

Local Society under Military Governance: A Study of the Chinese Diaspora Networks of Quemoy, 1949-1970s

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ABSTRACT

After 1949, Quemoy became a battlefield between the KMT and the CCP, as well as the frontline in the confrontation between Cold War blocs. Under military administration, the power of traditional lineages was suppressed and their connections with their fellow countrymen living abroad were severed. For forty-three long years, until 1992, Quemoy was transformed from an open hometown of the Chinese diaspora into a closed battlefield and forbidden zone.

Members of the Quemoy diaspora were often closely engaged with their hometown during the war years of the 1940s; they were deeply concerned about the security of their family members and their property. In the early 1950s, they tried to keep informed about the situation in Quemoy through any medium possible, and also tried to build new channels for remittances. Because formal visits by Overseas Chinese were an important symbol of legitimacy for the KMT, Quemoy emigrants were invited by the military authorities to visit their hometown. This became the only channel by which participants in the Chinese diaspora could return to their native place. This paper uses official archives, military newspapers and oral history to analyze how military authorities formulated policies for the Chinese diaspora in battlefield Quemoy, and to study the interaction between family and clan members in the Chinese diaspora and in their ancestral homeland during the period 1949-1970s. This analysis enables a discussion of the distinctive continuities and discontinuities of local history.

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