THE POLICE SYSTEM IN A GUANGDONG COUNTY
1929–1949

The seminar is conducted in English

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Abstract

In 1927, when the Nationalists party established a republic under Chiang Kai-shek, they faced a list of urgent duties. One was to reform the government structure from top to bottom so as to show the rest of the world its capability to govern the country in the modern way. Big cities immediately became the show place for modernization and state-building. At the county level, Chiang Kai-shek proclaimed Zhongshan in Guangdong the "model county". To maintain this recognition, the local authorities made further efforts in restructuring the government: reforming and restricting the police force was one important aspect of this attempt. However, it is commonly known today that in the 1930s and 1940s, county governments in the Pearl River Delta was disintegrated and dominated by "local bosses". This article explains why Zhongshan had successfully made a modern police force. It looks into number of problems related to inefficiency and ineffectiveness in government administration, but it also discusses the fact that many civilians were welcoming, rather than suspicious of the police. The answers to these issues suggest that the overall structure and management of the Zhongshan government (and even social integration) was to some extent consolidated in this period.

About the Speaker

Venus Viana is the postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore. Her doctoral thesis "Modernizing Zhongshan: The Implementation of Nation-building Policies and Responses of the Local People, 1930-1949" was completed at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) in 2012. Before joining NTU, she was a lecturer at the HKUST. Her research interests mainly include modern Chinese social and economic history and rural history in late Qing and Republican Guangdong.

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