

The Abstract for the 86th Annual meeting of JSS

**Fear and Political Stigma:
The Making of State Enemy During the 1950s in Taiwan.**

University of Cambridge
Ling-yu Hsiao (PhD Candidate)

1. Aim

How do political trauma and stigma persist after the transition from an authoritarian regime to democratic rule? This research is about how the effect of an authoritarian regime governed the Taiwanese who had been politically victimised under the reign of the ‘White Terror’, effectively by encompassing all sections of society within a culture of fear and stigma. As a foreign dictatorship, the Kuo-Min-Tang regime (KMT) under Chiang Kai-Shek and his son Chiang Ching-Kuo, subjected the Taiwanese people to a prolonged period of state violence until 1988, known as “The White Terror.”

To unravel the hidden logic posed above, especially the logic of how did the KMT define and formulate the image of state enemy, this paper aims to focus on the first decade since the KMT retreated its government to Taiwan in 1949. In this sense, the research seeks to account for the context of political fear and stigma that once formulated and exerted its devastating effectiveness under the structural of Cold War in Taiwan.

2. Data & Method

The research involves eliciting oral narratives from those victims and their families and also carries out interviews with people on the opposing site, including the perpetrators of the violence. By eliciting dialogue among people engaged on two sides, the research will also collect official documents released from Taiwan. In this way, the thesis seeks to explore the logic of surveillance and the project of stigma onto these victimised individuals and the tactics designed to maintain the authority from 1949 until now.

3. Results & Conclusion

The research so far has found that the image of state enemy during the 1950s performed as dynamic. The term ‘traitor’ was not only used for communists, but also for dissidents support Taiwan independence. Moreover, those ‘uncommitted families’ has been designed to live as impaired individuals with political stigma and watched under a comprehensive surveillance system which was mobilised through all the social parts of their daily lives. That is to say, anyone whose family matched the definition of state enemy in the 1950s, he or she would be treated as state enemy as well. The KMT managed to create the culture of fear to stigmatise people who potentially threatened his dictatorship. In this sense, the culture of fear was not only a consequence of the state violence, but also performed as a mean to employ its coercive control onto the society. By the delicate and pervasive surveillance system, the state violence in day-to-day life performed comprehensively in Taiwan under the KMT and the structure of Cold War.