

Abstract

The predominance of men, including married men, among Overseas Chinese emigrants gave rise to a distinctive family structure, in which the male emigrant lived apart from his wife and other family members who remained back home in China. This paper considers two very different bodies of evidence, archives concerning Overseas Chinese efforts to recover property lost during World War Two and magazines and newspapers published for Overseas Chinese in North America and Southeast Asia, in order to discuss tensions within the Overseas Chinese divided family in the early twentieth century. Family members who remained in China came to play important roles in the management of the family estate, including remittance-funded investments. Heightened anxiety about female sexuality and the trustworthiness of family members in general reflected the concern of absent Overseas Chinese men that their family members back home might make decisions about family management that were different than those desired by the migrants themselves.