

Relating to the “Outside”: Images and Perceptions of the World

beyond in Fuzhou’s Newspapers, 1927-1937

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From a very early period, Fuzhou, a city located on the eastern coastline of China, has had frequent contact with the world outside of it. As a treaty port since 1840, Fuzhou became intensively connected with Southeast Asia and other areas. Many studies have already focused on uncovering the history of overseas Fuzhouese who were an integral part of these connections. There is a lacuna however in literature examining the perspectives and attitudes of those who remained within China towards the emigrants and emigrant areas. Other than those who sojourned for employment as labor, the emigrants from Fuzhou during the Republican era included individuals who went abroad to further their education, careers or conduct missionary work. This paper explores the latter’s motivations and reasons behind their abandonment of comfortable lives to journey abroad.

At the same time, the interactions and connections between Fuzhou and other regions in the world, in particular Japan and Southeast Asia, naturally engendered much attention and coverage in local newspapers. This paper thus also examines the representations, images, and depictions of the world outside Fuzhou in the local newspapers to study the perceptions and attitudes of the remaining Fuzhouese residents towards the Fuzhouese emigrants and the external areas Fuzhou interacted with. Secondly, it analyzes how these perceptions and attitudes are propagated and transmitted by the newspapers, and their impact on urban changes and developments in Fuzhou during the Nanjing decade.