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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines attitudes toward marriage and family in Guangzhou society in the early and mid-twentieth century. This was an important period of transition in modern Chinese history as China experienced a dramatic change from imperial country to Republican state. During this time, traditional concepts related to marriage and families were put into question by Western ideas. By reviewing the newspapers, journals and magazines from the period under focus, for instance, *the Guangzhou Republic Daily* 廣州民國日報, *the Guangzhou Youth* 廣州青年 and *the Guangzhou Saturday* 廣州星期六, this thesis covers interrelated concepts about marriage and family such as free choice, free love, free marriage, free divorce and concubinage. The significance of the materials presented in this thesis is that they depict ideological collision between traditional and modern ideas; while at the same time, they reveal people's voices of struggle in making choices between state revolution and personal love. This thesis also places Guangzhou in a comparative context. The ideological collision in the early twentieth-century Guangzhou was by no means unique. In transitional societies changing from colonial rule to independence, from socialist government to democracy, we find similar experiences concerning changing attitudes toward marriage and family in transitional societies. For example, a familial imaginary was created by combining traditional and modern ideas, which was usually supported by the booming development of print media. Moreover, people's acceptance of modern ideas was selective when they were faced with Western intrusion.