Conflicts of Interest:

The Opium Problem in Guangdong, 1858-1917

利益之爭：1858-1917 年間廣東鴉片問題探析

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History at the University of Macau

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I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where the acknowledgment is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this university or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.
1 Introduction ........................................................................................................1
  1.1 Background ....................................................................................................1
  1.2 Literature Review .........................................................................................4
  1.3 Significance and Methodology .................................................................16

2 Foreign Opium Coming into Guangdong Province .............................................23
  2.1 Amount of Foreign Opium through Foreign Customs into Guangdong ............23
  2.2 Taxation and Lijin on Foreign Opium at Foreign Customs .........................33
  2.3 Summary ....................................................................................................36

3 Conflicts of Interest between Native Customs and Foreign Customs .............38
  3.1 Overview of the History of Customs in China ...........................................38
  3.2 Conflicts of Interest over Opium Taxation and Lijin .................................41
  3.3 Summary ....................................................................................................50

4 Conflicts of Interest over Opium Taxes between the Central and Provincial
  Governments ........................................................................................................51
  4.1 Customs Taxation in the Qing Dynasty .......................................................51
  4.2 Conflicts of Interest over Opium Taxes between the Central and Guangdong
      Governments ..................................................................................................55
  4.3 Summary ....................................................................................................60

5 Cultivation, Importation and Consumption of Native Opium in Guangdong..61
  5.1 Poppy Cultivation in Guangdong Province ..................................................61
  5.2 Routes of Native Opium Importation into Guangdong ...............................64
  5.3 Consumption and Re-export of Native Opium into Guangdong ..................67
5.4 Competition between Native Opium and Foreign Opium ............................. 71
5.5 Summary ........................................................................................................... 74

6 Foreign Opium Smuggling and Anti-smuggling Actions ............................... 75
   6.1 Routes of Foreign Opium Smuggled into Guangdong ................................. 75
   6.2 Organization of Foreign Opium Smuggling .................................................... 81
   6.3 An Estimate of the Amount of Foreign Opium Smuggled into Guangdong .... 84
   6.4 Actions to Suppress Opium Smuggling ......................................................... 87
   6.5 Summary ........................................................................................................... 90

7 Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 92

Conventions and Equivalences ............................................................................. 96

Character List .......................................................................................................... 97

Appendixes .............................................................................................................. 99
   Appendix 1: Net Opium Importation at Each Port, 1863-1870 ......................... 99
   Appendix 2: Revenue of Each Port ..................................................................... 102
   Appendix 3: Amount of Native Opium Consumed and Imported, and Its Price in
               Guangdong Province, 1889-1915 .............................................................. 120

Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 122

Curriculum Vitae ..................................................................................................... 141
Figures, Tables and Maps

Figures

Figure 1: Foreign opium coming into mainland China, Guangdong and Shanghai through foreign customs, 1863-1917 ............................................................25
Figure 2: The rate of foreign opium imports into Guangdong and Shanghai to those into China ............................................................................................27
Figure 3: The average amount of opium through the Canton Foreign Customs, 1859-1917 .....................................................................................................28
Figure 4: Amount of opium through the Canton Foreign Customs, 1909-1917...31
Figure 5: The rate of opium income to the customs’ revenue in Guangdong ......35
Figure 6: Amount of opium import through the Canton Foreign Customs, 1866-1877 .....................................................................................................46
Figure 7: Amount of opium import through the Canton Foreign Customs, 1886-1891 ................................................................. ............................................................50
Figure 8: The estimated amount of native opium coming into Guangdong .......68
Figure 9: Foreign opium through the Lappa Customs import into the Xiasifu area and Haikou, through the Kiungchow Customs, and legally coming into the Xiasifu area and Zhaoqing .................................................................79
Figure 10: Opium through the Lappa Customs, and from H.K. to Guangzhouwan ....................................................................................81
Figure 11: Amount of foreign opium through the Canton Foreign Customs.......88

Tables

Table 1: Budget deficit of provinces in the Late Qing Dynasty.........................53
Table 2: The price of native opium in Guangdong ...........................................69
Table 3: Opium imported, exported and smuggled in Macau, 1883-1885 ...........77
Table 4: The estimated amount of foreign opium smuggled into Guangdong.....85
Table 5: The situation of the export of foreign opium in Hong Kong in 1871 .....86

Maps

Map 1: Map of the two native customs stations around Macau .....................44
Map 2: Map of the four native customs stations around Hong Kong .............45
Map 3: Routes of native opium coming into Guangdong ....................................66
List of Abbreviations


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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to study the opium problem in Guangdong Province between 1858 and 1917. The period of 1858-1917 is a very special stage of opium trade in China, because from 1858 the opium trade became legal in China, and after 1917 all the records of opium import disappeared in the reports of the Chinese maritime customs. During this special period there were large amounts of foreign and Chinese native opium legally or illegally coming into Guangdong, which had a profound influence on the society in Guangdong at the time. This thesis will focus on the opium problem in Guangdong during this special period, including the opium import and significance of opium taxation to maritime customs, and several conflicts relating to the opium problem between different interest groups: foreign customs and native customs, the Chinese central government and local government, Chinese opium and foreign opium, and opium smugglers and preventive officers.

It is my contention that the study of these conflicts of interest over opium is a key to understanding the social, economic, and political history of modern China.