's trade in China and obtain more economic benefits.

The book uses a lot of space to describe the Chinese economy, such as industry, mining, industry, trade, commercial institutions, which provides an important reference for the Japanese economic community. Third, to promote Japanese research on China. After the sino-japanese war, Japan domestic a "theory" trend, under the background of Japan was born some to study the problem of China for the purpose of organization and group, east Asia is one of them, and by the compiled "whole" is undoubtedly the product of the study of China, and conducive to Japan's study of China. Fourth, it is the summary and show off of the results of the great travel survey of East Asia<sup>[8]</sup>. The big travel survey conducted by the East Asian Academy has spent considerable time and capital cost. The whole Annals, with the data obtained from the big travel survey as the main source, can not only record this unprecedented survey activity and summarize the results, but also show the results of the cultivation of "China Access" by the East Asian Academy. In short, the compilation of The Whole Annals is to highlight the achievements of the East Asia Tong Instrument Academy.

### 4. Data Source

The materials for compiling the Complete Annals are mainly from the Great Travel Survey Report written by students of the

East Asian Academy. Since 1905, the college has organized graduating students to conduct big trips every year. The results of the survey are collected in two ways. One is to write the survey report according to each topic. After the fifth issue of the travel survey report, the publication of the whole Annals was completed. Second, the college requires students to write a daily travel log, and the college compiles students' logs into a travel book every year. The diary includes detailed records of Chinese customs, place names, language, food and other aspects [9].

"Whole annals", a total of 18 volumes, "China Guizhou volume", "China don't whole annals, Gansu volume", "China don't Hainan volume" existing scholars do research, and the "China don't all annals of shaanxi volume" (hereinafter referred to as "shaanxi volume") study has not yet, so the following is "shaanxi volume", for example, to analyze the "whole annals". Shaanxi Volume mainly cites the following survey reports of students.

Table 1

	Travel investigation class name	Number of respondents	Investigation year
1	Henan Class, Shaanxi Province	Issue 5	In 1907
2	Jin Qin class	Issue 7	In 1907
3	Gouuo ordos class	Issue 7	In 1910
4	Hanzhong Class, Qinghua Town	Issue 9	In 1911
5	Gansu Sichuan class	Issue 10	In 1911
6	Qin Shu class	Issue 11	In 1913
7	Sha xi class	Issue 13	In 1915
8	Henan Shanxi class	Issue 14	In 1916
9	Hubei Sichuan class	Issue 14	In 1916

Through the field survey done by the college students, the college got a lot of the latest and most authentic information about Shaanxi Province. On the one hand, these data provide information for Japan's strategy towards China, and on the other hand, they also record the economic, political and cultural changes of various provinces in the process of China's modernization from the perspective of foreign countries, which still has important research value today. Annals to analysis and analysis. Shaanxi Volume mainly quotes the following survey reports of students.

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### 5. Content Composition

The Shaanxi volume consists of 10 volumes, The first part is called "the general theory", Introduce the history of the development and change of Shaanxi Province, The administrative divisions of the time, Area, population, and race, Terrain, river section, Climate and transportation; Part 2 is "the city", Introduced the various counties in Shaanxi province at that time; Part 3 is "Transport and transport agencies", This paper introduces the land transportation, railway and water transportation traffic information of Shaanxi province; Part 4 is "Postal and Telecommunications", Introduced the postal exchange, parcels,

telecommunications passing area, telecommunications bureau, telegraph and other information; The fifth part is "raw industry and mining", The development of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and mining in Shaanxi is introduced; Part 6 is "Major Products and Industries", This paper introduces the oil, cotton, hemp and other industries and the county industries; Part 7 is "trading and import and export commodities", It introduces the state of business and the goods traded in and out; Part 8 is the "Monetary and financial institutions", Mainly introduced the local monetary and financial institutions; Part 9 is "Business Institutions and Business Habits", This paper introduces the commercial organs and business habits of Shaanxi province; Part 10 is the "weights and measures", Weights and measures throughout Shaanxi province. It is not difficult to see that its description covers all aspects of society in Shaanxi at that time, which can be said to be a "small encyclopedia" of Shaanxi at that time.

## 6. Features Summary

The Shaanxi volume has the following characteristics in terms of description.

First, the perspective is unique. Compared with the previous local Chronicles written by Chinese, it opens up a new perspective. For example, in the description of Shang County in the first chapter of the first chapter of "Raw Industry and Mining", the fifth part of Shaanxi Volume, it not only described the types of local cultivated land and the types of food crops and cash crops, but also recorded the price of rice and local peach plums in the inn in Heilongkou. For the general local Chronicles, these too daily aspects have no significant impact on the historical development of a region, and are often not recorded. However, they are generally omitted when writing the Chronicles, but the whole Chronicles describes it, which also shows the detail of its content and the novelty of its perspective. Through these contents that are easily ignored by the Chinese people, we can observe a different China from the perspective that has not been discovered before.

Second, science is practical and practical. Very pay attention to the actual investigation and data, chart, not only have rivers, terrain, landform, prefectures data information table (such as old and new counties name table, shaanxi crops in the main products, etc.) and some cultural landscape (such as wild goose pagoda, Confucius temple, etc.) and natural landscape (e. g. huashan, Gansu hui fort salt pool vision, etc.). These charts and data certainly understand Shaanxi province more quickly and efficiently than abstract descriptions. At the same time, the use of a large number of charts also makes the description more intuitive and enhances the persuasion of the content.

Third, the content is comprehensive. From the perspective of Shaanxi Volume, Quan Zhi involves history, geography, economy, politics and other aspects, and is extensive in content. For example, in the second chapter of the third part, "Transportation and means of Transport", of Shaanxi Volume, it not only describes the area, the length of each section, the difficulty of construction, but also investigates the cost of the construction of each section, the treaty for the construction of railway borrowing, and the products of various regions along the railway. While describing the railway situation, it is not only about the railway situation. In addition, it also records the actual survey data and cites a variety of literature data, from the data record to the actual view and heard, including all aspects related to the survey objects, from which it shows that its value to today's research is extraordinary.

Fourth, there are some inevitable mistakes in the content. Although the content of The Whole Annals is comprehensive and accurate, there are some mistakes in the description of some contents, such as the differences of the cultural background and

the deviation of language understanding. Due to the limitation of objective conditions, there are gaps in some areas, such as Dingbian, Hengshan and other places. However, the rich content contained in *The Whole Annals* does provide quite valuable information for today's research, so we should also affirm the value of its research.

## 7. Evaluation of *Quan Annals* from the Perspective of Regional Countries

The Preface to the *Annals of Guangling* says: "The ambition of the county, the history of the country, so to examine the folk customs, the customs of the past, and the past." As a local chronicle, *The Whole Annals* provides valuable information for us to understand the folk customs and local customs at that time. Because of the particularity of its writing from foreigners, it also brings us a new and unique perspective of thinking and reference reference. Nowadays, China's comprehensive national strength is increasing, playing an increasingly important role on the world stage. As a responsible major country, China is actively promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind and the building of Belt and Road. Promoting major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics requires us to have a deeper understanding of the situation of other regions and countries outside the region. "Regional country learning" is a subject of this. At present, the development of regional country studies has come to a rising point, and in September 2022, regional country studies were included in the 14th category of interdisciplinary first-level discipline catalogue, which shows that China pays more and more attention to regional country studies. As a pioneer in regional country studies, the United States plays an important role in regional country studies. However, Ren Da, a famous expert in the modern Chinese history and modern Japanese history in the United States, said, "The history of 'regional studies' as an academic discipline still needs to be written. In fact, it must start with<sup>[7]</sup> from a little-known and historically important Japanese institution in China (East Asia Academy)." It is not difficult to see the significance of the East Asian Institute of Letters for the regional country research, and as the product of its research, it has a significant reference value for the regional country research in China.

First of all, the fundamental purpose of the China research conducted by the East Asian Society and the compilation of the *East Asian Society* is to serve Japan's strategy towards China. However, it undeniable captures the focus of the research and investigation, that is, it pays attention to the reality while serving the reality. Regional national studies must also start from the reality and return to reality, we should study things should play a role in reality, if the content of the research results is "vase" only for people to watch, then the study will lose its meaning, ceremoniously said, the so-called "research" is unnecessary for us, it does not deserve the weight of the word "research". Therefore, the first reference for regional country research is necessary to identify the purpose of the research and carry out reality-oriented research.

Secondly, the research methods attach great importance to fieldwork. The compilation of the whole *Annals* highlights that practice is the source of knowledge. A large amount of data compiled by *The Whole Annals* is inseparable from the "China Grand Tour" survey conducted by the students of the East Asian Tong Instrument Academy in various parts of China. It vividly shows that research cannot be separated from field investigation, just as the dialectical materialism believes that "practice is the basis of cognition, and practice plays a decisive role in cognitive activities". Paying attention to practice and field investigation is an important reference of the whole *Annals* for our regional country studies.

Finally, "*Quan Zhi*" describes all aspects of society, all reflect the intersection and integration of various disciplines. To clarify the account of such mixed knowledge must be inseparable from the compound talents. The compilation of *Quan Zhi* is

naturally inseparable from the "China Tong" trained by the East Asian Tong Instrument Academy. They should not only master Chinese, but also understand various professional knowledge, so as to collect and sort out the survey data. This means that research cannot be separated from all kinds of knowledge, so the talents who master knowledge naturally become an indispensable part of research. Therefore, if we want to carry out regional country research, we must pay attention to the cultivation of compound talents and provide essential talent support for the research.

## Data Availability

The experimental data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared that they have no conflicts of interest regarding this work.

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