

Overseas Connections as a Blessing: Goods Distribution and Survival Strategies in Mao's China, 1957–1962

by
Siling Tao

B.A., Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International
College, 2018

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
Department of History
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

© Siling Tao 2021
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Summer 2021

Copyright in this work is held by the author. Please ensure that any reproduction
or re-use is done in accordance with the relevant national copyright legislation.

Declaration of Committee

Name: **Siling Tao**

Degree: **Master of Arts**

Title: **Overseas Connections as Blessing: Goods Distribution and Survival Strategies in Mao's China, 1957–1962**

Committee: **Chair: Evdoxios Doxiadis**
Associate Professor, History

Jeremy Brown
Co-Supervisor
Professor, History

Timothy Cheek
Co-Supervisor
Professor, History
University of British Columbia

Ilya Vinkovetsky
Committee Member
Associate Professor, History

Angelina Chin
External Examiner
Associate Professor, History
Pomona College

Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

- a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics

or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

or has conducted the research

- c. as a co-investigator, collaborator, or research assistant in a research project approved in advance.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed with the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Update Spring 2016

Abstract

Overseas connections played a mixed role in the Mao period, sometimes helping families while often causing them political trouble. Using Quanzhou, Fujian, a region with a high concentration of overseas Chinese and returnees, as a case study and focusing on the late 1950s and early 1960s, this thesis goes beyond the narrative of “political victimization” and illustrates utilitarian aspects of overseas connections. For domestic overseas Chinese, overseas connections could be a privilege, a bargaining chip, and a way to get access to more overseas products. In the centralized distribution system, the state prioritized people with overseas connections in exchange for more remittances. Nevertheless, rather than passively accepting the state’s arrangement, domestic overseas Chinese used overseas connections to bargain with the state for more daily commodities. Overseas Chinese also went beyond the formal distribution system and developed informal distribution networks through their access to the capitalist world. They became the potential smugglers to whom customs officials paid special attention. They were also the active suppliers and purchasers on the “black” market. Overseas connections made Quanzhou a relative resource-rich area. Not only domestic overseas Chinese but also ordinary residents could benefit economically from the extensive distribution networks.

Keywords: Fujian; Quanzhou; distribution system; overseas connections; Great Famine; smuggling; speculation; cross-border commodities

To my beloved grandma (“nainai”), Huang Lizhu (1933-2021)

Acknowledgements

My first thanks go to Dr. Jeremy Brown and Dr. Timothy Cheek, the best advisors a budding history student on modern Chinese history could hope for. They went through every single word of my thesis, provided insightful comments, and helped sharpen my mind. This thesis could not have been completed without their thoughtful and detailed comments and suggestions. I am also grateful to Dr. Ilya Vinkovetsky who agree to be my committee member and recommended several inspiring academic works on the Soviet Union's economy. On the defense day, his insightful questions inspired me to explore further my research interests. I also want to thank my external examiner Angelina Chin, from whom I received valuable suggestions and comments. My thanks also go to my undergraduate advisor Dr. Kenneth Lan who brought me into the field of overseas Chinese studies. Thanks to his guidance and strong recommendation letter, I was able to march an important step in the academic world.

Thank you to the SFU/UBC cohort of graduate students working on the history of modern China: Weng Wenjie, Suki Xu, Anna Fong, Li Jifeng, He Songwei, Tao Le, Zhang Rui, Jiang Chengyang, Jakub Mscichowski, Sean James, Nathan Gan—their insightful commentary and warm encouragement have been an endless source of inspiration and happiness. Thank you to fellow SFU History graduate students: Emily Jukich, Curtis Platson, Brad Kleinstuber, Rylee Sear, Ryan Breeden—their unique perspectives and helpful critiques during the workshop did help this thesis project become better. Special thanks go to Esther Souman for helping me with my thesis writing. She pointed out numerous grammatical mistakes and several awkward usages in my thesis draft, and was always kind to answer all my questions about English writing. Thank you to SFU History Department's support staff, Ruth Anderson, Judi Fraser, Aali Mirjat, who are always supportive and helpful.

Thank you to all my interviewees in Quanzhou who shared their impressive personal stories with me and kindly host me in their homes or offices. Their experiences are essential part of this thesis. Therefore, this thesis is also dedicated to them.

Special thanks go to Liu Bozi, who generously shared primary sources on overseas Chinese with me and introduced me to several interviewees. I also want to

express my gratitude to archivists and librarians at the Hui'an County Archive, Quanzhou Municipal Archive and Fujian Provincial Archive, Universities Service Center at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Special Collection Branch at the Hong Kong Baptist University.

Thank you to my dear friends. Special thanks go to Jingqi, Yajie, Weixuan, Hongying, Yuqi, Sisi, and Yuning. I am so lucky to befriend with all of you. Yuning, especially, who patiently listened to my thoughts on thesis and always be helpful to provide new insights. During our casual conversations, I received many great ideas and suggestions to make this thesis better.

Finally, thank you to my parents and other family members for their support, care and love. Special thanks go to my cousins, Tao Chonglan and Tao Zujing, who made my life in Quanzhou wonderful and meaningful. I dedicate this thesis to my beloved grandmother, a brilliant women and brave mother, who returned to Quanzhou from a small town in Surabaya, Indonesia in 1953. Her life experience inspired me to write this thesis. She left me physically, but will live in my heart.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee	ii
Ethics Statement.....	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	viii
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Glossary of Chinese Terms.....	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. Bargaining within the System: Remittances and Everyday Commodities	12
New Distribution Scheme after 1957	14
Special Supply Institution: Overseas Chinese Store	19
Overseas Connections in the Famine	28
Special Pass: Remittance Coupons	33
Conclusion.....	40
Chapter 2. Informal Distribution Network: Regulations and People’s Desires	42
Forming Informal Distribution Networks.....	44
Unofficial Privilege: the Specialness of Qiaoxiang	55
Conclusion.....	61
Conclusion	63
Bibliography	66

List of Tables

Table 1. Total Remittance Incomes (1957–1962)	36
---	----

List of Figures

Figure 1. Fujian Province (1958)	3
Figure 2. Shishi Overseas Chinese Store.....	20
Figure 3. Jinjiang Prefecture (1958)	35

Glossary of Chinese Terms

Pinyin	English Translations	Chinese Character
<i>chiqing</i>	ate unripened standing crops	吃青
<i>fanxingwei</i>	counter-actions	反行为
<i>guiqiao</i> ¹	overseas Chinese returnee to China	归国华侨
<i>guitai</i>	kiosk	柜台
<i>huaqiao</i>	overseas Chinese	华侨
<i>qiaosheng</i>	overseas Chinese (returned) students	侨生
<i>qiaohuiquan</i>	overseas Chinese dependents/family members	侨汇券
<i>qiaoxiang</i>	overseas Chinese native place/hometown	侨乡
<i>shougouzhan</i>	purchasing stations	收购站
<i>tonggou tongxiao</i>	unified purchase and sale	统购统销
<i>xintuo shangdian</i>	trust stores	信托商店
<i>youdai</i>	preferential treatment	优待
<i>zousi taohui</i>	remittance smuggling	走私套汇

¹ *Guiqiao* is the term used by the CCP to refer to “returned overseas Chinese.” Since many *guiqiao* had been born outside of China and never been to China before, I do not think it is an accurate term to describe the overseas Chinese who settled down in mainland China after 1949. “Gui”(归) here emphasizes more on the emotional attachment rather than the physical one.

Introduction

“My husband Wang Keng taught international law at a university in Shanghai. He had a complicated family background. In 1958, to avoid being implicated in ongoing political campaigns, he wrote a letter to the Shanghai mayor, confessing his family ties to the Republic of China (ROC, i.e., Taiwan). Nevertheless, he was labelled as a “counterrevolutionary” and dismissed by the school for acknowledging everything.”¹ Xu Peilan, Wang’s wife, later wrote down this story of how overseas connections (*haiwai guanxi*) affected her family’s daily life. After Wang was deprived of employment, the whole family had no income. Fortunately, Wang’s younger sister who lived in the United States and her best friend who resided in Hong Kong sent them money every month. Since then, this family of five depended on remittances from the US and Hong Kong to sustain their lives. During the Cultural Revolution, the whole family was in the predicament of being expelled from Shanghai at any time. In the endless waiting for further directions from the authorities, Wang’s younger sister sent remittances again. This sum of remittances, Xu recalled, was life-changing money, rescuing them from being ousted from Shanghai. Knowing that the Wang family was about to leave Shanghai, the cadre responsible for delivering remittances reported the news to his superior. After leaders of overseas Chinese affairs in Shanghai negotiated with other official departments, Wang’s family was allowed to stay in Shanghai because of their contribution to the state’s remittance income.²

Doubtless, Wang and Xu were very lucky to stay in Shanghai when many other individuals were persecuted for their suspicious overseas connections. Overseas connections could be dangerous especially during the Cultural Revolution. Being connected to overseas contacts could be a stain in one’s political profile, signifying the possibility of being a spy, thus not trustworthy to the Party. In the final chapter of *Eight*

¹ Xu Peilan 许佩兰, “外汇保佑我们一家没被赶出上海” [Foreign remittances allowed our family to avoid being expelled from Shanghai], 《民间历史》 (Universities Service Center, Chinese University of Hong Kong, no date).

<http://mjlsh.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/book.aspx?cid=4&tid=4785> (accessed June 8, 2021).

² Ibid.

Outcasts, Yang Kuisong tells a story of a “counterrevolutionary” named Luo Guozheng, a cadre in a province’s department of transport. Luo was investigated secretly and monitored by the security section because he was in contact with his brothers-in-law in Japan and Hong Kong. The Public Security Bureau suspected Luo of being a spy even after he was rehabilitated in 1979.³ The negative connotation of overseas connections seems to eclipse the positive side of it. Nonetheless, the story of the Wang family reveals a beneficial side of foreign connections: they could be life-saving in some circumstances.

This thesis will focus on the utilitarian aspects of overseas connections. I will examine the everyday economic lives of people with overseas connections under China’s planned economy in Jinjiang Prefecture (*Jinjiang zhuanqu*, 晋江专区), Fujian from 1957 to 1962, especially their different accesses, both formal and informal, to everyday consumer goods and food. More broadly, in this thesis, I tell the stories of the interactions between the ordinary people and the socialist state in the sphere of everyday economic lives. I ask three questions: How did socialist China try to manage the overseas Chinese’s lives through daily economic policies? How did people in Jinjiang Prefecture benefit from the economic utility of overseas connections? How did overseas connections become a tool for people there to negotiate with the state?

Jinjiang Prefecture, the focus of this thesis, is on the central coast of Fujian province across from Taiwan, south of Fuzhou and north of Xiamen. This area used to be the primary Chinese port for foreign traders. It had been experiencing mass migration to the South Sea (*Nanyang*, 南洋)⁴ since the mid-nineteenth century. Up to 1949, Jinjiang Prefecture had the largest overseas Chinese population in Fujian. The geographical scope of Jinjiang Prefecture was slightly larger than today’s Quanzhou city. Culturally speaking, Jinjiang Prefecture belongs to the broader Minnan area (southern Fujian) where migration used to be a trend and overseas connections are ubiquitous. Going abroad was one of the most important family strategies for people in Minnan to make a living. Immigration to Nanyang, however, did not mean settling there permanently. Instead, it meant sojourning there for a while, then returning to the home place. One was still close

³ Yang Kuisong, *Eight Outcasts: Social and Political Marginalization in China under Mao*, trans. Gregor Benton and Ye Zhen (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 208–235.

⁴ Nanyang refers to today’s Southeast Asia.

to the family when they sojourned. As Philip Kuhn observed, “the spatially dispersed model of the Chinese family, with its long-practiced strategy of exporting labor and remitting money back home” constructed “a continuous connection between migrants and their home communities.”⁵ After 1949, the continuous connections still shaped Minnan people’s mentality, lifestyle, and distribution of labour, which played an essential role in their daily lives.

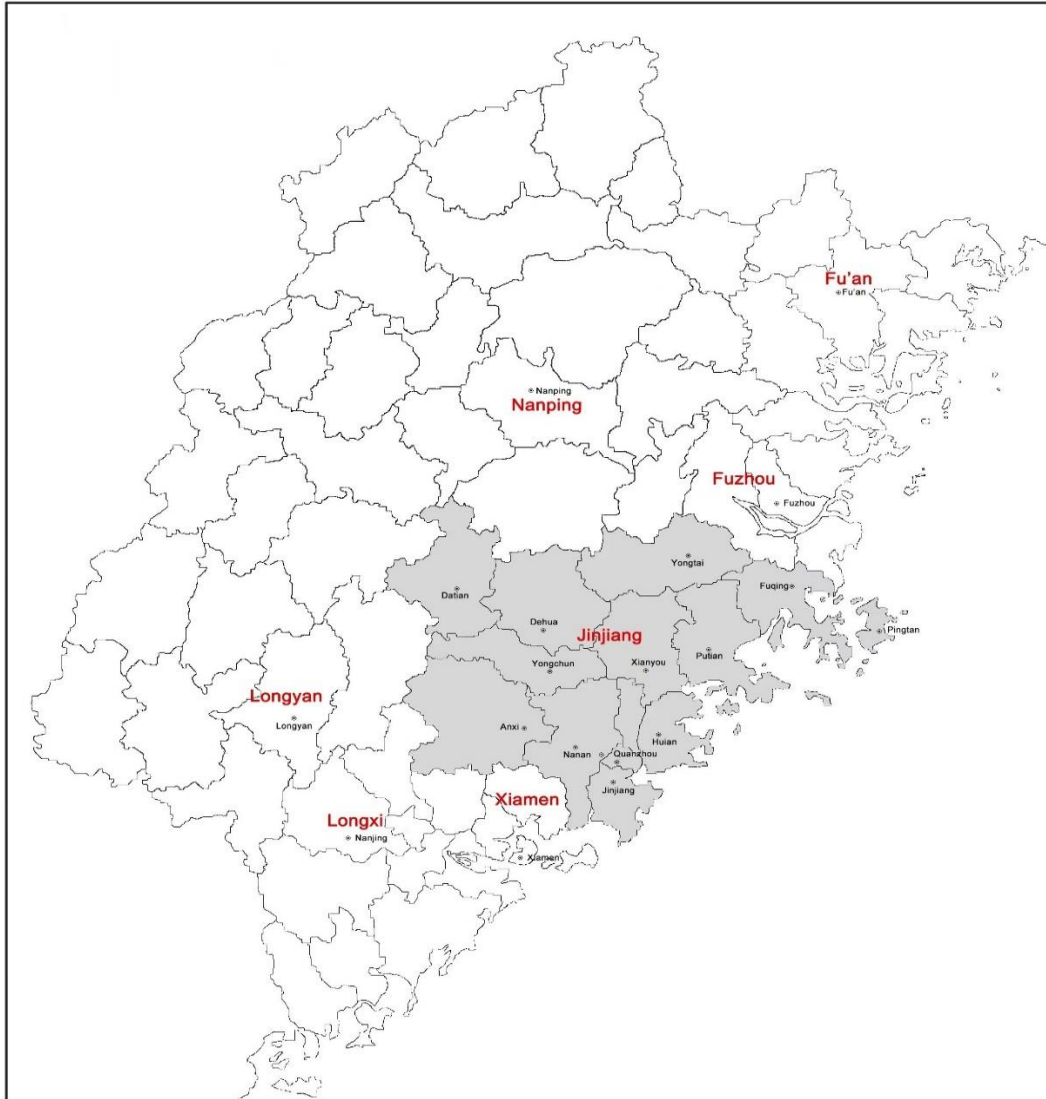


Figure 1. Fujian Province (1958)⁶

⁵ Philip Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 17.

⁶ This picture is the adaption of an online map of Jinjiang Prefecture in 1958, the original one can be found at <https://3g.163.com/dy/article/FKO8QM3C054650I3.html>

Once the Chinese Communists ascended to power in 1949, overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*) were included in the “United Front” as a useful part of the political economy.⁷ Like the late Qing and the Republican governments, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) also regarded overseas Chinese as a valuable economic asset that could contribute to socialist industrialization. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, state leaders of the PRC tended to use overseas Chinese’s remittances and expertise to bypass the embargo of the United States.⁸ Local leaders in emigrant provinces such as Guangdong and Fujian also wished overseas Chinese to continue sending remittances, using the wealth and resources they could obtain overseas to invest in the key industrial sectors in their hometowns.⁹

Like the Republican government, the PRC also set up special agencies in both provincial and local levels to take charge of overseas Chinese affairs (*qiaowu*). The Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission was established as a ministerial level administrative unit in the central government to create and enforce regulations and policy regarding overseas Chinese affairs.¹⁰ At the provincial and municipal levels, there were specialized branches or offices to implement overseas Chinese policy. Although overseas Chinese affairs departments were primarily responsible for overseas Chinese affairs (*qiaowu*), they still needed the help of other government sectors for some specific issues, such as the distribution of food.

In its overseas Chinese policy, the PRC emphasized the importance of people with overseas connections. This group of people, termed “domestic overseas Chinese,”¹¹

⁷ In the period framed by this thesis, several groups could identify themselves as *huaqiao*: overseas Chinese dependents or relatives in China (*huaqiao juanshu*, shortened to *qiaojuan*, 侨眷); returned overseas Chinese (*guiguo huaqiao*, shorten for *guiqiao*, 归侨); returned overseas Chinese students (*guiqiao xueshengg*), shortened to *qiaosheng*, 侨生) and overseas Chinese who actually lived abroad. Stephen Fitzgerald categorized *qianjuan*, *guiqiao* and *qiaosheng* as domestic overseas Chinese. See Stephen Fitzgerald, *China and the Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking’s Changing Policy: 1949-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972),

⁸ Glen Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People’s Republic of China* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 32.

⁹ On *huaqiao*’s contributions to their homeland from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1949, see Michael Williams, *Returning Home with Glory, Chinese Villages around the Pacific, 1849 to 1949* (Hong Kong University Press, 2018).

¹⁰ Han Xiaorong, “Continuities and Discontinuities in Politics: The ROC and PRC Policies Toward Overseas Chinese, 1912-1966,” *The Chinese Historical Review*, 25, no.1 (2018): 23–45.

¹¹ Stephen Fitzgerald, *China and the Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking’s Changing Policy, 1949–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); also see, Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the PRC*, 2–3.

had never been the focus of previous governments' overseas Chinese policies. The category of domestic overseas Chinese was made up of stay-at-home family members of overseas Chinese (*qiaojuan* 侨眷) including both immediate and collateral relatives, overseas Chinese who returned to China after 1949 (*guiqiao* 归侨), and teenagers of Chinese descent who pursued their higher degrees in China after 1949 (*guiqiao xuesheng* 归侨学生). The central leaders of the PRC envisioned the group of domestic overseas Chinese as an agent between their overseas relatives and the state and a useful tool to maximize the state's share of remittances.

Being connected overseas was a curse and a blessing. Individuals and households with overseas connections could easily become targets and scapegoats, being scrutinized in political campaigns because they were different from others, especially in areas where overseas connections were rare. It was also extremely hard for them to join the Party. Overseas connections, on the other hand, also brought *qiaojuan*, *guiqiao* and *guiqiao xuesheng* in the early People's Republic more income and consumer goods. From 1953, domestic overseas Chinese enjoyed exclusive entitlements granted under a preferential policy (*youdai*); they had greater food rations, private investment opportunities, were able to distribute scarce materials and to cross borders. I argue that, in everyday economic lives, *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* in Jinjiang Prefecture could still benefit from overseas connections, despite the tumultuous politics from 1957 to 1962. Overseas connections played a significant role in *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*'s daily access to goods in an era characterized by poverty, shortage, and famine.

Overseas Chinese in the Maoist Era

Overseas Chinese studies and modern Chinese history have been gradually engaged with each other; however, the existing literature of Chinese migration still pays scant attention to the issue of "domestic overseas Chinese" and their living experiences in the early period of PRC. As Glen Peterson has suggested, most historical studies about overseas Chinese just stop with the establishment of the PRC, or skim over the Maoist period and jump to the 1979 reform period when transnational ties began to reconnect

actively.¹² The narrative of earlier monographs about overseas Chinese in the early PRC was strongly influenced by the Cold War mentality, which considered *qiaowu* in the early PRC as a “conduit to export the communist revolution.”¹³ Stephen Fitzgerald’s work in 1972 rejected this assumption and pointed out the domestic aspect of *qiaowu*. But for Fitzgerald, *qiaowu* was fundamentally concerned with external policy and had a “single overriding objective of detaching the overseas Chinese from the Chinese homeland.”¹⁴ Fitzgerald’s viewpoint was very influential for a generation and still exerts its influence today.¹⁵

Glen Peterson’s work is an exception that considers the CCP’s approach to the overseas Chinese question since 1949 centering above all on a conviction that “overseas Chinese have an important, strategic role to play in China’s modernization.”¹⁶ Jin Li Lim’s recent monograph on the PRC’s overseas policy also follows Peterson’s lead by arguing that “*qiaowu* was a political practice by the Chinese party-state in service of economic objectives.”¹⁷ They both think that the PRC’s approach to the “overseas Chinese question” was utilitarian and realistic, based on a conviction that “overseas Chinese have an important, strategic role to play in China’s modernization.” Moreover, this perspective also challenges the common view of scholarship in mainland China that considers *qiaowu* as representative of the Party’s benevolence and generosity. This thesis broadly agrees with the argument of Peterson and Lim that the CCP’s overseas Chinese policy served the goal of state building. The beneficial aspect of overseas connections was partly because of the utility of domestic overseas Chinese. The PRC’s overseas

¹² Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People’s Republic of China*, 4.

¹³ Jin Li Lim, *The Price and Promise of Specialness: The Political Economy of Overseas Chinese Policy in the People’s Republic of China, 1949–1959* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 15. See representative works such as Victor Purcell, “Overseas Chinese and the People’s Republic,” *Far Eastern Survey*, 19, no.18 (1950): 194–196; Claude A. Buss, “Overseas Chinese and Communist Policy,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 277 (1951): 203–212.

¹⁴ Fitzgerald, *China and the Overseas Chinese*, 116–117.

¹⁵ See Elena Barabantseva, *Overseas Chinese, Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism: De-centering China* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Meredith Oyen, *The Diplomacy of Migration: Transnational Lives and the Making of U.S.–Chinese Relations in the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People’s Republic of China*, 7.

¹⁷ Lim, *The Price and Promise of Specialness*, 15.

Chinese policy was in essence utilitarian, providing overseas Chinese with special treatments in exchange for more foreign exchange.

Their narrative about overseas Chinese affairs, mainly from a top-down perspective, however, is not enough to delineate the whole picture of *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*'s daily lives. In their narrative, overseas Chinese seem to passively accept perceptions and regulations of the state. The bottom-up approach of this thesis suggests that overseas Chinese were more adept in navigating their overseas resources than the previous literature depicts, especially in terms of accessing food and other daily commodities. This thesis will not only focus on how the state envisioned overseas Chinese and how it used their economic utility. It also looks at how overseas Chinese used their overseas connections to barter with the state and how they took advantage of preferential policies to address their own interests.

As a result of analyzing the overseas Chinese issue in terms of the Party-State's "campaign time,"¹⁸ both Peterson and Lim regard 1957 as a critical transition to the PRC's overseas Chinese policy. They argued that *youdai* officially ended when the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward were launched in 1957 and 1958.¹⁹ Lim claims that several speeches given by the top leaders of the overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (OCAC) in 1957, such as He Xiangning and Fang Fang, marked the end of *youdai*. In their speeches, both He and Fang rejected the idea that *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* needed special treatment and recognized that overemphasizing the interests of the minority was inappropriate.²⁰ Peterson perceives experiences of *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* during the Great Leap Forward (GLF), in which they were required to participate in rural collectivization fully and completely, as another manifestation that *youdai* policy had ended. In terms of overseas Chinese's access to commodities, however, 1957 did not mark a critical transition. The logic of *youdai* remained sporadically in specific policies, especially in the realm of goods distribution. For example, *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* still

¹⁸ Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 4.

¹⁹ Lim, *The Price and Promise of Specialness*, 214; Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*, 138–162.

²⁰ Qiaowu baoshe 侨务报社, eds., 侨务政策文集 [Anthology on overseas Chinese policy] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1957), 66–81.

enjoyed privileged access to goods after 1957. Although the overall political and local socioeconomic contexts disadvantaged the *youdai* policy after 1956, a more pragmatic problem, the decrease of remittances, still faced the practitioners of overseas Chinese affairs at both the provincial and national levels. In such a circumstance, overseas Chinese still had value to the state. The state's demand for remittances saw a form of *youdai* continue.²¹

Anthropological Perspective

The narrative focus of the PRC history research has gradually shifted from an elite perspective to a more grassroots one in recent years. This can add a new perspective into overseas Chinese history in the PRC. An anthropological approach and perspective have decentralized the history, diversified the historical records, and revealed diverse behaviours of the populace under a regime that seemingly centralized power.²² As Jeremy Brown and Matthew Johnson argue, “the notion of a comprehensive post-1949 consolidation of power by the Mao-led Communist Party cannot account for the diversity of behaviour.”²³ This diversity of behaviours reveals both conflicts and harmony between the interests of the state and those of ordinary people. Although the Chinese Communists tried to overhaul the political, economic and social structure of the entire society, to eliminate class distinction and poverty according to their socialist blueprint, ordinary individuals' actions did not always strictly follow the state's plan. They may have circumvented regulations, used policy's loopholes, or resisted orders.

The recent research on the Great Leap Forward and famine demonstrates that peasants had never been passive victims even when confronted with the most repressive period for them.²⁴ Ralph Thaxton considers the practice of *chiqing* (吃青), when peasants

²¹ Jin Li Lim also points this out, but he insists that after 1957 “the *youdai* was on the way out,” and access to the special store came at the expense of the interest of *huaqiao*.

²² Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, “Re-Imagining the Chinese Peasant: The Historiography on the Great Leap Forward” in *Eating Bitterness: New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine*, ed. Kimberley Manning and Felix Wemheuer (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 28–47.

²³ Jeremy Brown and Matthew D. Johnson, eds., *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China's Era of High Socialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 5.

²⁴ Kimberley Manning and Felix Wemheuer, “Introduction,” in *Eating Bitterness*, 20.

ate unripened standing crops in the Great Famine as a form of resistance and as a survival strategy.²⁵ In oral interviews with peasants who experienced the Great Leap Forward, Gao Wangling shows how Chinese peasants developed “counter-actions” (*fanxingwei*) including “concealing production and distributing privately” (*manchan sifen*) and stealing food to react to the collective economic structure.²⁶ Peasants’ counter-actions were essential for them to survive the hardship in the countryside. Grain that peasants obtained through counter-actions, Gao argues, constituted a new institutional arrangement, and completed the secondary distribution beyond the collective one. Peasants were also well aware that there was more food in cities. Despite the rigidity of the household registration system, peasants found ways to enter the city to get more food.²⁷

Building on previous scholarship focusing on the PRC’s grassroots, this thesis adopts an anthropological perspective to examine the interaction between the state and overseas Chinese. It not only discusses informal distribution, but also formal distribution. Unlike peasants or urbanites without overseas connections, domestic overseas Chinese had more leverage to bargain with the state, which enabled them to maneuver for more grain and other commodities in the formal distribution system. In addition, because of their access to the capitalist world and their privileged status in the formal distribution system, overseas Chinese became active participants and distributors in the informal distribution process.

Structure and Sources

The thesis proceeds with material in topical, issue-oriented chapters instead of presenting a chronological unfolding of policy development. Chapter 1 will focus on how overseas Chinese bargained with the state in the formal distribution system. Chapter 2

²⁵ Ralph Thaxton, *Rural China: Mao’s Great Leap Forward Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); also see Thaxton’s, “How the Great Leap Forward Famine Ended in Rural China: ‘Administrative Intervention’ versus Peasant Resistance,” in *Eating Bitterness*, 251–271.

²⁶ Gao Wangling 高王凌, *Renmin gongshe shiqi Zhongguo nongmin fan xingwei diaocha* 人民公社时期中国农民反行为调查 [Investigation of Everyday Forms of Resistance of the Chinese Peasants in the Era of the People’s Communes] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2006).

²⁷ Jeremy Brown, *City Versus Countryside in Mao’s China: Negotiating the Divide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 29–52.

will examine strategies that overseas Chinese used to create informal distribution chains. Each chapter is arranged according to chronological order, mainly from 1957 to 1962. As discussed in the literature review section, 1957 marked a critical transition for the CCP's overseas Chinese policy. The new supply mechanism for overseas Chinese was also introduced in this year. The year 1960 was another key turning point. As a result of the anti-Chinese crisis, thousands of ethnic Chinese fled Indonesia to the PRC in 1960, just as the famine was deepening in China. The PRC's supply system was near failure, but the state still prioritized supplies for new returnees. Despite the malfunction of the formal distribution system, the informal one was still active. For *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* who had come back for a while, overseas parcels became their survival strategy during the famine. Additionally, customs in the PRC relaxed the duty-free limits on overseas Chinese's personal effects because of the wave of returnees, which caused the proliferation of cross-border goods. The years 1961 to 1962 were a period of readjustment and reassessment of the PRC's economy, to reconstruct the socio-economic order after the devastating famine. The formal distribution for *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* was also adjusted slightly during the economic recovery. Meanwhile, the authorities also began to tighten their control over the market. Official documents detailed black-market transactions involving overseas Chinese.

My thesis is based on three types of sources. Archival materials are the first type. I draw on materials from Hui'an County Archive, Quanzhou Municipal Archive and Fujian Provincial Archive. Researchers must be cautious analyzing the forms of informal distribution using archival materials. Archival materials on illegal economic activities only represent cadres' viewpoints, and reveal the mechanisms that the state used to regulate the informal distribution. However, the underlying motivations of overseas Chinese who engaged in these activities remain unknown. Sometimes, I need to read against the grain of the archive to speculate about the motives of overseas Chinese. For example, most archival materials attribute smuggling activities to overseas Chinese's profit-seeking mentality, which is partial and inaccurate. Profit-making was just one reason for smuggling. Sometimes, overseas Chinese also considered smuggling only as a survival strategy. The second category of sources consists of newspapers about overseas Chinese, stored in Hong Kong Baptist University's Special Collection. The third type of

materials are oral history interviews. Regretfully, I did not find any *qiaojuan*; rather, I interviewed ten *guiqiao* who came to China for different reasons. Oral interviews of these *guiqiao* provide me a glimpse of their economic daily lives in the PRC.

Chapter 1. Bargaining within the System: Remittances and Everyday Commodities

Everyone needs consumer goods and food. In a free market society, you can purchase whatever you want if you have plenty of money; while if you live in a planned-economy society, everything would be completely different. Ordinary daily necessities that could be easily bought in a free-market economy became extraordinary in a planned economy, very difficult to obtain.²⁸ Commodities in the centrally-planned, state-directed economy, as Dorothy Solinger points out, “substituted for currency as a medium of exchange among units as a tool of power and as an object of contention.”²⁹ Having exclusive access to scarce goods, therefore, was also a privilege in socialist China. Overseas Chinese in the PRC was a group that enjoyed this privilege.

In Maoist China, the state was a dominant distributor of resources. The rural and urban division, by far, determined economic chances and access to daily necessities. The distribution system in the PRC had a strong urban bias from the beginning. Only urban households, most of whom were workers, administrative officials, and intellectuals, were included in a state-organized food distribution system, while rural households had to rely on themselves for survival. As Felix Wemheuer correctly notes, “in terms of the distribution of basic goods and services, such as food, clothing, housing or health care,” the urban-rural divide was far more important than class.³⁰ The urban-biased distribution system ensured that an urban “capitalist” from a big city who had a less favorable class status would eat better than a politically favoured “poor peasant” in remote rural areas.³¹

The group of *huaqiao* was an exception, because their access to food and other commodities did not strictly follow the urban-rural binary. Domestic overseas Chinese, as

²⁸ Elena Osokina notes that under the centralized distribution system, people searched rather than shopped; therefore, “the verb ‘to get’ was used instead of ‘to buy’.” See Elena Osokina, *Our Daily Bread, Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin’s Russia, 1927–1941*, trans. Kate Transchel and Greta Bucher (New York: Routledge, 2015), xi.

²⁹ Dorothy J. Solinger, *Chinese Business Under Socialism: The Politics of Domestic Commerce, 1949–1980* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 11.

³⁰ Felix Wemheuer, *A Social History of Maoist China: Conflict and Change, 1949–1976*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 54; also see Felix Wemheuer, *Famine Politics in Maoist China and the Soviet Union* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 77–114.

³¹ *Ibid.*

a group, was given preferential status in the centralized distribution system regardless of rural and urban residency. *Qiaojuan*, *guiqiao* and *guiqiao xuesheng* as official labels crossed the boundaries of rural and urban, covering all walks of life. They could be peasants, workers, or administrative officials. Some *guiqiao* resettled in rural state farms, but registered as urban households, enjoying the entitlements of urban citizens. *Qiaojuan* were also prioritized by the state in the distribution system despite their rural household registration. As Glen Peterson correctly suggests, the terms *qiaojuan*, *guiqiao*, and *guiqiao xuesheng* were not merely descriptive labels, but also represented an official identity status, “to which were attached both political and juridical meanings.”³² Benefits of preferential policies, however, did not affect domestic overseas Chinese equally. Overseas Chinese at home, as a group, were heterogeneous and divided hierarchically. Wealthy overseas Chinese household benefitted more from the preferential distribution because the state considered them more useful to socialist construction, especially after 1957.

This chapter will discuss the bargaining between the state and overseas Chinese, centering on remittances and goods. It focuses on a new supply policy promulgated after 1957 targeted at domestic overseas Chinese. How did the state prioritize domestic overseas Chinese in the centralized distribution system to attract more remittances after 1957? How did the overseas Chinese both at home and abroad bargain with the state to access more goods? I argue that overseas Chinese used overseas connections as a bargaining tool to negotiate with the state. I use the term “bargain” to specifically emphasize that the interactions between the state and overseas Chinese proceeded in an established institutional framework. All the methods that overseas Chinese used to get more supplies in the bargaining process mentioned in this chapter were in line with the state regulations.

³² Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People’s Republic of China*, 3.

New Distribution Scheme after 1957

On August 6, 1959, *Ta Kung Pao* reprinted an article from *China News Service* headlined “*Qiaojuan* in Fujian Province can purchase special provision commodities with their remittances.”³³ In fact, it had been more than a year since this new supply policy was formalized. According to the coverage, remittance recipients could get extra supplies based on the amount of remittances they received under the new supply scheme. The author acclaimed this policy as a reflection of the Party’s benevolence to overseas Chinese. Yet, the new policy’s introduction was based on economic interests and not on the kind of loving care that the news portrayed. It was bargaining between overseas Chinese and the state.

One of the most significant reasons for the introduction of a new supply mechanism was that supplies of daily necessities could not meet the demands of domestic overseas Chinese. The system of “unified purchase and sale” (*tonggou tongxiao*) introduced in 1953 adversely affected *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* households. Under this system, the state purchased surplus grain from peasants at relatively low prices, supplied it to the rapidly expanding urban industrial workforce, and the rest would—at least ideally—be redistributed to grain deficient households. Most *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* households were classified as grain deficient households, either because of a lack of male labour in most *qiaojuan* households or their dependence on remittances for their livelihood. The “grain deficient” *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* households had previously purchased daily necessities from private traders with their remittances. However, this channel had been cut off since the state monopolized grain and other key agricultural commodities. Considering that most *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* households were “grain deficient,” the state instituted a preferred supply system in which they could receive rations of grain that were comparable to the amount provided to urban workers. Yet, the preferred supply faced difficulties in implementation.³⁴ Some local cadres, for example,

³³ *Ta Kung Pao* (大公报), “Fujian qiaojuan xiangyong qiaohui gouwu huode teshu gongying” 福建侨眷享用侨汇购物获得特殊供应 [*Qiaojuan* in Fujian Province can purchase special provision commodities with their remittances], August 6, 1959. HKBU Library.

³⁴ Under a preferred supply system instituted in 1955, grains distributed to *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* households were on average 3-4 *jin* higher than grain-deficient households that did not possess

considered that the state provided excessive special treatment to *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*. To the households to express their dissatisfaction, they deducted the goods that should have been distributed

Qiaojuan and *guiqiao* began to realize that remittances in hand did not help them to obtain the goods they wanted. Some domestic overseas Chinese, therefore, asked their relatives abroad to send goods directly.³⁵ Since 1955, the number of parcels mailed from Hong Kong, Macau, and Southeast Asia had surged. During the fourth quarter of 1956, there were 6,000 parcels mailed to Fujian. A rise in parcels meant a decline in remittances, a consequence that the officials in charge of overseas Chinese affairs did not want. Moreover, certain commodities purchased abroad, such as bicycles, were actually made in China, yet the price was much lower abroad, even after adding taxes and freight costs.³⁶ Exported goods ultimately flowed back to China, adversely impacting the state's foreign exchange earnings. The supply shortage also boosted emigration. According to official statistics, 130,000 *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* moved to Hong Kong and Macau from 1955 to 1957. This worried some cadres who worked on overseas Chinese affairs, and thus they warned in an official document that "shortages of everyday consumer goods not only have reduced the amount of remittances, but will provide an opportunity for the imperialists to slander us."³⁷ With an increase in overseas parcels, remittances had been or would be further squeezed, so a new supply scheme needed to be introduced to prevent the number of parcels from increasing.

Both state officials and overseas Chinese participated in the process of setting up a new supply mechanism. On February 6, 1957, Premier Zhou Enlai received a report

huaqiao status. From 1956, every individual from *qiaojuan* households could receive 24 *jin* of unhusked grain per month, and the state increased the ration to 26-30 *jin* per month later, which was very close to the ration provided to urban workers. In addition to grains, overseas Chinese households also enjoyed preferred supply on other necessities, such as cooking oil, sugar, cotton fabrics and meat. See Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*, 65.

³⁵ Zhongguo renmin yinhang (中国人民银行), Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo duiwai maoyi bu (中华人民共和国对外贸易部), Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo huaqiao shiwu weiyuan hui (中华人民共和国华侨事务委员会) [People's Bank of China, the Foreign Trade Ministry and overseas Chinese Affairs Committee], "Guanyu zhengqu qiaohui wenti de baogao xiegei zongli de baogao" 关于争取侨汇问题的报告：写给总理的报告 [Report on how to attract more remittances]. February 16, 1957. Hui'an County Archive (HCAC). 0082-002-032.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

from the overseas Chinese Affairs Committee, the People's Bank of China, and the Foreign Trade Ministry, which proposed a new idea regarding the supply mechanism for *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*. At the end of April, *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* in Guangzhou expressed their dissatisfaction with the current supply policy directly to representatives of the National People's Congress (NPC) in a discussion meeting.³⁸ Deputies of domestic overseas Chinese suggested establishing a special market to allow them to purchase daily necessities with remittances, especially non-staple food and cotton included in a "unified purchased and sale" scheme.³⁹ According to these deputies, the special market was grounded in a reality that domestic overseas Chinese needed goods and the state desired foreign exchange. From the perspective of *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*, instead of exporting goods that were in shortage in China for foreign exchange, it would be better to permit them to purchase these goods with remittances.⁴⁰ It seemed to be a win-win game for both overseas Chinese and the state.⁴¹ The idea suggested by *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* was very similar to that proposed to Premier Zhou. It might be a just a coincidence. But it was more likely that a series of private and unofficial negotiations had unfolded between influential and prestigious individuals in domestic overseas Chinese community and officials in charge of overseas Chinese and economic affairs before they officially put forward this new supply mechanism to the central leaders. From the outset, the new supply policy was a bargaining chip between overseas Chinese and the state. The initiation and the formation of the new distribution plan, therefore, was not completely dominated by the state even though it was seemingly more powerful at the negotiating table. Each party tried to get what they were looking for through this process.

Compared to the previous preferred supply system towards grain-deficient *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* households, the new arrangement was more pragmatic. Under the new supply system, access to extra unified supply commodities was no longer based on labels of *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*. It instead depended on the amount of remittances they

³⁸ "Guangzhou shi *guiqiao*, *qiaojuan* xiang quanguo renmin daibiao dahui tichu de yaoqiu" 广州市归侨侨眷向全国人民代表大会提出的要求 [Requests to the representatives of NPC by the domestic overseas Chinese in Guangzhou]. May 13, 1957. *Neibu cankao* (Internal reference, hereafter abbreviated as NBCK). University Service Center (USC).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

received. In other words, remittance recipients rather than the group of domestic overseas Chinese were provided exclusive access to additional unified supply items, such as grain, edible oils, cotton clothes and sugars, and scarce consumer goods that were in short supply or unavailable to the populace at large.⁴² In 1957, every 100 yuan converted from remittances could purchase an additional 6 kilograms of rice,⁴³ 1 kilogram of edible oil, 2.5 kilograms of sugar, 1 kilogram of pork, and 3.32 metres of cotton fabrics.⁴⁴ The allocation would be increased in proportion with the amount of remittances to a maximum of 50 kilograms of rice, 5 kilograms of edible oil, 17.5 kilograms of sugar, 7.5 kilograms of pork and 16.67 meters of cotton fabrics.

The state was more concerned about the living conditions of upper-middle class overseas Chinese who were able to receive regular remittances than the overall overseas Chinese population. The report submitted to Premier Zhou also reveals cadres' special attention to upper-middle class overseas Chinese. It states:

Upper-middle class overseas Chinese were better off than (some) domestic capitalists. From 1949 to 1953, the provision could still meet the demand of these overseas Chinese. Yet, after the implementation of "unified purchase and supply," the living standard of these overseas Chinese has declined. Their living standard declined once again after the implementation of joint state-private ownership. In the past, the private traders in *qiaoxiang* (native place of overseas Chinese) sought scarce consumer goods from all over the nation to supply upper-middle class overseas Chinese families. After the private traders were squeezed out and the state took over and unified supply chains, *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* found it more difficult to access scarce consumer goods. As a result, some of them needed to send the prescriptions of Chinese medicines to dispensaries in Hong Kong.⁴⁵

⁴² Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*, 64.

⁴³ Six kilograms of rice was not that much considering that the highest standard of grain supply for urban residents was 25 kilograms. Six kilograms of rice was approximately equal to a three-year-old toddler's daily grain consumption. See Quanzhou shi liangshi ju 泉州市粮食局, ed., *Quanzhou shi liangshi zhi* 泉州市粮食志 [Quanzhou grains gazetteer] (Quanzhou: Hui'an xian yinshua chang, 1994), 52.

⁴⁴ Zhongguo renmin yinhang fujian sheng fenhang guowai yewu chu 中国人民银行福建省分行国外业务局 [Foreign Business Division of Fujian Branch, People's Bank of China], "Youguan ping qiaohui shouru zengjia wuzi gongying de ruogan juti wenti" 有关凭侨汇收入增加物资供应的若干具体问题 [Several issues on providing extra supplies based on amount of remittance incomes]. December 24, 1957. HCAC. 0082-002-032.

⁴⁵ HCAC. 0082-002-032.

Not a single word mentioned lower-middle class overseas Chinese who received few remittances. Obviously, they were not the major target of the new policy.

The supply scheme's promulgation and implementation did not evenly affect domestic overseas Chinese. The upper-middle class benefitted the most. The state graded the economic status of domestic overseas Chinese based on remittances received by every transnational household. Doubtless, those transnational households whose economic status was above the upper-middle level had the most potential to contribute to socialist construction, thus they became the group that the CCP's policy most favored. The logic behind the policy was explicit: only those who could provide remittances on a regular basis were entitled to privileges. In the political propaganda, however, the CCP rationalized the remittance incomes of overseas Chinese at home by claiming that most overseas Chinese abroad were working class whose salaries were also hard-earned money.⁴⁶ The contradiction between the propaganda slogan and the policy outcomes was inevitable because the state prioritized "rapid industrialization over the socialist goal of transforming the social relations of production."⁴⁷

The new supply scheme was a result of negotiation and bargaining between overseas Chinese and the state, but the local government still publicized it as a policy reflecting their special care for the overseas Chinese. In a propaganda sheet drafted by the Hui'an County government, the specialness of overseas Chinese appeared in the first sentence. Cadres also juxtaposed domestic overseas Chinese with both high-level officials and intellectuals to compare their positions in the centralized distribution system. By making this comparison, cadres told overseas Chinese that they should not complain about higher prices, because both "high-level officials" and "high-level intellectuals," whose contributions to socialist construction were more crucial than overseas Chinese, still needed to pay higher prices to obtain extra supplies. The overtone of this comparison

⁴⁶ "Zhonggong zhongyang tongyi zhanxian gongzuobu guanyu ziben zhuyi tixi guojia nei huaqiao tongyizhanxian gongzuo yu shetuan gongzuo de ruogan yijian 中共中央统一战线工作部关于资本主义体系国家内华侨统一战线工作与社团工作的若干意见 [Several Opinions of the United Front Work Department on carrying out united front work in capitalist countries] in *Tongzhan zhengce wenjian huibian (4) 统战政策文件汇编* [Collection of official documents on policies about united front work policy]. FJPA. D-04588.

⁴⁷ Karl Gerth, *Unending Capitalism: How Consumerism Negated China's Communist Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 5.

was that the overseas Chinese should feel grateful for the special care from the government.⁴⁸

Special Supply Institution: Overseas Chinese Store

After 1956, news coverage about a novel type of store, the “overseas Chinese store,” frequently appeared in different pro-CCP newspapers, such as *Ta Kung Pao*, *China News Service* and *Wen Wei Po*, whose readers were overseas Chinese in Hong Kong, Macau, and abroad. The duty of these news agencies was to report on the thriving side of *qiaoxiang* and to advocate the benevolent overseas Chinese policy of the CCP. Obviously, this news coverage was one-sided, but it still reflects the partial reality, and shows the life of overseas Chinese and the situation of *qiaoxiang* at that time. After the introduction of the new supply policy towards overseas Chinese, the number of stores surged. In 1962, there were thirty-four overseas Chinese stores and sixteen kiosks (*guitai*, 柜台) in Jinjiang Prefecture with 246 employees. As its name suggests, the overseas Chinese store was tailored for people with overseas connections. Ostensibly, the overseas Chinese store was a special supply institution to serve overseas Chinese, but in reality, the establishment of these stores was a decision based on economic calculations, an approach the CCP used to increase the state’s share of remittances.

The State’s Vision of Overseas Chinese Stores

The overseas Chinese store used its façade to distinguish itself from common stores. The first overseas Chinese store in Quanzhou was set up in the most bustling downtown area in Shishi, a subordinate town of Jinjiang county.⁴⁹ Although the special supply policy has already receded from the historical stage, the old building of the overseas Chinese store in Shishi is still there. From its structure and architecture, this building was a *qilou* (骑楼) that overseas Chinese built during the Republican era. The

⁴⁸ HCAC. 0082-002-032.

⁴⁹ Zhongguo xinwen tongxun she 中国新闻通讯社 [China News Service], “Shishi nijian yi huaqiao shangdian” 石狮拟建华侨商店 [Shishi County plans to set up an overseas Chinese store]. September 9, 1956. HKBU Library Special Collection.

magnificent and exotic *qilou* was in line with the “foreign” and “upscale” positioning of the store. Selecting a proper storefront for the overseas Chinese store was not an easy task. In a 1962 report on inspecting the implementation of the new supply policy in Hui’an County, county cadres considered that the old façade and worn equipment would adversely affect the operation of the store. County cadres responsible for overseas Chinese affairs perceived that overseas Chinese and their domestic relatives were fond of extravagance. In their understanding, the extravagant façade, relatively wide space, and new equipment could potentially attract more guests. The report continued, “most of the overseas Chinese stores in our county are narrow, and the equipment is outdated. An overseas Chinese store located in Dong Yuan only had two small storefronts, and different kinds of commodities were jumbled together.” The report criticized, “this overseas Chinese store does not look like it is supposed to!”⁵⁰ As Karl Gerth described *Huaiguojiu*, a state used goods market, as an “exhibition of the material culture underlying the bourgeois lifestyles,”⁵¹ with its exotic façade, the overseas Chinese store had the similar effect. The appearance of overseas Chinese stores also helped to display the specialness of remittance recipients, reminding passersby of the value of remittances.



Figure 2. Shishi Overseas Chinese Store, photo taken by the author

⁵⁰ Hui’an xian zengjia qiaohui gongying wuzi jiancha zu 惠安县增加侨汇供应物资检查组 [Inspection team of increasing supply based on the amount of remittances in Hui’an County], “Guanyu zengjia wuzi gongying gongzuo de jiancha baogao” 关于增加物资供应工作的检查报告 [Inspection report on the work of increasing supply of goods]. September 6, 1962. HACA. 0013-001-0043-0060.

⁵¹ Gerth, *Unending Capitalism*, 191.

The overseas Chinese store was not only a marketplace but also an official supply institution whose responsibility was to allot and manage special supply materials. The store was led by the local commercial department and the remittance materials management unit.⁵² The goods supplied in the store came from all over the country, especially from the two largest commercial and industrial cities in China at that time: Tianjin and Shanghai. “Catering to the appetites and habits of *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*,” a journalist from *China News Service* wrote, “the staff carefully procured and purchased more than two thousand types of commodities from Shanghai and Tianjin including classy silks, embroidered quilts, bedsheets, blankets, phonographs, bicycles, and various types of vases and engraved decorations.”⁵³ The imported goods were also an indispensable part of the store. Commodities such as Parker pens, brand-name watches, and silk-made blouses and pants were all imported from abroad. The journalist ensured its readers that “*qiaojuan* can find and buy whatever they like in the store.”⁵⁴ On the important traditional holidays, overseas Chinese stores also provided holiday specials. Following the customs of Minnan area (southern Fujian), on the Dragon Boat Festival and Qing Ming Festival, for example, the stores would prepare large quantities of sticky rice, peanut kernels, flour and raw pork in advance. Some stores also stocked sachets full of fragrant herbs and seasonal toys for children’s holiday needs.⁵⁵ In fact, commodities in overseas Chinese stores reflected the official and public imagination towards overseas Chinese. This imagination supposed that the overseas Chinese preferred upscale commodities to common consumer goods and foodstuffs.

⁵² Qi Pengfei (齐鹏飞) and Zhang Lingwei (张玲蔚), “1956-1966 nian zhongguo de qiaohui wuzi gongying zhengce” 《浅析 1956-1966 年中国的侨汇物资供应政策》 [The PRC’s supply policies toward remittances recipients 1956-1966], *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu* [Contemporary China History Studies], no. 2 (2019): 4-16.

⁵³ Zhongguo xinwen tongxun she 中国新闻通讯社 [China News Service], “Shishi huaqiao shangdian fuwu zhoudao” 石狮华侨商店服务周到 [Excellent service in *Shishi* overseas Chinese store]. October 15, 1959. HKBU Library Special Collection.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Zhongguo xinwen tongxun she 中国新闻通讯社 [China News Service], “Fujian huaqiao shangdian jizao anpai duanwu jie huowu gongying” 福建华侨商店及早安排端午节货物供应 [Overseas Chinese in Fujian has prepared for the supply of Dragon Boat Festival early]. May 26, 1963. HKBU Library Special Collection.

Providing remittance recipients with extra consumer goods and foodstuffs was also a process to balance the interests of different official departments. The commercial agencies at each level wanted a piece of the pie because goods were so scarce and limited. At a meeting about the supply of resources provided specifically for remittance recipients in Fujian, cadres of overseas Chinese stores in Jinjiang Prefecture mentioned that the materials meant to be distributed to stores were kept by supply departments at each level. The central supply agency allocated enough materials for overseas Chinese; however, its counterparts at provincial, municipal, and county levels would keep materials according to their demands, and only the remaining 30 percent would get to overseas Chinese stores.⁵⁶ The cadres complained that goods finally distributed to overseas Chinese stores were never sufficient to complete the high target of remittance income set up by leaders at the provincial level.⁵⁷ Under the planned economy, the state directed commercial organs and enterprises to procure and allocate goods in accord with annual targets for sales dictated by offices in Beijing. Commodities became a kind of currency that every commercial department would fight for. The state was never a coherent and unified actor even in the centralized state distribution system. It was made up of stakeholders whose interests sometimes clashed with each other. The bargain between the state and the overseas Chinese, therefore, was multi-layered and complicated, involving the interests of several parties.

In addition to quality and variety of commodities, service also mattered a lot. The officials thought that better service meant more remittances. But how did the authorities ensure better service? Gender played a role. Besides the essential requirement of loyalty to the Party, the cadres of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives in Hui'an County showed their preference for saleswomen in the recruiting process.⁵⁸ The preference for saleswomen derived from the entrenched stereotype that women were more considerate and amiable. It was also based on the gendered division of labor in transnational

⁵⁶ Qiaohui wuzi huiyi jianbao 侨汇物资会议简报 [Briefing on meeting about remittances materials]. September 11, 1962. Fujian Provincial Archive (FJPA). 230-003-662-019.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Hui'an xian gongxiao hezuo she 惠安县供销合作社 [Hui'an County Supply and Marketing Cooperative], "Guanyu xunsu chengli huaqiaowuzi gongying zhuan ye shangdian de tongzhi" 关于迅速成立华侨物资供应专业商店的通知 [Notice on rapid establishment of overseas Chinese stores]. January 1, 1962. HACA. 0080-001-011.

households in which wives stayed at home to take care of the family and husbands went abroad to work. The cadres may have assumed that saleswomen could take advantage of their gender to promote the CCP's overseas Chinese policy in the selling process.⁵⁹ Home delivery service was another way to practice “good service.” When *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* bought too many goods and could not carry them home, staff of the store would do guests a favour. According to a piece of news published in *China News Service*, two employees of the Shishi overseas Chinese store used a cart to help Zhang Huazan, a returnee, dispatch over 150 kilograms of goods to Zhang's home twenty *li* away from the store.⁶⁰

A 1963 report in *Sing Tao Daily*, a pro-KMT newspaper published in Hong Kong at that time, however, satirized overseas Chinese stores' emphasis on service, deeming it as a propaganda slogan just for window-dressing.⁶¹ According to this report, the overseas Chinese Affairs Committee and the Commercial Bureau in Fujian blamed stores' operating loss on bad service. Leaders of two departments thought that a model overseas Chinese store should excel in service. Each staff member of the overseas Chinese store, therefore, was required to become a “red and Lei Feng-style salesman,” who should correct their previous apathetic attitude and serve their overseas Chinese guests cordially. *Sing Tao Daily* also quoted the content of the letter to promote its own argument. The sender claimed to be a cadre working in an overseas Chinese store in Longxi, a county in Zhangzhou city, just southwest of Quanzhou. He revealed in this letter that good service has become a crucial criterion to select exemplary overseas Chinese stores in a recent competition that was held in Fujian to cope with the annual inspection of representatives of the People's Congress. “Other than a small number of staff,” this cadre pointed out, “the majority was not very enthusiastic about the competition and was careless about whether they could earn the title of ‘Lei Feng-style salesman’; they just muddle through

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Zhongguo xinwen tongxun she 中国新闻通讯社 [China News Service], “Shishi huaqiao shangdian fuwu zhoudao yingye fanrong” 石狮华侨商店服务周到营业繁荣 [Shishi overseas Chinese store had excellent service and prosperous business]. October 15, 1959. HKBU Library Collection.

⁶¹ *Sing Tao Daily* 星岛日报, “Huaqiao shangdian shengyi cha Fujian Longxi qu dagao suowei mofan huaqiao shangdian mude zaiyu yingfu rendai shicha” 华侨商店生意差 福建龙溪区大搞所谓模范华侨商店目的在于应付人大视察 [Longxi county set up model overseas Chinese stores to cope with the annual inspection of representatives of the People's Congress]. October 29, 1963. HKBU Library Special Collection

the competition.”⁶² Despite its antagonistic political attitude towards the PRC regime, the *Sing Tao Daily* in this report correctly noted that the service of the overseas Chinese store fell short of the standard that the authorities required. This piece of news did not specifically mention the operation of overseas Chinese stores in Jinjiang Prefecture, but the situation there was similar. Several official documents written by cadres from this area did suggest that stores’ poor service should be improved.

Responses from Domestic Overseas Chinese

It turns out that the overseas Chinese stores’ attraction for overseas Chinese was not as strong as expected. According to news reports by *China News Service* and *News on the Emigrant Communities (Fujian qiaoxiang bao)*, the overseas Chinese store in Shishi was crowded with guests since opening, and many *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* travelled long distances to visit and shop in the first store, thus sales were on the rise. In September 1956, the store had sales of 22,000 *yuan*, which was 1.2 times more than in August.⁶³ Considering the political stance of these two news agencies, their news about overseas Chinese stores may have been exaggerated. These pieces could have also been propaganda and advertisements as well, which were used to convince overseas Chinese that their relatives at home had enough goods. The better the overseas Chinese stores looked, the more remittances the state could receive. Even with the special supply, alleged good service and high sales at first, Quanzhou’s first overseas Chinese store was in deficit after six years of operation. In 1962, the total assets of the store were worth 325,000 *yuan*, among which the unsalable commodities’ value reached 170,000 *yuan*.⁶⁴ The store had lost several thousand *yuan* in the first quarter.⁶⁵ The overseas Chinese store in Shishi was not the only one that was in deficit. Overseas Chinese stores in Xiamen and in Longyan also faced the same problem. The unsalable foodstuffs were piled up in stores, including candied dates, canned mutton and day lilies, which were moldy and infested with vermin.⁶⁶ The deficit demonstrated that at least some *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ HKBU Library Collection, China News Service, October 15, 1959.

⁶⁴ QZMA. 0110-001-0023-002.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ FJPA. 230-003-662-019.

were unwilling or unable to purchase in overseas Chinese stores specifically designed for them.

High prices of commodities discouraged some customers. For remittance recipients, getting exclusive access and good service came at a cost: goods sold in overseas Chinese stores were more expensive than those sold elsewhere. The price of these commodities was far above the average market price. For example, the price of rice was 50 percent above the average market price, edible oil 150 percent, and sugar, cotton and pork 30 percent. But high prices did not actually signal high quality despite official documents frequently mentioning this principle. Some commodities were ordinary on the market, but became extraordinary in overseas Chinese stores, selling for higher prices. The overseas Chinese store in Shishi had more than thirty types of commodities in stock at the end of February in 1962, and more than one third of them were priced abnormally high; their total value reached 181,803 yuan.⁶⁷ For example, canned beef sold in the store was priced at 4 yuan, while the same amount of fresh beef on the market cost only 3.5 yuan. Comparing the price and the freshness of two kinds of beef, customers must choose the fresh one.⁶⁸ A pack of Chienmen cigarettes was priced less than 1 yuan on the market, while it was worth a 50-yuan remittance coupon.⁶⁹ Daily necessities such as basins, tooth cups, and thermoses sold in overseas Chinese stores were also high priced. Ironically, imported commodities were far cheaper than those sold in overseas Chinese stores. The price of a pair of high-top sneakers, for example, plus tariff, was no more than 8 yuan. By contrast, the same product in the overseas Chinese store required a remittance coupon worth 230 yuan. Obviously, for remittance recipients, it was more economical and effective to ask their relatives in Hong Kong and Macau to mail sneakers directly.

Daily necessities were expensive in overseas Chinese stores, let alone high-end commodities. Because of their scarcity, a remittance coupon worth 100 yuan could only purchase few up-scale commodities. According to the conversion rate set by the Fujian

⁶⁷ Zhongguo renmin yinhang jinjiang zhuanqu zhihang 中国人民银行晋江专区支行 [Jinjiang Special District Branch of People's Bank of China], "yijiu liuer nian shishi huaqiao shangdian yingye qingkuang" 1962年石狮华侨商店营业情况 [The operation situation of Shishi overseas Chinese store in 1962]. April 13, 1962. Quanzhou Municipal Archive (QZMA). 0110-001-0023-002.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

provincial government, a 100-yuan remittance coupon could be exchanged for upscale commodities valued 25 yuan. However, only overseas Chinese stores in Fuzhou had reached that standard. The actual conversion rates of overseas Chinese stores in other areas in Fujian were much lower. For example, in the Shishi store, overseas Chinese could only purchase upscale commodities valued 0.75 yuan with a 100-yuan remittance coupon.⁷⁰ Even *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* who were much wealthier also thought that purchasing goods in overseas Chinese stores was not a good deal.⁷¹ A relative of overseas Chinese wanted to buy dowries for her daughter in the store with the 10,000-yuan remittance she just received, but she only got products worth several hundred yuan.

In fact, with their monthly remittances, not every *guiqiao* and *qiaojuan* had enough money to frequently patronize the special store. Professors of Southeast Asian Studies at Xiamen University conducted a survey in 1957 and found that the majority of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia belonged to the working class.⁷² They could send their family members at home thirty to fifty HK dollars, at most one hundred each month. The individual cases I found also confirm this conclusion. Chen Lijuan's younger brother Chen Wenda aided his brother-in law, Chen Lijuan's husband, in running a rubber business in the Philippines. Chen wrote to her brother and asked him to send more remittances for their mother's daily use. Chen Wenda replied, "after sending fifty HK dollars a month to support the family, I am almost penniless and cannot send more."⁷³

Life would become more difficult if the whole family decided to settle in the PRC in the 1960s. Decree Number.10 passed by the Sukarno government in May 1959 changed tens of thousands of overseas Chinese's destinies. This decree revoked the trading rights of foreigners in rural areas, directly attacking the economic position of

⁷⁰ Zhongguo renmin yinhanag fujian zhihang 中国人民银行福建支行 [Fujian Provincial Branch of People's Bank of China], "Guanyu dangqian qiaohui wuzi gongying gongzuo cunzai wenti de qingshi baogao" 关于当前侨汇物资供应工作存在问题的请示报告 [Report on problems of providing extra supplies based on remittances]. May 2, 1962. FJPA. 0148-002-1299-0028.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Zhang Zhenggan (章振干), Chen Kejian (陈克俭), Gan Minchong (甘民重), and Chen Kekun (陈可焜), "Fujian zhuyao qiaoqu nongcun jingji tantao qiaoqu nongcun diaocha zhiyi" 福建主要侨区农村经济探讨: 侨区农村调查之一 [Research on economic situation of Fujian's major zones with high concentrations of overseas residents], *Journal of Xiamen University*, no.1 (1957): 31-66.

⁷³ *qiaopi* (letters sent together with remittances), author's collection.

ethnic Chinese and threatening their livelihood. Overseas Chinese in Indonesia faced a dilemma: to become Indonesian or “return” to their supposed homeland: Fujian and Guangdong. Wu Longsheng’s father declined to change his nationality, therefore he and his wife took their seven children back to the PRC in February 1960. After coming back, every year when Chinese New Year was approaching, Wu’s elder sister and his aunt who still lived in Indonesia would send 1,000 yuan to subsidize the daily needs of this big family. Although 1,000 yuan was a huge sum of money at that time, Wu’s mother still needed to plan carefully where to spend every yuan because the Wu family was “big.”⁷⁴ In the same year, a fifteen-year-old teenager named Guo Jingren, with his younger sister, came to China to pursue higher education. Guo’s parents stayed in Rengat, a city in Riau province of Indonesia, operating a small coffee shop. After Guo and his sister went to China, Guo’s father would send each of them 300 HK dollars every few months, equal to seventy to eighty yuan. The monthly expenses for Guo were about 18 yuan, including 12 yuan for meals and the rest for stamps and other daily use.⁷⁵ The remittances that Guo received were just enough for his daily expenses, and there was no extra money to purchase anything in the overseas Chinese stores.⁷⁶

The average living standard of most transnational households in the late 1950s and early 1960s shows that domestic overseas Chinese as a group did not benefit evenly from this special supply institution tailored for them.⁷⁷ If it was good enough for most remittance recipients to have three meals a day with the “meagre” remittances they received, then who could patronize overseas Chinese stores to purchase those scarce consumer goods? Upper-middle class overseas Chinese could afford it. The establishment

⁷⁴ Wu Longsheng, oral interview. June 20, 2019 in Quanzhou.

⁷⁵ Guo Jingren, oral interview. June 19, 2019 in Quanzhou.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ However, in general, the purchasing power of *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* households was higher than urban households without overseas connections. Cadres in Shantou researched about the purchasing power of thirteen *qiaojuan* households and eighty ordinary urban households (including workers, cadres and high-level intellectuals), and found that the *qiaojuan* households' purchasing power was 3 percent higher than that of households without overseas relatives. *Qiaojuan* households' expenses on rent, electricity, school fees, and gifts were approximately 22.4 percent of total expenditure, while those same expenses accounted for only 9.6 percent of an ordinary citizen's total expenditure, and 11.9 % for government employees. See “Shantou qiaoshan dengdi qiaohu de goumaili ji qiaohui shiyong qingkuang” [Purchasing power of transnational households in Shantou and Qiaoshan and usage of remittances], April 18, 1957, NBCK.

of overseas Chinese stores shows how the new supply policy towards the overseas Chinese served a minority. When overseas Chinese representatives in Guangzhou proposed to set up a special market for domestic overseas Chinese, they may have only been concerned about their own (upper-middle class) interests rather than the rest of the group.

Overseas Connections in the Famine

The bargain between the state and overseas Chinese was premised on the normal operation of the state's distribution system. When the formal distribution system fell apart during the Great Famine, overseas Chinese sent more parcels to supplement the vacancy left by the state. Food parcels became a vital survival strategy for domestic overseas Chinese in a situation of state failure. In general, the PRC discouraged overseas parcels because they affected remittance incomes. Yet, during the Great Famine, the state had to depend on relief food parcels from overseas Chinese. Overseas parcels were permitted and encouraged by authorities.

Some articles and academic works briefly discuss the situation of famine in Fujian, but barely mention how overseas connections played a role during the famine. According to Yang Jisheng, almost 180,000 died because of famine in Fujian. Longyan, a mountainous area in Fujian, was most severely affected. But even so, in contrast to those provinces hit hard by the famine, the damage caused by the famine in Fujian, especially the coastal area, was relatively minimal.⁷⁸ Based on oral interviews, Ralph Thaxton notes that eating raw crops and raw sweet potato in the fields was a common practice during the famine in Rancu Village in Xianyou County, Fujian province.⁷⁹

In his book about gifts, Yan Yunxiang briefly mentions the importance of social network (*guanxi*) for social assistance during the famine. Yan observed that villagers from Xiajia in Heilongjiang province who maintained good relationships with people

⁷⁸ Yang Jisheng (杨继绳), *Mubei: Zhongguo liushi niandai dajihuang jishi* 墓碑：中国六十年代大饥荒纪实 [Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962] (Hong Kong: Tiandi, 2008), 1: 303–305.

⁷⁹ Ralph Thaxton, “How the Great Leap Forward Famine Ended in Rural China: ‘Administrative Intervention’ versus Peasant Resistance”, in *Eating Bitterness*, 262.

from nearby villages were able to receive more food from them, and were lucky to avoid starvation.⁸⁰ Similar to the function of *guanxi* in famine, overseas connections were crucial for *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* to get through the famine.

By early 1959, famine broke out in several provinces, and gradually developed into a national crisis in the following two years. People's lives were deteriorating and the dissatisfaction with the food policy spread from urban centres to the countryside.

Qiaojuan and *guiqiao* were no exception. They wanted desperately to go abroad. For example, eight to nine thousand *qiaojuan* from Jinjiang County were trying to leave the country or flee to Hong Kong because of food shortage. A person from Sucuo Commune in Jinjiang County said, "in the past, overseas Chinese hoped to return to their ancestral homeland when they were getting older, whereas, in the present time, people who only had distant relatives abroad also longed to go abroad because of hunger."⁸¹ Most of the population in Jinjiang Prefecture depended on the state's grain provision. There were 4 million people in the prefecture relying on complete or partial state provision of grains, amounting to nearly 80 percent of the total population.⁸² However, the grain supplies in the area had dwindled since May 1959, let alone providing extra commodities for the remittance recipients.⁸³ Many areas in the prefecture reduced the grain (细粮) rations from 24 *jin* to only 15 *jin* per person per month.⁸⁴

At the end of 1959, with the food shortage in Guangdong and Fujian deepening, the central government permitted residents of Hong Kong and Macau and overseas Chinese to send food parcels of maximum two pounds to their family members.⁸⁵ From

⁸⁰ Yan Yunxiang (阎云翔), *Liwu de liudong: yige Zhongguo cunzhuang zhong de huhui yuanze yu shehui wangluo* 礼物的流动：一个中国村庄的互惠原则与社会网络 [The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Network in A Chinese Village] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2017), 99–103.

⁸¹ "Jinjiang zhuanqu liangshi jinzhang hou chuxian de xin qingkuang" 晋江专区粮食紧张后出现的新情况 [New situation appeared in Jinjiang Prefecture after shortage of grains]. May 26, 1959. NBCK.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*, 161; Zhonggong Fujian sheng youdian guanli dangzu [The Party Core Group of Fujian Provincial Postal and Telecommunication Administration], "Guanyu liji shuyun toudi huaqiao baoguo de baogao" [Report on how to dispatch parcels sent from overseas Chinese efficiently]. April 8, 1961. FJPA. 0179-008-0044-0157.

1960, the food parcels sent from Hong Kong, Macau, and Southeast Asia increased dramatically. Since the end of 1960, the customs in Fujian province each day could receive more than 200 bags of parcels mailed from abroad; and 1,000 bags weighing more than 10 tons in total came from Bao'an County, the border between Guangdong and Hong Kong. According to official statistics, the amount of parcels mailed to Fujian in 1961 was 22 times of the previous year, among which food parcels made up the largest share, about 70 percent, parcels containing fabric and clothes accounted for 20 percent, and the rest were medicine.⁸⁶ On the national scale, there were nearly 15 million individual food parcels weighing two pounds each sent from Southeast Asia in 1961, followed by an additional 6.2 million food parcels in the first half of 1962.⁸⁷

The efficiency of parcel delivery was crucial in famine relief. Both the central and local governments viewed the fast delivery of relief supplies from overseas as a political task, looking for ways to improve the efficiency of parcel transportation. Because the quantity of parcels was overwhelming, a meeting held by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission in Guangzhou in March 1961 proposed allowing Hong Kong-based provision companies to set up food parcel delivery depots in major *qiaoxiang*.⁸⁸ Following instructions from OCAC, the Fujian provincial government set up express entry for overseas parcels, and ships of Hong Kong-based provision companies could pass unobstructed through the two largest ports in the province, Xiamen and Fuzhou.⁸⁹ As a result of lack of labour, vehicles, and space, the Fujian Provincial Postal and Telecommunication Administration (FPPTA), still felt stressed in dealing with a surfeit of parcels. The FPPTA's cadres asked for help in a report submitted to the provincial and local Party committees. According to this report, 80 percent of parcels that arrived in Xiamen port were distributed to counties in Jinjiang Prefecture, weighing over 30 tons,

⁸⁶ Fujian sheng huaqiao shiwu weiyuan hui 福建省华侨事务委员会 [Fujian Provincial Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee], "Fujian sheng linian lai youbao lianyun xiedai jinkou wupin tongji biao" 福建省历年来邮包联运携带进口物品统计包 [The statistical table of parcels and goods carried or mailed through combined transport connections to Fujian province for years]. FJPA. 0148-002-1670-0085.

⁸⁷ Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*, 136.

⁸⁸ FJPA, 0179-008-0044-0157; Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*, 161.

⁸⁹ FJPA, 0179-008-0044-0157.

and thus the highway between Xiamen and Quanzhou became one of the busiest roads in the province.⁹⁰ Additionally, the report suggested establishing a simple warehouse of 1,500 square meters in Fuzhou and Xiamen to store packages.⁹¹

Food parcels mailed from abroad can be considered an external supply system which supplemented the internal one that was paralyzed by the famine. During the famine, the relief effort of Chinese authorities still prioritized the major cities over the countryside. The central government transferred grain from countryside to cities to prevent the rural famine from turning into an urban crisis, which aggravated famine in rural areas. Only when food supplies in the major cities had reached crisis level at the end of 1961, did the central government decide to import grain to feed parts of the urban populations.⁹² Food parcels from overseas Chinese formed another kind of grain import, but through personal connections, and arrived earlier and more promptly to their domestic relatives. It was a blessing for those *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* whose overseas relatives sent food parcels to save them from starvation when millions of people were suffering from the famine, waiting for help from the government.

New returnees also benefitted from overseas connections in another way during the famine. In early 1960, the PRC still welcomed more than 100,000 overseas Chinese from Indonesia to settle down in China. PRC customs relaxed its management of goods carried by overseas Chinese. The unprecedented influx of overseas Chinese from Indonesia and the outbreak of the famine played a decisive role in relaxing the regulation. In early February, a new directive of the State Council stated that all belongings carried by returned overseas Chinese were exempted from tariffs. At the end of 1960, the scope of tax exemption was expanded beyond personal effects. Another new directive issued by the State Council stated that all carried or mailed grain and non-staple food, for both personal and other people's use, could be exempted from tariffs.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Jeremy Brown, *City Versus Country in Mao's China*, 67-69.

⁹³ State Council, "Guowuyuan guanyu jiedai he anzhi guiguo huaqiao de zhishi" 国务院关于接待和安置归国华侨的指示 [Directive of the State Council on reception and resettlement of returned overseas Chinese]. February 2, 1960. HACA.

Entire families relocating to China made up a large part of this wave of return migration. Liang Fusheng's family, for example, was one of them. Liang, who was only ten years old at the time, "returned" with his parents and the other three siblings, recalled that it was a completely new journey as well as a challenge to relocate in a supposed homeland that was actually a strange place. To better prepare for an unpredictable future, his parents brought as many valuable possessions as possible, such as sewing machines, bicycles, and several of his father's handmade wooden cabinets.⁹⁴ Overseas Chinese commonly carried coffee, butter, and bread because of their dietary habits.⁹⁵ Some "returned" overseas Chinese also brought food like grain, edible bird's nests and red ginseng. The authorities may have predicted that piles of belongings would have been difficult to inspect, so they relaxed the regulation. More importantly, as mentioned, the supply system of the PRC was paralyzed during the Great Famine. It was incapable of providing enough grain for people already in China, let alone newcomers. The state, therefore, expected new returnees to feed themselves with their own goods when possible.

Life was still tough for some transnational households even if they had parcels from overseas. Yan Zhi came to China in 1960 as an overseas Chinese student. Her aunt in a village asked her to save the remaining rice that was leftover by her classmates, dried the rice in the sun, and carried the rice back home when she was on vacation. Yan felt confused and asked her aunt why she made such a burdensome request. Yan's aunt told her that the sun-dried rice could be cooked again and eaten by the family. The dried rice, in fact, may have been the last resort for Yan's aunt during the grain shortage. Some family members of overseas Chinese may have had nothing to eat except for brown sugar.⁹⁶ Yan's matrilineal grandmother only had brown sugar in the famine. She died of edema.

⁹⁴ Oral interview with Liang Fusheng, June 16, 2019. Liang's father was born in Xinhui County, Guangdong Province and went to Indonesia in 1926. Liang's mother was born in Indonesia and never came to China. They were supposed to settle down in Xinhui County or anywhere in Guangdong Province in 1960, but his father wrote a letter to his family members in Xinhui without hearing any response. They decided to obey the distribution of the government resettling in Quanzhou, Fujian.

⁹⁵ Wu Longsheng, oral interview over WeChat, November 2, 2019.

⁹⁶ Oral interview with Yan Zhi, June 15, 2019

Special Pass: Remittance Coupons

To privilege domestic overseas Chinese in the centralized distribution system, the state also created special coupons for them. In 1958, the Fujian Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee created a remittance coupon (*qiaohuiquan* 侨汇券) that was later used nationwide for the whole Mao era and the early period of reform.⁹⁷ Whenever overseas Chinese sent remittances to their relatives through the official channel, recipients could receive remittance coupons of an equivalent value. The recipients had to show their coupons when they checked out in overseas Chinese stores.

The authorities invented remittances coupons for administrative considerations. First, the remittance coupon was the product of the widespread shortage. Like other socialist countries, the CCP tried to monopolize production and distribution, which caused woeful shortages.⁹⁸ The limited materials would be distributed to those who the state considered more crucial to building socialism. The authorities used remittance coupons to further narrow down the scope of special treatment and ensure adequate supply.⁹⁹ The remittance coupon was also an approach used by the CCP to reduce the odds that overseas Chinese would exchange foreign currency on black markets. According to the logic of the new supply policy, as the remittance coupon became the only way to get for extra supplies, *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* would encourage their relatives to send money back through the official channel.¹⁰⁰

The remittance coupon also represented the special status of *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*. The creation of remittance coupons helped to distinguish remittance recipients from those who did not have remittances. This boundary, however, was far from clear, because the coupons could be transferred and sold by remittance recipients. Some people used remittance coupons to make a profit. In Nan'an County, which was part of Jinjiang

⁹⁷ The later coupons were called “*waihuiquan*” (外汇券) but served the same function of collecting foreign cash in exchange for coupons that could be used as special high-end shops. The later coupons were not limited by time and place in the way that *qiaohuiquan* were.

⁹⁸ Thomas B. Gold, “Urban Private Business in China.” *Studies in Comparative Communism* 23, no. 2/3 (1989): 187-201.

⁹⁹ HACA, 0082-002-032.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Prefecture, a remittance coupon worth 100 yuan could be sold for 30 to 35 yuan.¹⁰¹ Speculators would collect coupons, purchase the hot-selling products and sell them to people who did not have access to these stores. Some remittance recipients would give extra coupons to help their friends, distant relatives, and villagers. Those who did not have overseas connections and had never received remittances became the indirect beneficiaries of the preferential policy because of their connections with *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*.

Every remittance coupon had its own expiration date, lasting for only several months, and could only be used in specific areas. In practice, the supply standards varied in different places even within the same administrative area. In Jinjiang Prefecture, conversion rates for grains were different in Yongchun County and Nan'an County. In Yongchun, a 100-yuan remittance coupon could be exchanged for 3 kilograms of grains; while in Nan'an County, a coupon with same value could only be exchanged for 2 kilograms of grains. The overseas Chinese in Nan'an preferred to exchange grains in Yongchun, which affected the grain supply of the latter. The same situation also existed in other counties. To avoid chaos, Jinjiang Prefecture, therefore, ruled that all subordinate counties must follow the supply standard set up by the prefecture.¹⁰² Setting various limits on the remittances coupons was not only for administrative convenience. More importantly, these restrictions aimed to urge *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* to use their coupons as quickly as possible. After extracting remittances of overseas Chinese by pegging the value of RMB abnormally high, the state wanted the relatives of overseas Chinese to consume their every yuan in state-owned stores. The state only granted benefits to domestic overseas Chinese after carefully balancing state interests, so as not to undermine its share of remittance incomes.

¹⁰¹ Fujian sheng Jinjiang zhuanqu guiguo huaqiao lianhe hui 福建省晋江专区归国华侨联合会 [Returned Overseas Chinese Association in Jinjiang Prefecture], "Qiaoqing fanying" 侨情反映 [Reactions of overseas Chinese]. November 14, 1962. HCAC. 0034-002-000.

¹⁰² "Guanyu tongyi qiaohui liangshi gongying biao zhun de tongzhi" 关于统一侨汇粮食供应标准的通知 [Notice on unifying the standard of grain rations provided for remittance recipients]. March 27, 1959. QZMA.



Figure 3. Jinjiang Prefecture (1958)

The state set a relatively low conversion rate for remittance coupons. This could be first attributed to the ambivalent attitudes of the state towards overseas Chinese. On the one hand, to attract more remittances, the state aimed to distribute more everyday commodities to the remittance recipients; on the other hand, it was reluctant to give too many preferential treatments to recipients. In practice, the state kept this delicate balance by adjusting the conversion rate of remittance coupons. The supply ability of the state also caused the low conversion rate. In some circumstances, supply shortages made the state unable to fulfill its promises. The supply department could not provide enough food that *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* desperately needed, such as fish, non-staples, and pork. Since 1957, supply shortage caused the decline of remittance incomes. The massive influx of parcels during the famine also further shrunk remittance incomes. In 1962, the total amount of remittances plummeted from 75 million in 1961 to only 50 million US dollar. Hui'an County only received 0.34 million dollars from remittances in 1962, amounting to 19.11 percent of their planned amount.¹⁰³ With the economy gradually recovering in 1962, the state decided to raise conversion rates to boost remittance incomes.

¹⁰³ Hui'an xian renwei qiaowu ke (惠安县人委侨务科), Hui'an xian renmin yinhang (惠安县

Table 1. Total Remittance Incomes (1957-1962) unit: million¹⁰⁴

Year	Remittance Incomes	Year	Remittance Incomes
1950	105.5	1957	138
1951	186.3	1958	117.4
1952	182.9	1959	89.2
1953	144.5	1960	117.6
1954	131.2	1961	75.3
1955	143.8	1962	50.9
1956	139.4		

Although it was not a decisive factor, complaints of *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* also contributed to an increase in the conversion rate. Despite the implementation of the new supply scheme in 1957, *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* never stopped complaining about shortages. Some *guiqiao* griped about not having eaten pork for several months, saying that they had almost forgotten the taste of it.¹⁰⁵ Marriage and the funeral items, like beds, cotton fabrics and coffins, were also difficult to procure. Some *qiaojuan* therefore commented that the government had bragged about their supply capacity without basis in recent years.¹⁰⁶ Many *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* were also unsatisfied with the low conversion rate of remittance coupons. A family member of overseas Chinese complained that “the grain provided based on the amount of remittance coupons was not much, and the price of grain on the free market is not cheap as well, therefore, overseas food parcels have

人民银行), Hui'an xian shangye ju (惠安县商业局), Hui'an xian liangshi ju (惠安县粮食局), Hui'an xian gongxiao hezuo she (惠安县供销合作社) [Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Hui'an County Government, People's Bank of China (Hui'an County Branch), Commercial Bureau of Hui'an County, Grain Bureau of Hui'an County, Supply and Marketing Cooperatives of Hui'an County], “Guanyu guanche guowuyuan he shengrenwei dui zengjia ping qiaohui yu xin guiguo huaqiao wuzi gongying de zhishi de lianhe tongzhi” 关于贯彻国务院和省人委对增加凭侨汇与新归国华侨物资供应指示的联合通知 [Joint notice on implementing State Council and Fujian provincial government's directive on increasing supplies for remittance recipients and new returned overseas Chinese]. July 15, 1962. HACA. 0079-001-015.

¹⁰⁴ Ren, Guixiang (任贵祥), “Xin Zhongguo sanshinian qiaohui zhengce yanjiu” 新中国三十年侨汇政策研究 [Research on remittance policies in the New China, 1950-1980], *Jinlin Daxue shehui kexue xuebao*, no. 4 (2020): 186–199.

¹⁰⁵ HACA. 0082-0066-0052.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

become the best way to obtain grains.”¹⁰⁷ This family member continued, “We will ask for more remittances as long as the goods supply could meet our demands.”¹⁰⁸ Domestic overseas Chinese also informed their overseas relatives of the supply situation in letters. It was highly probable that overseas Chinese made their decisions about sending more goods or remittances based on the information they received from their family members. Government policy makers at the central level had to consider the grumblings of domestic overseas Chinese because they had potential to affect remittance incomes. This was part of the bargaining.

In early 1962, the central government decided to raise the amount of remittance coupons in the name of “meeting the daily demand” of *guiqiao* and *qiaojuan*. Following the central government’s direction, the Fujian provincial government issued an order, claiming that “while the nationwide supply was still insufficient, (the government) was determined to make every effort to ensure sufficient goods supply for *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*.”¹⁰⁹ Specifically, the provincial government required that local cadres must provide *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* with enough pork. If the pork supply was still lacking in some places, local cadres should substitute fish and eggs for pork. Different types of coupons were now allowed to be exchanged, which had been prohibited prior to the new standard, for example, 0.5 kilograms of pork equaled 2 kilograms of rice. Following the new regulation, the Hui’an County government increased the conversion rate of remittance coupons. Every remittance coupon worth 100 yuan could now purchase 15 kilograms of grains, 1.5 kilograms of edible oils, 1 kilogram of pork, 3.33 meters of fabrics, and 0.33 meters of knitwear.¹¹⁰ In addition, high value commodities but not hot

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Fujian sheng renmin weiyuanhui caimao bangong shi 福建省人民委员会财贸办公室 [Finance and Commerce Office of Fujian Provincial People’s Committee], “Guanyu ping qiaohui zheng zengjia qiaojuan guiqiao wuzi gongying banfa de buchong guiding” 关于凭侨汇证增加侨眷归侨物资供应办法的补充规定 [The supplementary regulation on increasing supply of goods toward overseas Chinese based on the amount of remittances]. April 17, 1962. HACA. 0078-002-005.

¹¹⁰ Hui’an xian renwei qiaowuke (惠安县人委员侨务科), Hui’an xian renmin yinhang (惠安县人民银行), Hui’an xian shangye ju (惠安县商业局), Hui’an xian liangshiju (惠安县粮食局), Hui’an xian gongxiao hezuo she (惠安县供销合作社) [Overseas Chinese Affair Office of Hui’an County People’s Committee, People’s Bank of China (Hui’an County Branch), Commerce Bureau of Hui’an County, Grains Bureau of Hui’an County and Hui’an County

sellers could be purchased with a 100-yuan remittance coupon, including coffins, brand-name radios, electric fans, sewing machines, record players, bicycles, ginseng, and tweed coats.¹¹¹ In other words, these products were cheaper than before. The exchange rate of remittance coupons was changed in line with the altering of remittance incomes. When remittance income declined, authorities would slightly increase the conversion rate. The conversion rate of remittance coupons became another arena in which overseas Chinese could bargain with the state. For most of the time, the state used this lever more adeptly; however, it could also be a card that the overseas Chinese used to bargain with the state.

Qianjuan and *guiqiao* in Hui'an County felt delighted to know about the increased rations, and disseminated this news much quicker than the official propaganda. Huang Bangrong, who lived in the Dongyuan area in Hui'an County, could not help sharing the great news with his old friend Huang Baosheng when they met on the street. Huang Bangrong said to his friend ecstatically, "the remittance worth 100 yuan can exchange for 80 *jin* of rice now! Write to your son immediately and tell him to send more remittances rather than goods."¹¹² In April 1962, after hearing about the new policy, Zhang Zancheng who previously asked his father abroad for some items to prepare for his wedding wrote to his father again, and asked him to send remittances rather than goods.¹¹³ In a discussion meeting (*zuotanhui*) specifically targeted at people with overseas connections, Sun Liangji, a representative of *qiaojuan*, considered the new policy as special treatment toward *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*, calling on *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* to get more remittances for building socialism.¹¹⁴

Not all *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* had positive attitudes toward the new policy. "Because the supply policy towards overseas Chinese was changeable," the cadre wrote, "a small part of *guiqiao* and *qiaojuan* were suspicious of the reliability and veracity of

Supply and Marketing Cooperative], "guanyu guanche guowuyuan he shengrenwei dui zengjia ping qiaohui yu xinguiguo huaqiao wuzi gongying de zhishi de lianhe tongzhi" 关于贯彻国务院和省人委对增加凭侨汇与新归国华侨物资供应的指示的联合通知 [Joint notice on implementing the directive issued by the State Council and People's Committee on increasing supply of goods towards overseas Chines] (July 15, 1962). HACA. 0079-001-015.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² HACA. 0013-001-0043-0060.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

the new standard, questioning whether it would be valid for a long time.”¹¹⁵ “A small part” was a euphemism used to indicate that there were more domestic overseas Chinese who doubted the authenticity of the new policy. According to the report, these *guiqiao* and *qiaojuan* suspected the new rule for three reasons. Part of them thought that it was just an expedient strategy of the government based on an economic calculation. They speculated, “Because of the decreasing remittances, the government can do nothing but increase the ration for the time being. In the future, if remittance income is back to normal, the ration will not be set at such a high level.”¹¹⁶ Some considered raising the ration as a trick by the government. “The grain and non-staple food mailed from abroad caused the decrease of remittances,” a *guiqiao* commented, “the state, however, could not forbid overseas Chinese to mail these goods to their relatives, so the officials have to increase the ration to reduce the import goods.”¹¹⁷ From the perspective of feasibility, some *qiaojuan* thought the new standard was unworkable because the state did not have enough pork and grain.¹¹⁸ Considering that the CCP tended to exaggerate its supply capacity, making empty promises to stimulate the remittance income, these misgivings were all grounded.

The reflections of cadres and people without overseas connections were different from those with connections. Some peasants in Hui’an County considered this new policy as a manifestation that the state aided the rich while discarding the poor. A peasant complained in 1962, “Huaqiao [referring to *guiqiao* and *qiaojuan*] will be richer than before because of the new policy!”¹¹⁹ Four peasants surrounded Huang Bingduan, a relative of overseas Chinese, when they saw Huang receive a remittance coupon worth 100 yuan. These peasants commented indignantly, “Being *huaqiao* is great! They have enough food to eat and clothes to wear. Being a peasant, in contrast, is miserable. We are starving to death but never get the extra supply!”¹²⁰ Some local cadres were worried about how to propagandize the new policy towards the masses. He Peiyu, a cadre from

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Zhangban Commune, Hui'an County, who took charge of trade and financial affairs, stared at a new poster in front of him, and commented, "It does not make sense that the overseas Chinese are so special."¹²¹ A staff member at the Dongyuan grain distribution station (*liangzhan*, 粮站) also felt confused about the new regulation, saying, "I cannot figure out (the rationale behind the regulation), so I cannot explain it to the masses if they ask for an explanation."¹²² An accountant of the sixth production team in the Neicuo village did the math, trying to determine the consequence of the new rule on agricultural production. This accountant pondered, "There are twenty-four households in the sixth production team, among which eight households have no overseas connections and fourteen are transnational households. If the ration increases, there is no need for these transnational households to do agricultural work, and the remaining households with only nine laborers need to cultivate ten acres. How can it possible to have a good harvest?" Compared with *qiaowu* practitioners, cadres whose job duties did not cover overseas Chinese affairs were apathetic about the new stipulation. From these complaints, it is clear that people without overseas connections did not distinguish carefully between various classes of overseas Chinese. In their view, overseas Chinese were homogenous as a group: all of them were rich and privileged. Overall, overseas connections did give *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* better bargaining power in access to goods. This advantage, however, only belonged to a small group of overseas Chinese.

Conclusion

To attract more remittances, the state provided remittance recipients with exclusive access to consumer goods and foods in the formal distribution system. Whereas the state dominated the bargain process most of the time, overseas Chinese never passively accepted official regulations. To maximize their own interests, namely to obtain more daily necessities they needed, overseas Chinese at home and abroad would use remittances as leverage, prompting the state to raise the conversion rates of coupons. The state had to take *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*'s complaints, which would potentially affect

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

remittance income, into consideration when revising the current policy. Goods, as a bargaining tool, could not only be used by the state, but also by overseas Chinese. Overseas Chinese's access to the capitalist world enabled them to have more channels to buy products that would otherwise be difficult to get in a socialist country. When the supply shortage hit their domestic relatives' daily life badly from 1959 to 1961, they mailed goods parcels directly rather than remittances. When the famine eased, the state realized that the increasing amount of parcels had reduced remittance incomes; therefore, the state tended to provide overseas Chinese with more commodities in the formal distribution system.

The creation of a preferential group within a socialist state seems to collide with its ideologically-based politics which regarded egalitarianism as the ultimate end. Yet, when the state tried to use the transnational experience, capital, and access to strategic materials of overseas Chinese, the socialist ideals could be shelved temporarily for more urgent practical demands.

Chapter 2. Informal Distribution Network: Regulations and People's Desires

One day in September 1961, an overseas Chinese, Lin Shuang, passed Chinese customs inspection with 250 kilograms of ammonium sulphate (*feitianfen*), a kind of fertilizer, and 9 kilograms of saccharin without paying tariffs.¹²³ After coming back to his birthplace, Hui'an County in Quanzhou, he sold these goods on the market and earned 3,115 yuan in total. This was a huge amount of money at that time, equivalent to eight years of living expenses of a worker in Quanzhou.¹²⁴ Unluckily for him, this private trading was discovered by officials of the Hui'an County Tax Bureau. Lin was accused of illegal profiteering and tax evasion and was required by the tax bureau to pay tariffs, commodity taxes, and other extra taxes based on his total amount of sales. The story of Lin was by no means an exception in Quanzhou. Living in a major emigrant area in which half of its population had overseas connections (predominately with Southeast Asia),¹²⁵ Lin was one of a large group of people there who used their overseas connections, loopholes of the overseas Chinese policy, and the supply shortage in the PRC to make profits, to meet their basic needs, and even desires.¹²⁶

For overseas Chinese at home, having preferential status in the centralized distribution system was not their only way to get access to scarce goods. Compared with other preferential groups in the formal distribution system, overseas Chinese had another advantage: access to foreign markets. This special access enabled them to carry or mail

¹²³ Ammonium sulphate is a chemical fertilizer widely used in the Republican and People's Republic periods for agricultural production. It was a major import product in the port of Xiamen during the Republican period. The overseas Chinese were the major participants in the international market to import "*feitianfen*".

¹²⁴ In 1958, the worker's average salary in Quanzhou was about 28 *yuan* to 30 *yuan*. See, Quanzhou shi wujia zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, ed., *Quanzhoushi wujia zhi* [Quanzhou gazetteer on prices] (Quanzhou: Fujiansheng hui'anxian yinshuachang, 1993), 535.

¹²⁵ Quanzhou shi huaqiao zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 泉州市华侨志编纂委员会, ed., *Quanzhoushi huaqiao zhi* 泉州市华侨志 [Quanzhou gazetteer on overseas Chinese] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 1996), 78.

¹²⁶ Hui'an xian shuiwuju 惠安县税务局[Hui'an county tax bureau], "Dui huaqiao he qiaojuanheishi chushou yanghuo jianyi zhengshou linshangshui de baogao" 对华侨和侨眷黑市出售洋货征收临商税的报告 [Report on levying supplementary commercial taxes on returned overseas Chinese and the family members of overseas Chinese who have sold the goods in the black market], November 11, 1961. Hui'an County Archive (HACA).0077-002-030.

import goods to the PRC, creating their own supply chain that was to some extent independent of the PRC supply system of the PRC. Asymmetrical resources between China and other countries were essential to the existence of this supply chain. Navigating this asymmetry, overseas Chinese could provide residents of socialist China with scarce consumer goods and food. These asymmetrical resources, however, could either be a helper or a problem for the PRC. On the one hand, this asymmetry could sometimes supplement the formal supply system when the formal one malfunctioned, as it did during the Great Famine. However, goods carried or mailed through the asymmetry could also challenge the CCP's control over the market and reduce the state's remittance income as well.

This chapter will focus on cross-border goods, meaning consumer items or food carried or mailed by overseas Chinese or residents from Hong Kong and Macau.¹²⁷ I argue that overseas connections helped to constitute informal, underground distribution networks of cross-border goods. This informal distribution network also created a group of what I call “privileged ordinary people” in *qiaoxiang*. Privileged ordinary people included domestic overseas Chinese who were prioritized in the formal distribution system and those non-elite individuals who had access to scarce goods because of their personal relations with *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*. I will show how privileged ordinary people responded to loopholes in overseas Chinese policies and coped with the state's control over cross-border goods. Unlike the last chapter, the tactics that overseas Chinese used to access goods discussed in this chapter did not proceed in a lawful, state-prescribed context. In contrast, overseas Chinese deployed different techniques that were often in between legal and illegal zones to circumvent state regulations or exploit the loopholes of state policies.

¹²⁷ At the conference on Material Culture in Mao's China, Denise Ho also mentioned about “cross-border objects” in her research. “Cross-Border Objects: Goods, Packages, and Material Culture as Politics.” September 14, 2018. https://ceas.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/MCMC_Abstracts%20for%20Website.pdf

Forming Informal Distribution Networks

Using Policy Loopholes

Preferential treatment toward overseas Chinese extended to their luggage. To provide convenience for overseas Chinese, the General Administration of Customs, Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee and the Ministry of Foreign Trade promulgated preferential treatment for belongings carried by the returned overseas Chinese. Travel restrictions and duty-free limits on overseas Chinese's luggage were further relaxed in 1956 when the CCP's *youdai* approach toward overseas Chinese was at its height.¹²⁸ In February 1956, a document issued by the Ministry of Foreign Trade stipulated that overseas Chinese who had resided abroad for more than one year and wanted to resettle in the PRC could import duty-free goods worth 150 yuan. A whole family prepared to settle down in China could carry 300 yuan of duty-free goods per person.¹²⁹ Only the excess portion of the goods would be charged taxes. Overseas Chinese could also choose to return with such goods as wristwatches, cameras, and fountain pens without paying any extra fees.¹³⁰

The policy easing inevitably created more opportunities for illegal practices. An official document that the Guangdong provincial government shared with its counterparts in Fujian mentioned that more and more overseas Chinese and visitors from Hong Kong and Macau carried goods to the PRC for making profits. According to the document, around 50,000 overseas Chinese entered the country via different ports of entry in Guangdong in 1957, and each individual might have carried at least 1,000 yuan of goods.

¹²⁸ Wen Wei Po (文汇报), "Yanfang gangao lüke xingli wupin haiguan fangkuan xinbanfa quanwen gongbu" 验放港澳旅客行李物品 海关放宽办法全文公布 [Customs of the PRC relaxed duty-free limits on overseas Chinese's luggage]. February 2, 1956. HKBU Special Library.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Shanghai haiguan zhi bianzuan weiyuan hui 上海海关志编纂委员会 ed., *Shanghai haiguan zhi* 上海海关志 [Shanghai customs gazetteer] (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue yuan chubanshe, 1997). Shtong.gov.cn; Guangzhou haiguan bianzhi bangongshi 广州海关编志办公室, ed., *Guangzhou haiguan zhi* 广州海关志 [Guangzhou customs gazetteer] (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1997), 183.

The number of visitors from Hong Kong and Macau was also massive, about one million. Among these visitors, the official document estimated, 42 percent were parallel traders who relied on smuggling for a living. In the first half of 1957, cases of smuggling involving visitors from Hong Kong and Macau reached 57,490 and the total value of these goods was more 10 million yuan, far exceeding the sum of 1956.¹³¹ An overseas Chinese from Malaysia, Cheng Shoulin, for example, always kept his eyes on the market price changes of consumer goods in the PRC. He organized a group of people to purchase items in Malaysia and sell them when they were more profitable on the market.¹³² Some overseas Chinese had more boldness and valued the relaxation as a great opportunity to make profits. An overseas Chinese was found to have with him 100,000 knives, 48,000 pen nibs, 1,800 pencils and 98 kilograms of lighter flints; another returnee brought 48 bicycles, which far exceeded the duty-free limits.¹³³ I did not get access to official statistics of the Fujian Customs, but one thing was for sure: smuggling activities in Fujian were as prevalent as in Guangdong, if not more so; otherwise, cadres of the Guangdong provincial government would not have been sending reports to their counterparts in Fujian. A report from *Internal Reference* (Neibu cankao) revealed that the private trading of cross-border goods was prevalent in Fujian. From January to August 1957, there were 956 overseas Chinese coming back to Fujian, and they carried consumer goods weighing more than two hundred *dun* (200,000 kilogram) per month. Moving through experienced middlemen (*jingjiren*), most of these consumer goods flowed into the black market as soon as they entered mainland China.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Guangdong sheng renmin weiyuanhui 广东省人民委员会 [Guangdong Provincial Government], “Guanyu guiguo huaqiao Gang’Ao lüke bianyanqu qunzong xiedai wupin jinkou chushou mouli ji zousi wenti de zuotanhui jilu” 关于归国华侨港澳旅客边沿区群众携带物品进口出售牟利及走私问题的座谈会记录 [Meeting record on returned overseas Chinese, residents from Macau and Hong Kong, and masses living in border areas who carried smuggling goods to make profits]. September 12, 1957. FJPA. 205-03-412-014.

¹³² Zhongguo renmin yinhang Hui’an zhihang 中国人民银行惠安支行 [People’s Bank of China (Hui’an County Branch)], “Qiaohui gongzuo cankao ziliao” 侨汇工作参考资料 [Working reference materials on remittance of overseas Chinese]. September 23, 1957. HACA. 0082-002-032.

¹³³ *Qiaowubao* no. 10 (October 1958): 39, cited in Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People’s Republic of China*, 111.

¹³⁴ “Fujian guiqiao daihui wuzi heishi maimai yanzhong” 福建归侨带回物资黑市买卖严重 [Returnees brought consumer goods to China and sold them on the black market]. May 13, 1957. NBCK.

Overseas Chinese responded differently to the State Council's further relaxation on their personal effects in 1960. Some *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao* took this opportunity to ask their relatives and friends overseas to buy wristwatches. Some were more cautious about the relaxation. They wrote letters, made phone calls, or even visited the office of the Fujian Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (FJOCAC) to confirm the policy relaxation.¹³⁵ In June 1960, an overseas Chinese in Singapore sent an anonymous letter to the Commission reporting an alleged smuggling case. In the letter, a woman named Cai Ximei was accused of being a habitual speculator who was ready to take advantage of this relaxation and make profits again. According to the informant, Cai had earned 30,000 to 40,000 yuan in selling smuggled goods in 1956. In May 1960, she again took advantage of policy relaxing, purchasing a great batch of consumer goods in Singapore with overseas Chinese's remittances.¹³⁶ It was weird and unusual that someone wrote from Singapore to report a petty smuggling activity that happened in the PRC. This informer was likely either a zealous Chinese patriot who was ready to return to China in the near future or a business competitor of Cai who seized the chance to attack his opponent. The relaxed regulations did effectively alleviate the supply shortage in *qiaoxiang*. In fact, not everyone intended to make profits from the policy relaxation. As mentioned, most overseas Chinese mailed relief food parcels to their domestic relatives. Relaxing duty-free limits in 1960 alleviated the supply shortage in the home area of overseas Chinese, and provided convenience for new returnees as well. The relaxation also brought about more incidents of smuggling.¹³⁷

Customs officials were well aware that the increase of smuggling incidents was coupled with the relaxation of policies. After policy relaxation in 1956, *Internal Reference*, official documents, and *Ta Kung Pao* all mentioned simultaneously an

¹³⁵ HACA. 0054-002-005.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ State Council, "Guowuyuan guanyu jiaqiang guiguo huaqiao ji Gang' Ao tongbao xiedai he youji jinkou wupin de guanli de zhishi" 国务院关于加强归国华侨及港澳同胞携带和邮寄进口物品的管理的指示 [Directive of State Council on strengthening the management on the imported goods that were carried by returnees and Hong Kong and Macao compatriot]. May 14, 1962.

increase in smuggling cases in Guangdong and Fujian.¹³⁸ On June 19, 1957, *Ta Kung Pao* published an article in a conspicuous position to remind smugglers and overseas Chinese that previous attempts to exploit the special status of overseas Chinese to bring in smuggled goods had not survived inspections.¹³⁹ Given *Ta Kung Pao*'s political stance, this article was more of an alert than a piece of news coverage, warning overseas Chinese not to take risks to bring in illegal goods. On the one hand, as Philip Thai notes, the PRC Customs aimed to crack down on smuggling, parting ways with its predecessor in the Republic of China by effectively supervising trade.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, providing preferential status for overseas Chinese would increase smuggling incidents. The PRC's officials, therefore, faced a conundrum: how to reduce the frequency of smuggling while allowing overseas Chinese to bring more duty-free products.

Increasing "Trafficking" and Decreasing Remittances

CCP's cadres paid special attention to a particular type of smuggling: remittance smuggling (*zousi taohui* 走私套汇). In the official definition, remittance smuggling referred to sending remittances over unofficial channels rather than through official ones. The nascent regime received most of its foreign exchange revenue from remittances rather than foreign trade.¹⁴¹ To secure more foreign exchange, the PRC adopted fixed exchange rates, and set the exchange value of RMB artificially high. The real value of a US dollar was about 5 yuan, while the fixed rate that Chinese state banks offered *huaqiao* was only 2.4 yuan.¹⁴² The CCP was not unique in extracting foreign exchange from its overseas compatriots; the Soviet Union also did so at the end of the 1920s when

¹³⁸ See "Guangdong sheng diyi jidu qiaohui bi qunian tongqi xiajiang liangcheng duo" 广东省第一季度侨汇比去年同期下降两成多 [Remittance incomes of first quarter decreased by 20 percent compared to the same period of last year]. April 18, 1957. NBCK; "Fujian guiqiao daihui wuzi heishi maimai yanzhong" 福建归侨带回物资黑市买卖严重 [Returnees brought consumer goods to China and sold them on the black market]. May 13, 1957. NBCK.

¹³⁹ *Ta Kung Pao* (大公报), "Xianggang sixiao liyong huaqiao zousi tuli jun bei chachu" 香港私梟利用华侨走私图利均被查出 [Smuggling incidents were inspected and caught by customs officials]. July 19, 1957.

¹⁴⁰ Philip Thai, *China's War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State, 1842–1965* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 241–244.

¹⁴¹ Jin Li Lim, *The Price and Promise of Specialness*, 202.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

industrialization urgently needed capital.¹⁴³ Remittance smuggling was not unusual in the 1950s and 1960s due to the low exchange rate. Suppressing remittance smuggling, therefore, was a recurring topic that appeared in different official documents, slogans of political campaigns, and propaganda pamphlets. From an official perspective, the state needed a favourable exchange rate to secure one of its few ways to receive foreign currency. After all, extracting foreign exchange from overseas Chinese was much quicker and easier than from foreign trade.

Overseas Chinese were unwilling to bear the unnecessary losses that a fixed exchange rate inflicted on the real value of remittances. Most overseas Chinese sent remittances to support their family members, and they certainly did not want their hard-earned money diminished.¹⁴⁴ Some overseas Chinese, therefore, deployed different methods to avoid losses. Bypassing national banks was one of the most common approaches. Overseas Chinese would give remittances to their friends or relatives who were about to come to the PRC, or to the parallel traders who went back and forth between the PRC, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. Being entrusted, the “returnees” and parallel traders would use these remittances to purchase everyday consumer products abroad and sell them on the domestic market. The money earned from selling these products would then be transferred to recipients of remittances through domestic postal offices.

In some circumstances, the remittance recipients would receive commodities rather than money. An overseas Chinese couple purchased daily products in Singapore with remittances they received from other overseas Chinese, before returning to Putian County in Jinjiang Prefecture. When arriving in Shantou, they sold some of the commodities; the rest were distributed to *qiaojuan* in a production team in Putian. The households of this production team who still had surplus remittances also purchased edible oil and flour directly from this couple.¹⁴⁵ A private transaction like this was

¹⁴³ Elena Osokina, *Sulian de waibin shangdian: weile gongyehua suo xuyao de huangjin* [Gold for Industrialization: Torgsin] (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2020), 146–165.

¹⁴⁴ About 70 percent to 80 percent of remittances were used to support family. See, Quanzhou shi huaqiao zhi bianzuan weiyuan hui 泉州市华侨志编纂委员会, eds., *Quanzhou shi huaqiao zhi* [Gazette on overseas Chinese in Quanzhou] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 1996), 178.

¹⁴⁵ Zhongguo renmin yinhang Jinjiang zhihang 中国人民银行晋江支行 [People’s Bank of China (Jinjiang Prefecture Branch)], “Guanyu huaqiao jinkou wuzi touji taohui diaocha baogao

criminalized as “speculation,” and officially banned in socialist China.¹⁴⁶ Residents from Hong Kong and Macau even hid money within commodities, and consigned someone to carry it. A *qiaojuan* named Shi told local cadres that he received edible oil in which there was 400 yuan.¹⁴⁷ Individuals, as well as certain collectives, engaged in remittance smuggling. Production teams in *qiaoxiang* sold import goods to raise funds for production.¹⁴⁸

For some overseas Chinese, reducing losses by mailing the equivalent value of goods was also an economical and efficient choice. Similar to goods carried by overseas Chinese, the state also imposed several restrictions on mailed goods’ uses, weights, and total values. For goods mailed by overseas Chinese, cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) could not exceed 50 yuan each time and their total value could not exceed 300 yuan in a year. Residents of Hong Kong and Macau could only send parcels once a month to relatives on the mainland. In a propaganda pamphlet, cadres of the Fujian Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee used a question-and-answer format to specifically explain the criteria of goods for personal and household uses. According to the pamphlet, mailing several kilograms of white pepper seeds would exceed the reasonable limits of personal use.¹⁴⁹ Another case from the pamphlet showed that even mailing a piece of upscale dress material that meet the criterion of personal use scope could also be non-compliant, because the dress material was so expensive that it exceeded the limit of the regulated value.¹⁵⁰

It is uncertain whether overseas Chinese knew the detailed regulations, but they

he jianyì” 关于华侨进口物资投机套汇调查报告和建议 [Report on importing overseas Chinese consumer products that caused remittance smuggling]. April 13, 1962. HACA. 0082-002-053.

¹⁴⁶ Considering speculation as a crime was a unique phenomenon in socialist states. In free-market society, it was a major economic activity. Suppressing on private transaction was a way for the state to compete with private traders over resources. Although the state cracked down on private trading, speculation still flourished in a society with chronic shortages of materials. See Elena Osokina, *Sulian de waibin shangdian*, 282.

¹⁴⁷ HACA. 0082-002-053.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Fujian sheng huaqiao shiwu weiyuan hui 福建省华侨事务委员会, “Fan zousi taohui ji huaqiao jinkou wupin guanli ruogan wenti de wenda xiao cezi 反走私套汇及华侨进口物品管理若干问题的问答小册子 [Propaganda pamphlet answering several questions about anti-remittance smuggling and management of overseas Chinese import goods]. November 13, 1964. FJPA. 0148-002-1508-0063.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

may have been vaguely aware of its strictness. To circumvent official limitations, overseas Chinese used different tactics. Some overseas Chinese would split one package into several smaller ones and mail them to different individuals who could be their friends, fellow villagers, or distant relatives in the PRC.¹⁵¹ Being a “fake” recipient was sometimes rewarding.¹⁵² The real recipients would distribute some consumer goods, such as shoes or the clothing fabrics, to the “fake” ones. In a society beset by constant shortages and extreme poverty, these goods were much more valuable than money. In addition, these fake recipients could not get these commodities in a hierarchical distribution system, so they turned to informal distribution networks initiated by overseas Chinese. In some cases, certain overseas Chinese would even forge the names of recipients. The same propaganda pamphlet also criticized overseas Chinese for using this tactic to make profits. A father and his son working as sailors in Hong Kong purchased medicine and clothing fabric with their monthly salaries and separated them into 850 small packages, mailing all the packages to their native place of Lianjiang, a county in northeast Fujian. Most of the mailed goods were sold on the market by the sailor’s wife. As Philip Thai correctly notes, practitioners of smuggling “did their best to minimize violence and thereby avoid any public exposure;” therefore, most often, incidents of smuggling “that left their mark in the archives are there because they were incidents of failure.”¹⁵³ Likewise, the above-mentioned technique could be discovered and documented as remittance smuggling only when a great quantity of mailed goods was sold on the market, involving a huge amount of money. Some overseas Chinese might have considered sending or carrying goods that exceeded the duty-free limits only as a customary practice to provide enough daily necessities for their domestic relatives rather than a tool for profits. Such minor cases would not be recorded in the archive.

Officials had reasons to worry about remittance smuggling. It had an immediate effect on remittance incomes. According to official statistics from the Fujian provincial government, the province’s remittance income in the first quarter of 1962 dropped 63.3 percent compared to the first quarter of 1961.¹⁵⁴ In the first quarter of 1962, remittance

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Philip Thai, *China’s War on Smuggling*, 19.

¹⁵⁴ HACA. 0082-002-053.

incomes of Putian, where parallel traders and returnees frequently carried a large quantity of goods, dropped 87.8 percent compared to that of 1961.¹⁵⁵ Official documents and propaganda pamphlets labelled the behaviour that caused remittance decrease as smuggling, and called overseas Chinese involved in these economic activities speculators, who tried to “hoodwink customs officials and circumvent regulations.”¹⁵⁶ In this sense, the state’s management and regulations over cross-border goods was a method to prevent remittances from plummeting.

Moreover, cadres tried to draw a clear line between speculators and returned overseas Chinese in official documents. The customs officials kept vigilant eyes on those professional speculators and organized smuggling groups who crossed borders several times a year to make profits from sending smuggled goods.¹⁵⁷ By the official standard, overseas Chinese, who were allowed to carry a reasonable amount of goods for personal and household use instead of making profits, were different from these professional speculators.¹⁵⁸ In reality, however, it was quite difficult to distinguish smugglers and overseas Chinese. By the official definition, the behaviour of selling consumer goods carried or mailed by overseas Chinese on the market was also smuggling. Except for passengers who carried excessive amounts of goods, customs officials could not predict in advance who would potentially sell their personal effects just by checking their belongings. In addition, every overseas Chinese could potentially participate in smuggling unconsciously. When they deployed various tactics to bypass official regulations, they made their rational choices based on how to maximize their own and their family members’ interests, and cared less or not at all about the state’s interests. The boundary between legal and illegal was also vague and porous. In response to the outbreak of famine, the authorities welcomed more parcels of goods as a relief effort. However, when smuggling incidences increased following a relaxation of duty-free limits, they tightened regulations promptly. Activity that was once considered compliant became noncompliant after policy tightening.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ FJPA. 0148-002-1508-0063.

¹⁵⁷ HACA, 0082-002-032.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Institution to Control Trading Cross-Border Goods

Customs were just the first institutional checkpoint that the state used to manage and control the import of goods. After import goods entered the borders of the PRC, passing customs inspections, the state established other institutions to prevent goods from being sold on the market and to maintain “socialist economic order.” Overseas Chinese were required to sell their surplus personal effects to trust stores (信托商店) or purchasing stations (*shougouzhàn*, 收购站). In October 1957, following the directive of the State Council, the Fujian provincial government established special branches in Fuzhou, Xiamen, Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in charge of purchasing import goods.¹⁵⁹ Managing imported goods became a more vital issue for the state in 1960 when thousands of overseas Chinese flooded into mainland China. A notice issued by the Ministry of Commerce in 1960 emphasized that goods procurement would be an important task for the long term, and thus commerce bureaus at both provincial and municipal levels in emigrant areas should appoint cadres in charge of this work.¹⁶⁰ The notice also required that purchasing stations should be set up in overseas Chinese gathering places, such as overseas Chinese state farms, guesthouses, overseas Chinese Remedial Schools, and universities.¹⁶¹ The cadres responsible for purchasing the personal effects of overseas Chinese were required to publicize the state’s acquisition policy, to educate the overseas Chinese in patriotism, and to persuade them to sell commodities to the state rather than to unofficial buyers.¹⁶²

To better carry out the acquisition work, the cadres of purchasing stations and state companies regularly visited overseas Chinese Remedial Schools and universities (where most of students were from overseas) to purchase their “unused” products. “Life was

¹⁵⁹ Xiamen shi difangzhi bianzhuan weiyuanhui 厦门市地方志编撰委员会 [Compilation Committee on Xiamen Gazettes], *Xiamen Shizhi di san ce* 厦门市志（第三册） [Amoy Gazette, third volume] (Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 2004), 1838–1839.

¹⁶⁰ Shangye bu wujiaju 商业部物价局, ed., *Wujia wenjian huibian* 物价文件汇编 [Collected materials on price of commodities] (Beijing: Shangye bu wujiju, 1981), 29–32.

¹⁶¹ Overseas Chinese state farms were set up to settle returned overseas Chinese. Overseas Chinese Remedial Schools and universities were set up in the early 1950s in Beijing, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Shantou and other cities to help “returned overseas Chinese students” to improve their Chinese language ability; *Wujia wenjian huibian*, 29–32.

¹⁶² Ibid.

difficult in China back then. We (overseas Chinese students) needed living expenses, so we sold the unused products, such as gold jewelry and bird nests, to the “purchasing stations” (*shougouzhān*) no matter how much they offered. We only needed ten more yuan to live each month. The amount of money we could receive from selling these products was more than one month’s living cost.”¹⁶³

Purchasing stations, however, in some cases led to smuggling. The state aimed to manage and control the mobility of goods by setting up purchasing stations, while the establishment of these stations, in fact, weakened state control. Disparity in prices between the domestic and foreign markets stimulated overseas Chinese to bring in more goods. The commercial departments priced these consumer goods based on the need of the state and the scarcity of the products. The state added 30 to 50 percent above the original price to purchase the consumer goods in urgent need, while the least needed products for state-building would be purchased at their original price.¹⁶⁴ In reality, however, any kind of product, whether strategically important goods or daily consumer commodities, might sell for a much higher price in China than selling abroad. For example, the CIF price of pepper was 100 *yuan* per picul, while purchasing stations would purchase same items for 700 yuan to 1000 yuan.¹⁶⁵ Purchasing prices also varied in different areas’ purchasing stations because ways to calculate purchasing prices were not the same. Purchasing price was either gauged based on the CIF price or the sale price. Because the sale price of cross-border goods was far above the CIF price, the procurement price calculated by the latter approach would be higher than the former one. For example, the CIF price of one kind of alloy steel was about 100 yuan, and the procurement price in Guangzhou was 700 yuan. The same product could be bought even two and three times higher in Shanghai and Shenyang than in Guangzhou. In an official document, one cadre concluded that the relatively high purchasing prices would

¹⁶³ Oral interview, Zeng Huashan, September 4, 2019.

¹⁶⁴ The state added 40 percent to 50 percent above the original price to purchase urgently needed consumer goods (*guojia jixu wuzi*), such as rubber, sisal, gasoline, and precise instruments. The less needed (*yiban xuyao wuzi*) items like rubber goods, coconut oils and peppers would be purchased at 20 percent to 40 percent above the original price. The least needed products for the modernization project would be purchased at their original price.

¹⁶⁵ FJPA. 205-03-412-014.

potentially stimulate overseas Chinese to carry more goods for profits.¹⁶⁶

Besides purchasing stations, other types of department stores that were not permitted to buy and sell imports were also involved. Those department stores would use higher prices than the state-fixed ones to buy consumer goods from overseas Chinese.¹⁶⁷ In addition, commission shops in Quanzhou, a kind of pawnshop where people bought and sold old and used items and could bargain over their prices, failed to follow the special business operation procedures prescribed by public security departments when they purchased consumer goods from overseas Chinese.¹⁶⁸ Certain employees of stores who were acquainted with some overseas Chinese, exempted these guests from the need to show their household registration documents, and fill relevant documents. Some department stores would require overseas Chinese to show their household registration documents when they made the first deal, and then waived this red tape the next time. Overseas Chinese wrote down their real names and addresses when they were required to provide identity documents, while forging the information the next time.¹⁶⁹ The real name and address on the transaction receipt, however, were crucial for officials from customs and public security to monitor and further inspect smuggling activities. Stores' loose procedures of purchasing imported goods created liminal spaces for overseas Chinese or smugglers to sell contraband.

Commission shops in Quanzhou also encouraged their employees to collect cross-border goods. To motivate staff to find more cross-border commodities, commission shops would reward their employees with a percentage of the operation's profits.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Zhonghua renmin gongheguo Xiamen haiguan 中华人民共和国厦门海关 [Xiamen Customs of the PRC], "Guanyu Jinjiang zhuanqu mouxie guoying xintuobu he hezuo shangdian zhijie shougou he jishou jikou wupin qingkuang de baogao 关于晋江专区某些国营信托部和合作商店直接收购和寄售物品情况的报告 [Report on certain cooperative shops and trust stores purchasing commodities from overseas Chinese without following state's regulations]. November 27, 1963. FJPA. 0293-001-0166-0030.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Dorothy Solinger also mentions this type of store, which was outside the regular supply channels. According to her research, the store in Changsha received an 8 percent commission, most of which it handed over to its superior unit, the city's General Goods Company. If the seller chose to take the money before an item had been sold, he or she will receive less money. See Dorothy J. Solinger, *Chinese Business Under Socialism*, 42.

¹⁶⁹ FJPA. 0293-001-0166-0030.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

These employees found ways to buy imported commodities privately from different provinces, which was not allowed by the state. According to the investigation of Xiamen Customs, from October 1962 to September 1963, the total value of commodities collected from overseas Chinese by a commission shop in Quanzhou was 40,138 yuan, and overseas Chinese commissioned the shop to sell goods worth 14,993 yuan.¹⁷¹ Customs officials blamed commission shops on non-compliant acquisitions that encouraged smuggling. However, the priority of the shop employees was to purchase as many commodities as possible from overseas Chinese at prices that satisfied both sides. They did not pay attention to whether these goods were smuggled. The divergent priorities between different official sectors eventually motivated some overseas Chinese to bring more goods.

Unofficial Privilege: the Specialness of Qiaoxiang

Qiaoxiang as a whole also benefitted from overseas Chinese's access to foreign markets and the CCP's preferential supply policy. The preferential supply policy and goods carried and mailed by overseas Chinese made *qiaoxiang* a relatively resource-rich area. Even if non-*huaqiao* did not get privileges in the centralized supply system, and thus had difficulty getting scarce commodities through official channels, they could still get these items through their personal networks. Non-*huaqiao* in *qiaoxiang*, therefore, became an unofficially privileged group thanks to their own overseas connections. Previous literature suggests that the implementation of preferential policies was not smooth, incurring many criticisms among lower-level Party cadres. In some circumstances, non-*huaqiao*, particularly peasants who lived in villages with transnational households, resented the preferential policies towards overseas Chinese.¹⁷² This section, however, shows another perspective: not only overseas Chinese, but also individuals who had connections with *huaqiao*, benefitted from these preferential

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² One of the manifestations of these resentments was during land reform. Many transnational households were classified as landlords (*huaqiao dizhu*). See Ezra F. Vogel, *Canton Under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949–1968* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*.

policies. Through these indirect overseas connections, some non-*huaqiao* populations could have easier access to scarce commodities.

Trade of cross-border commodities on the black market was widespread in *qiaoxiang*. Documents dating from the late 1950s to the early 1960s in the Hui'an County archive reveal that cadres of the county tax and public security bureaus consistently cracked down on speculation, especially the private trading of cross-border goods. In May 1959, central commercial authorities decided to reopen village markets to alleviate the severe food shortage caused by the Great Famine.¹⁷³ Some spontaneous peddlers' markets also began to appear in medium and large cities on the heels of the opening of the rural markets. In the socialist state, however, it was limited and conditional to open the market. The opening was accompanied by control over the market and a crackdown on speculation. Cross-border commodities that were popular products became an important target of the crackdown. Because of the crackdown, cadres meticulously recorded transactions of cross-border commodities in the markets, which provides a great lens to observe the incessant skirmish between individuals and the state during the Mao era.

Behind the frequent trading of cross-border goods was people's desire for luxury goods, especially the "Three Great Items," bicycles, wristwatches, and sewing machines. Wristwatches, for example, were very difficult to acquire during the Mao era. All watches had to be imported, until, in 1955, a wristwatch manufacturer in Tianjin invented the first domestic wristwatch named "Five-Star." Although China could finally produce its own watches, it was still difficult to produce enough wristwatches to meet mass demands because of the complicated technical procedures of watch manufacturing. The state dramatically increased domestic production of watches in the 1960s, but still, only a very small fraction of Chinese people could afford this luxury.¹⁷⁴ Because the state narrowed down purchasing channels to only a small group of the population, especially groups who were essential to the state's industrialization, individuals who had enough

¹⁷³ Feng Xiaocai (冯筱才), "Yijiu wuba nian zhi yijiu liusan nian Zhonggong ziyou shichang zhengce yanjiu" 一九五八年至一九六三年中国自由市场政策研究 [The Study on the Free Market Policy of the CPC from 1958 to 1963], *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* [Research on CCP's Party History], no. 2 (2015): 38–53.

¹⁷⁴ Gerth, *Unending Capitalism*, 12–17.

money to purchase wristwatches still lacked access to them. Places to buy wristwatches were also very few, restricted to big cities in China like Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin.

People living in *qiaoxiang*, as an exception, were free to a degree from the rigid centralized distribution of watches in the command economy. They had alternative channels to get them. Compared with other places in China, watches were relatively abundant in *qiaoxiang* because almost every *guiqiao* would bring bicycles and wristwatches. Ma Yonghai, an overseas Chinese student, recalled what kinds of items he would bring back to China. “Going to China was a big event at that time. Our parents thought that we would never come back, therefore, they gave us all the valuable properties which must include the wristwatch and bicycle. When we arrived in Beijing, only overseas Chinese had bicycles.”¹⁷⁵ Because the personal effects of overseas Chinese were exempt from tariffs, bringing several watches was very common for overseas Chinese when they came to mainland China. It was also common that overseas Chinese abroad mailed a watch to their family members at home.

Qiaoxiang became a special place to obtain luxury items under the state-dominated distribution system because of overseas Chinese’s access to the capitalist world and the special treatment they received. Chen Youcai, a cadre from Hui’an County, was transferred to Jianyang, a northern county in Fujian, to support forestry development. All his colleagues were either cadres from the military or transferred from other places of the province. They were all knowledgeable about how to get scarce consumer goods. Soon after he transferred to the new working place, some of his colleagues began to ask him about channels to purchase wristwatches when they learnt that Chen’s native place was a *qiaoxiang*. Chen replied to his colleagues very straightforwardly, “My hometown is a *qiaoxiang*, there must be some ways to buy wristwatches.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Wang Cangbai (王苍柏), *Huozai biechu: Xianggang Yinni huaren koushu lishi* 活在别处：印尼华人口述历史 [Life is elsewhere: Stories of the Indonesian Chinese in Hong Kong] (Hong Kong: Institution of East Asia Studies of Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 53.

¹⁷⁶ Hui’an xian shuiwuju 惠安县税务局 [Tax Bureau of Hui’an County] “Guanyu Chen Youcai heishi goumai jinkou wuzi chushou wenti de baogao” 关于陈友彩黑市购买进口物资出售问题的报告 [Report on Chen Youcai selling imported goods in the black market]. January 7, 1961. HACA. 0077-002-0029.

Starting in early 1960, Chen constantly wrote letters home. He said his colleagues wanted to buy watches and asked his friends and family members to keep an eye out for potential sellers of watches. In May, after multiple inquiries, Chen finally found a family member of an overseas Chinese willing to sell watches. In June, Chen went home and spent 290 yuan to purchase a Titoni watch. Later, he sold the watch to a county magistrate at its original price. In July, Chen visited his family in Hui'an again after participating in the national volleyball competition. Commissioned by his colleagues again, he purchased three Swiss watches just mailed from Nanyang from his former colleague's father. Party secretary Chi, Director Cheng and Section Chief Liu bought these three watches, each for 190 yuan. Like the last time, Chen did not make any profits from the sales.

In 1962, a cadre's average one-month salary was about 50 yuan. Buying a watch with 190 yuan was equal to a salary of almost four months, and 290 yuan was the salary of almost half a year. Why were these buyers willing to spend so much? Compared with the other two "Three Great Items," the practical utility of a watch was less than a bicycle and sewing machine. A watch, however, was a clearer sign of a household's above-average wealth and access to privileged products. Karl Gerth suggests that the difficulty of acquiring the Three Greats and their association with "more technologically advanced countries meant that their acquisition represented additional social capital, and the state mediated who got access to this capital."¹⁷⁷ However, for those who had connections with overseas Chinese, they could easily break this mediation and be free to some degree from the state's control. In this sense, social capital for them was their connection with overseas Chinese rather than their social position in the socialist state. These people who indirectly benefitted from overseas connections were in a privileged position in informal distribution system.

In fact, cadres had mixed feelings about foreign consumer goods. On the one hand, the foreign goods' bourgeois social connotations were something that cadres wanted to avoid in the workplace; but on the other hand, to fulfill their own desires, they could ignore these taboos temporarily. The state attempted to be the chief appropriator

¹⁷⁷ Karl Gerth, *Unending Capitalism*, 20

and the chief allocator of capital, suppressing competing demands for other use of surplus, but the state “failed to achieve near total control over material desires.”¹⁷⁸

After successfully purchasing four watches twice, Chen was caught on his third attempt. In August 1960, Chen Youcai asked for family leave for about twenty days because his father was ill. Chen was commissioned by his colleague again to buy a watch. This time Chen bought a watch from the director of the County Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee. When he was waiting for a bus in the station with the new watch, cadres from the Hui’an Tax Bureau suddenly appeared. They confiscated the new watch, Chen’s personal watch and 68 yuan. Chen and two of his family members were taken to the tax bureau for inquiry.

In the view of the County Tax Bureau, it was not a coincidence that Chen Youcai sold duty-free imported watches in the black market. In the eyes of the cadres of the tax bureau, he was a habitual speculator who returned his hometown to search for watches several times and sold them on the black market. However, in his personal confession, Chen repetitively emphasized that he never had speculative thoughts. He wanted to help his colleagues to get watches and never made any profits from it. But he also admitted that he had a vague understanding of the state’s overseas Chinese policy, and apologized for disrupting the state’s management of the market.

Chen was not the only one who did not know about the state’s policy on overseas Chinese consumer goods. Jiang Qingyuan, a principal of a primary school, bought a watch from his student’s uncle.¹⁷⁹ When asked why he purchased a watch on the black market, he admitted that he did not know that it was illegal to purchase watches from overseas Chinese. The same situation also happened to Xu Fusheng, a mason, who bought a Hales Swiss watch from an overseas Chinese.¹⁸⁰ All these stories show that the

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 8

¹⁷⁹ Hui’an xian shuiwu ju 惠安县税务局 [Tax Bureau of Hui’an County], “Dui Jiang Qingyuan weifan jinkou wuzi guanli guiding sigou jinkou weishui shoubiao chuli yijian de baogao” 对蒋清源违反进口物资管理规定私购进口未税手表处理意见的报告 [Report on how to deal with the case of Jiang Qingyuan violating regulation of imported consumer goods]. November 3, 1960. HACA, 0077-002-0028.

¹⁸⁰ Hui’an xian shuiwu ju 惠安县税务局 [Tax Bureau of Hui’an County], “Guanyu Xu Fusheng goumai jinkou wuzi chuli yijian de pifu” 关于徐付生购买进口物资处理意见的批复 [Approval on suggestions on handling the case of Xu Fusheng purchasing imported overseas Chinese consumer goods], December 22, 1961. HACA, 0077-002-029.

informal procurement of scarce materials in *qiaoxiang* was so convenient and common that buyers or sellers did not consider obtaining consumer goods on the black market illicit.

Even though some might have known that private transactions were illegal, they believed they would have a slim chance of being caught, because private trade of cross-border goods was so widespread in *qiaoxiang*. Additionally, the punishment for sellers was not so severe after they were caught. A cadre named Cai Yuanxin, for example, bought a British brand bicycle produced by the Birmingham Small Arms Company (BSA) from an overseas Chinese named Yang Tao in March 1959. Cai also provided Yang with a receipt which wrote that “the expense of this bicycle will be paid by the commune, and the seller will be exempt from responsibility.”¹⁸¹ Unluckily for Cai and Yang, this underground transaction was caught by the officials of the tax bureau, the bicycle was confiscated, the buyer was fined 50 yuan, while the seller was free from punishment.¹⁸² The seller may have been aware that his behaviour was wrong. He was afraid of getting caught by the tax bureau, so Yang required Cai to write down a receipt as an evidence to get rid of his responsibility. Another cadre named Ke Jiayun used 116 yuan to buy a Titoni watch from a returned overseas Chinese named Pan Feng who had purchased the watch abroad. Similar to cadre Cai’s case, the seller also went unpunished, but the buyer needed to pay tax on the watch and was fined 10 yuan.

In addition to individuals, state agencies and production units also purchased consumer goods through unofficial channels to obtain bicycles. Nanpu and Yuhu districts of Hui’an had ten foreign bicycles, seven of which were bought on the market in the name of the collective. Because of the low supply of bicycles, different state agencies needed to compete with each other in a rush to buy bicycles (*qianggou* 抢购). One commune in another county spent 350 yuan, 230 yuan more than the state’s purchasing price for a bicycle.¹⁸³ Without going through the County Tax Bureau and the Commercial

¹⁸¹ Hui’an xian renmin jiancha yuan 惠安县人民检察院 [Hui’an County People’s Procuratorate], “Guanyu Nanpu diqu dangqian huaqiao jinkou wuzi sizi maimai qingkuang diaocha baogao” 关于南浦地区当前华侨进口物资私自买卖情况调查报告 [Report on current situation of selling and purchasing imported overseas Chinese consumer goods on the market in Nanpu district]. May 19, 1960. HACA. 0004-001-024.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Bureau, the County Transport Bureau bought a bicycle for 340 *yuan* from an overseas Chinese named Wu Zhaoxia.¹⁸⁴ Even though official institutions in charge of commerce promulgated a series of policies to prohibit trading overseas Chinese consumer goods on the market, while the transportation bureau still went against these rules. This phenomenon itself reflects that those governmental agencies could sometimes purchase goods through informal distribution channels rather than formal ones, especially when the informal route was more convenient.

Trading remittance coupons and reselling consumer goods from overseas Chinese stores on the market was very common in *qiaoxiang*. In Nan'an County, every remittance coupon could be sold at 30 to 35 *yuan*. Having received 300 *yuan* from a Filipino relative, Huang Xianggu purchased consumer goods in an overseas Chinese store, and then sold them on the market for 320 *yuan*. Speculators would also find remittance coupons around the entire *qiaoxiang* to purchase popular products from overseas Chinese stores, which resulted in stores running out of top-selling items. Zeng Humu, Weng Chengqi, and three other individuals from Nan'an County were accused of being involved in speculative activities by trading remittance coupons privately. Based on the official narrative, Zeng, Wang, and their accomplices frequently purchased hot-selling products from overseas Chinese stores, and at most buying up to forty-five *jin* of wool and ninety pairs of rain boots at a single time. In addition to speculators, cadres also used their position to obtain remittance coupons. Instead of transferring coupons to the state, they used up those coupons. Sometimes, they asked overseas Chinese for the unused coupons as well. Trade in remittance coupons circumvented the system, but it helped to redistribute resources from the state's privileged group to other ordinary individuals.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

Overseas connections constituted an informal distribution network. Overseas Chinese were main distributor and facilitator of this network. Overseas Chinese's access

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ HCAC. 0034-002-000.

to the capitalist world and the PRC's preferential policy on luggage carrying were fundamental to creation of the informal distribution system. In addition, official departments and ordinary people in *qiaoxiang* were so eager to obtain cross-border commodities, which stimulated circulation of these goods. Because of market potential for cross-border commodities, some overseas Chinese would use loopholes in the preferential policy to smuggle, which became a huge headache for Chinese customs officials. The consequence brought about by the special treatment sometimes conflicted with other priorities of New China, such as cracking down on smuggling and commanding the market. Despite the preferential policy, customs officials always kept vigilant eyes on overseas Chinese. In their eyes, every overseas Chinese could be potential smugglers, brokers, and black-market sellers. However, not all overseas Chinese smuggled for profits. Smuggling could either be just a living strategy for them in the constant shortage of supply, or a tactics to bypass the high fixed-exchange rate. For non-*huaqiao* in the *qiaoxiang*, the existence of overseas Chinese could also be a blessing. The connections with overseas Chinese enabled them to bypass the mediation of state on scarce consumer goods. The pervasiveness of personal connections and networks made it easier for non-*huaqiao* in *qiaoxiang* to circumvent the state's control. The state's control could not completely penetrate into these networks and connections.

Conclusion

In the end, we can go back to Wang Keng and Xu Peilan's story. Wang Keng and Xu Peilan were lucky, but they were not the only transnational household that benefitted from overseas connections, many individuals in *qiaoxiang* did too. Focusing on the beneficial side of overseas connections is not to ease or to overlook pains inflicted on *qiaojuan* and *guiqiao*, but an attempt to depoliticalize *haiwai guanxi*. For a long period of time, foreign connections were politicized. Only the sufferings caused by these connections was noticeable for scholars, which obscured their utilitarian aspect. When analyzing the social hierarchy of Soviet society under the centralized distribution system from 1927–1941, Russian historian Elena Osokina notes that those closet to power and industrial production could benefit from the system of state supply; on the other hand, many other social groups “including those completely outside the system of official privilege” needed to depend on the market.¹⁸⁶ In socialist China, the group of overseas Chinese was not only officially privileged in the system of state supply, but also active suppliers and purchasers on the “black” market. Overseas Chinese made *qiaoxiang* a relatively resource-rich area during the period of goods scarcity, which also benefitted non-overseas Chinese populations in the area.

Overseas connections brought cross-border mobility of goods, which benefitted both the state and individuals. In conventional wisdom, the post-Mao era is characterized as an exciting period with “reform and opening up”, which causes a stereotype that Maoist China severed its relationships with the outside, especially the capitalist world, and initiated these relationships only after 1978. In fact, the survival and normal functioning of the nascent PRC regime depended on overseas connections and informal distribution it brought about and facilitated. Ordinary people also used overseas connections to access food and other daily commodities. Some ordinary individuals' daily economic lives were based on these connections. Although overseas connections became a lethal curse during the Cultural Revolution, and many individuals suffered from their connections with overseas. It did not mean; however, these connections disappeared or could be rooted up entirely by the political force. Rather, these connections became more

¹⁸⁶ Elena Osokina, *Our Daily Bread*, xv.

underground, eventually revived, and exerted their profound influences after 1978.

In both formal and informal distribution systems, the interactions between overseas Chinese and the state were complicated and dynamic. To solicit more remittances from overseas Chinese, the PRC prioritized their family members in the centralized distribution system, providing them special accesses to scarce daily commodities. In a society short of resources, the commodities distributed exclusively to domestic overseas Chinese became valuable materials every official department desired to acquire. The official departments involved in coordinating commodities supplies to overseas Chinese had varying interests. The state itself, therefore, was not coherent and unified. Rather, it involved the interests of several parties. Overseas Chinese as a group were also not monolithic. This group was made up of people from different backgrounds. Individuals who were able to receive more remittances had more leverage in negotiations with the state. Therefore, the bargaining process between overseas Chinese and the state was multilayered. The complexity and variety of state institutions also opened some cracks for *huaqiao* to form an informal distribution system. Official departments related to overseas Chinese affairs wanted to extend the preferential policy to returned overseas Chinese's luggage, department stores' responsibility was to purchase as many as commodities from overseas Chinese in reasonable prices, and the priority of customs officials was to crack down on smuggling. Divergent priorities between different official sectors, especially divergence between customs and department stores, led overseas Chinese to bring more cross-border commodities.

This thesis also echoes to Jin Dalu's argument in his book *Abnormal and Normal*.¹⁸⁷ During the Cultural Revolution, Jin Dalu argues, ordinary people still lived their everyday lives, even though the whole society worked abnormally. Overseas Chinese were just one group of millions of ordinary individuals who used every tactic to ensure that they had enough food to eat, clothes to wear, and daily goods to use. This was normal in daily life. However, it was abnormal when access to goods, the most

¹⁸⁷ Jin Dalu (金大陆), *Feichang yu zhengchang: Shanghai wenge shiqi de shehui shenghuo* 非常与正常：上海“文革”时期的社会生活 [Abnormal and normal: social life in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011).

fundamental part of daily life, was hierarchical, and became a privilege for a certain group of people.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

(1) Archival sources

Abbreviations Used in Citations

FJPA Fujian Provincial Archives

QZMA Quanzhou Municipal Archives

HACA Hui'an County Archives

NBCK Neibu cankao (Internal reference), Universities Service Center for Chinese Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong

(2) Newspapers

China News Services (中国新闻通讯社)

Qiaowu Bao (侨务报)

Sing Tao Daily (星岛日报)

Ta Kung Pao (大公报)

Wen Wei Po (文汇报)

(3) Oral Interviews

Guo Jingren. June 19, 2019.

Liang Fusheng. June 19, 2019.

Wu Longsheng. June 20 and November 2, 2019.

Yan Zhi. June 15, 2019.

Zeng Huashan. September 4, 2019.

(4) Published Materials

Quanzhou shi liangshi ju 泉州市粮食局, ed. *Quanzhou shi liangshi zhi* 泉州市粮食 [Quanzhou grains gazetteer]. Quanzhou: Hui'an xian yinshua chang, 1994.

Quanzhou shi huaqiaozhi bianzhan weiyuanhui 泉州市华侨志编纂委员会, ed. *Quanzhoushi huaqiao zhi* 泉州市华侨志 [Quanzhou gazetteer on overseas Chinese]. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 1996.

Shanghai haiguan zhi bianzuan weiyuan hui 上海海关志编纂委员会 ed. *Shanghai haiguan zhi* 上海海关志 [Shanghai Customs gazetteer]. Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue yuan chubanshe, 1997.

Guangzhou haiguan bianzhi bangongshi 广州海关编志办公室, ed. *Guangzhou haiguan zhi* 广州海关志 [Guangzhou Customs gazetteer]. Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1997.

Secondary Literature

Monographs

Barabantseva, Elena. *Overseas Chinese, Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism: De-centering China*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Brown, Jeremy. *City Versus Countryside in Mao's China: Negotiating the Divide*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Brown, Jeremy and Johnson D, Matthew eds. *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China's Era of High Socialism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Chan, Shelly. *Diaspora's Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

Vogel F, Ezra. *Canton Under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949–1968*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Fitzgerald, Stephen. *China and the Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking's Changing Policy: 1949–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

Gao Wangling (高王凌). *Renmin gongshe shiqi Zhongguo nongmin fan xingwei diaocha* 人民公社时期中国农民反行为调查 [Investigation of Everyday Forms of Resistance of the Chinese Peasants in the Era of the People's Communes]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2006.

Gerth, Karl. *Unending Capitalism: How Consumerism Negated China's Communist Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Hershatter, Gail. *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Jin Dalu (金大陆). *Feichang yu zhengchang: Shanghai wenge shiqi de shehui shenghuo* 非常与正常：上海“文革”时期的社会生活 [Abnormal and Normal: social life in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution]. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011.

- Kelly M. Jason. *Market Maoists: The Communist Origins of China's Capitalist Ascent*. MA: Harvard University Press, 2021.
- Kuhn, Philip. *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.
- Lim, Jin Li. *The Price and Promise of Specialness: The Political Economy of Overseas Chinese Policy in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1959*. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Manning, Kimberley and Wemheuer, Felix eds. *Eating Bitterness: New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011.
- Osokina, Elena. *Sulian de waibin shangdian: weile gongyehua suo xuyao de huangjin* [Gold for Industrialization: Torgsin]. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2020.
- . Translated by Kate Transchel and Greta Bucher. *Our Daily Bread, Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia, 1927–1941*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Oyen, Meredith. *The Diplomacy of Migration: Transnational Lives and the Making of U.S.–Chinese Relations in the Cold War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Shen, Huifen. *China's Left-behind Wives: Families of Migrants from Fujian to Southeast Asia, 1930s–1950s*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012.
- Solinger J, Dorothy. *Chinese Business Under Socialism: The Politics of Domestic Commerce, 1949–1980*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Thaxton Ralph. *Rural China: Mao's Great Leap Forward Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Wang Cangbai (王苍柏), *Huozai biechu: Xianggang Yinni huaren koushu lishi* 活在别处：印尼华人口述历史 [Life is elsewhere: Stories of the Indonesian Chinese in Hong Kong]. Hong Kong: Institution of East Asia Studies of Hong Kong University Press, 2006.
- Wemheuer Felix. *A Social History of Maoist China: Conflict and Change, 1949–1976*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Williams, Michael. *Returning Home with Glory: Chinese Villages Around the Pacific, 1849–1949*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018.

- Yan Yunxiang (阎云翔). *Liwu de liudong: yige zhongguo cunzhuang zhong de huhui yuanze yu shehui wangluo* 礼物的流动：一个中国村庄的互惠原则与社会网络 [The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Network in A Chinese Village]. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2017.
- Yang Jisheng (杨继绳). *Mubei: Zhongguo liushi niandai dajihuang jishi* 墓碑：中国六十年代大饥荒纪实 [Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958–1962]. Hong Kong: Tiandi, 2008.
- Yang Kuisong (杨奎松). *Eight Outcasts: Social and Political Marginalization in China under Mao*, trans. Gregor Benton and Ye Zhen. California: University of California Press, 2020.
- Zhou Taomo. *Migration in the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia, and the Cold War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019.

Articles

- Chan, Shelly. “Rethinking the ‘Left-Behind’ in Chinese Migration: A Case of Liberating Wives in Emigrant South China in the 1950s.” In *Proletarian and Gendered Mass Migrations: A Global Perspective on Continuities and Discontinuities from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries*. Edited by Dirk Hoerder. Boston: Brill, 2013.
- Feng Xiaocai (冯筱才). “yijiu wuba nian zhi yijiu liusan nian zhonggong ziyou shichang zhengce yanjiu” 一九五八年至一九六三年中国自由市场政策研究 [The Study on the Free Market Policy of the CPC from 1958 to 1963]. *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* [Research on CCP’s Party History], no.2 (2015): 38–53.
- Ford, Caleb. “Guiqiao (Returned Overseas Chinese) Identity in the PRC.” *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 10 (2014): 239–262.
- Godley, R Michael. “The Sojourners: Returned Overseas Chinese in the People’s Republic of China.” *Pacific Affairs* 62, no. 3 (Autumn, 1989): 330–52.
- Han Xiaorong. “Continuities and Discontinuities in Politics: The ROC and PRC Policies Toward Overseas Chinese, 1912-1966.” *The Chinese Historical Review*, 25.1 (2018): 23–45.
- Qi Pengfei (齐鹏飞) and Zhang Lingwei (张玲蔚). “1956–1966 nian zhongguo de qiaohui wuzi gongying zhengce” 浅析 1956–1966 年中国的侨汇物资供应政策 [The PRC’s supply policies toward remittances recipients 1956-1966]. *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu* [Contemporary Chinese History Studies], no. 2 (2019): 4–16.

- Ren Guixiang (任贵祥). “Xinzhongguo sanshinian qiaohui zhengce yanjiu” 新中国三十年侨汇政策研究 [Research on remittance policies in the New China, 1950–1980]. *Jinlin Daxue shehui kexue xuebao* 吉林大学社会科学学报, no. 4 (2020): 186–199.
- Xie Dibin (谢迪斌). ‘Shilun jianguo chuqi de qiaoshu gongzuo jiqi jingyan’ 试论建国初期的侨属工作及其经验 [Study on *Huaqiao huaren lishi yanjiu*] 华侨华人历史研究 no. 3 (1992): 7–11.
- Zhang Zhengan (章振干), Chen Kejian (陈克俭), Gan Minchong (甘民重) and Chen Kekun (陈可焜). “Fujian zhuyao qiaoqu nongcun jingji tantao qiaoqu nongcun diaocha zhiyi” 福建主要侨区农村经济探讨：侨区农村调查之一 [Research on economic situation of Fujian’s major zones with high concentrations of overseas residents]. *Journal of Xiamen University*, no.1 (1957): 31–66.
- Zhuang Guotu. ‘Zhongguo zhengfu dui guiqiao, qiaojuan zhengce de yanbian (1949–66)’ (中国政府对归侨侨眷政策的演变 (1949–66)). *Nanyang wenti* 南洋问题 3 (1992): 49–56.