CHAPTER 13

The Current State of Historical Research in the People’s Republic of China

Zhang Xingxing

Abstract

Since the early 1980s, study of the history of the People’s Republic of China has gradually been established in the academic world. Thirty years of efforts in the field have yielded remarkable achievements. Formal research institutions and academic groups have been established, forming research teams of certain size. Many files and documents have been edited and published, providing beneficial conditions for academic research. Many research findings have been published, propelling deep development of academic research. The study of history has also been included within the national education


Author’s Note: When I presented this essay at the “Current State and Future of the Study of Chinese History” academic symposium, hosted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Association of National History for the International History and Science Commission on September 16, 2007, there were omissions. In the writing of this article, I referred to the following works:


I would like to thank the authors of those works here.

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system, which has fostered a generation of dedicated talent in academic research. Hereafter, we must further clarify its positioning among academic fields, broaden the scope of research, strengthen the establishment of the field, and dig up more files and documents.

Keywords

History of the People's Republic of China – current state of research – academic positioning – national history research mainline – national history installments

The founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 ushered in a new era in the history of the Chinese people. Since the 1980s, study of PRC history has gradually arisen in the academic world, accompanied by summaries of the history and experiences of both the positive and negative sides of New China’s socialist construction. After 30 years of efforts, this research has yielded remarkable achievements, and has become an emerging field in the study of China’s history.

1 Development Outline of PRC History Research

Initial attempts to establish the study of PRC history were made as early as the 1950s. At a meeting of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee in June 1956, Vice Chairman Huang Yanpei discussed the need to “collect and preserve historical materials related to the founding of the nation in a timely fashion.” In 1958, Nankai University’s history department compiled and published the book *Major Events of the People’s Republic of China (1949–1956)* [*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo dashi ji (1949–1956)*], and the Hebei Normal University of Beijing’s history department compiled and published *Historical Manuscripts of the People’s Republic of China (1949–1956)* [*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shigao (1949–1956)*]. However, study of PRC history in the strict academic sense did not truly begin until the 1980s. From that time to present, the academic development of the study of PRC history has been manifested in the following four areas.

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