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【Summary】

On “the Discovery” of the Migrated Archives:

A Guide to the Research in the National Archives of the United Kingdom

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This article is prepared as a guide to conduct research activities in the National Archives of the United Kingdom. Although the research environment improved remarkably and it is much more convenient to use the Archives now, some researchers still take wrong approaches when conducting historical research. How can we conduct proper yet successful research in the Archives? This article presents some research tips for scholars of Southeast Asian Studies.

Chapter 1 introduces the basic principles for organizing and keeping the documents in the archives. Each group of records in the archives is maintained in the same order as they were originally stacked by the creator of the groups. By keeping the groups of records in the original order, the creator’s additional contextual information and the original environment of the creation are preserved. When establishing their methods of research, researchers must take these basic principles into their consideration.

Chapter 1 also introduces the significance of the compiled sourcebooks of historical documents titled British Documents on the End of Empire (BDEE). This series of volumes contains an annotated selection of official documents from the National Archives, charting British withdrawal from its colonial territories. The C series of BDEE can be regarded as a guidebook for British colonial documents in general.

Chapter 2 introduces the Migrated Archives. Sensitive and incriminating collections of documents from Britain’s former colonial governments were sent back to Britain (hence migrated) on the eve of decolonization, to be stored in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office archives, in order to prevent their disclosure. If these documents were disclosed to the public, the British Government and the local collaborators could have faced subsequent embarrassments. These documents, recently “discovered” and released, provide deep insights into the studies related to the decolonization of Malaysia and Singapore. From the documents, it was discovered that more so than the previous studies revealed, Lim Chin Sion and the Communist Party of Malaya were in close cooperation. Furthermore, the same observation can be made for the relationship between Lee Kuan Yew and the British Government.