“Moving Through the Gate of Venus:
The History of Cumsingmoon and the Coolie Trade: 1849-54”

by

Thomas McTernan Stasko

Dr. Oscar Sanchez, Supervisor

Department of History

Master of Arts in History

May 2013

Department of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Macau

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Abstract

This thesis examines the historical development of the anchorage of 金星門 (Cumsingmoon) and its progression from an opium station to its role in the inchoate stages of the coolie trade. It argues that its previous use as an opium station was precisely the reason why it was chosen as a center during the early stages of the coolie trade at a time when emigration was discouraged by the Qing government. Southeast China lured many would be human traffickers because of the lax state of its legal enforcement and the weakness of imperial government. These forces combined in a perfect situation for the development of the trade in this area.

Moreover, in examining the eighteen voyages that left Cumsingmoon during the years of its involvement in the coolie trade, from 1849 to 1854, the thesis finds that eight of those voyages ended either in mutiny by the passengers or in rampant illness caused by the British traffickers. This spelled doom to Cumsingmoon as an important station for the burgeoning trade. The voyages that left helped form the policy the British government would adopt, first culminating in the Chinese Passenger Act of 1855.

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澳門大學

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