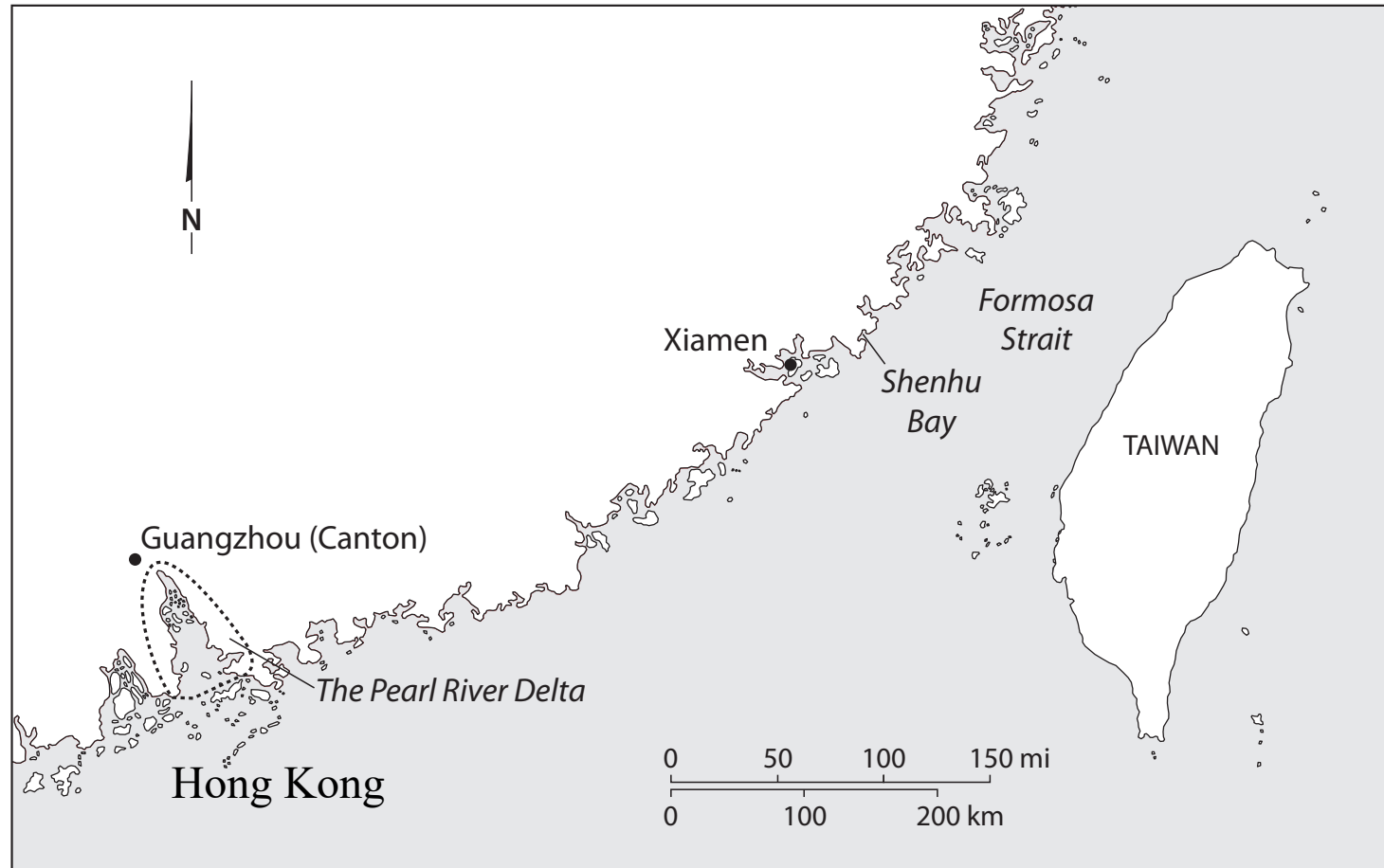
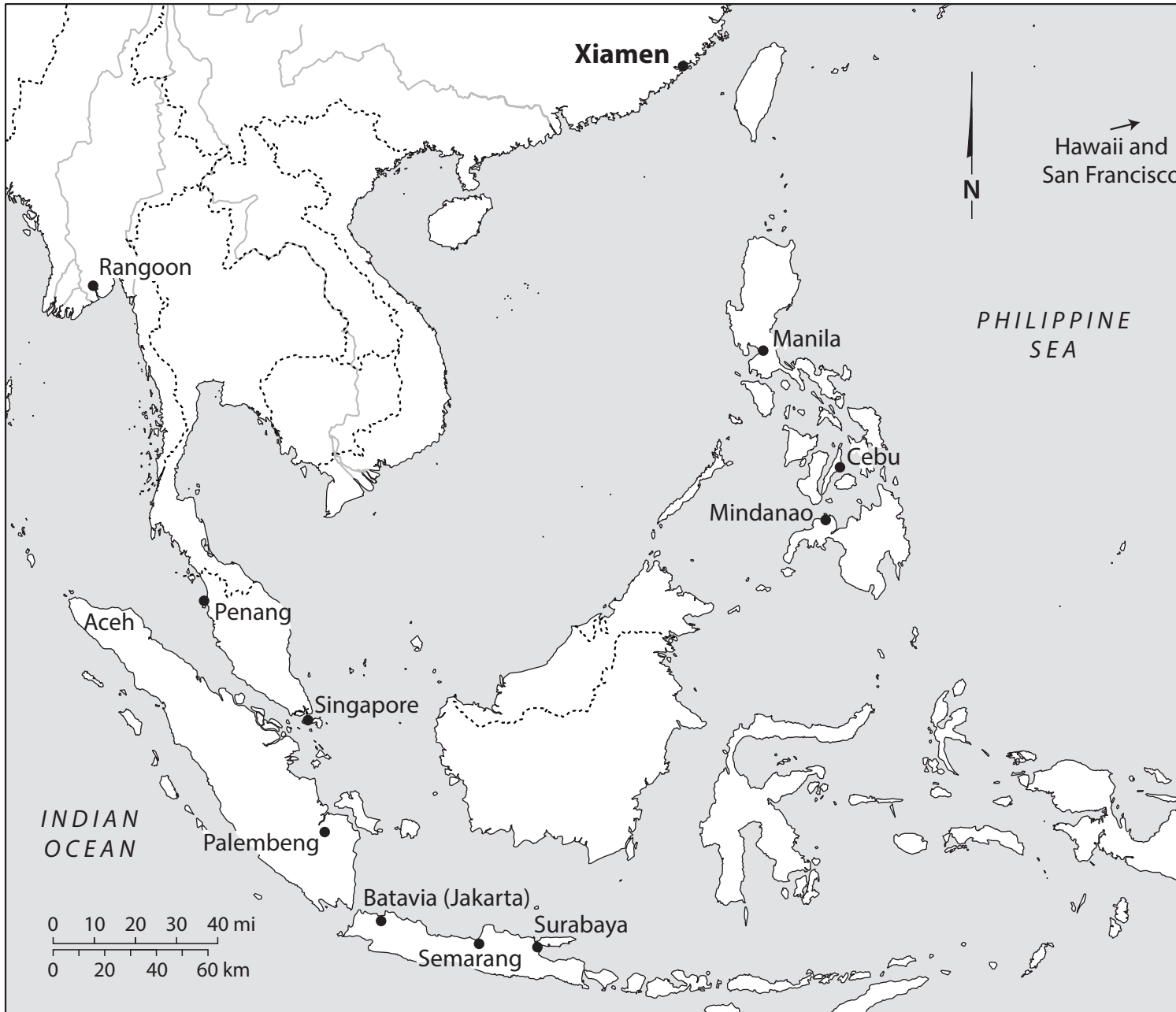


# **The Chinese Opium Business**

*in Global Context*

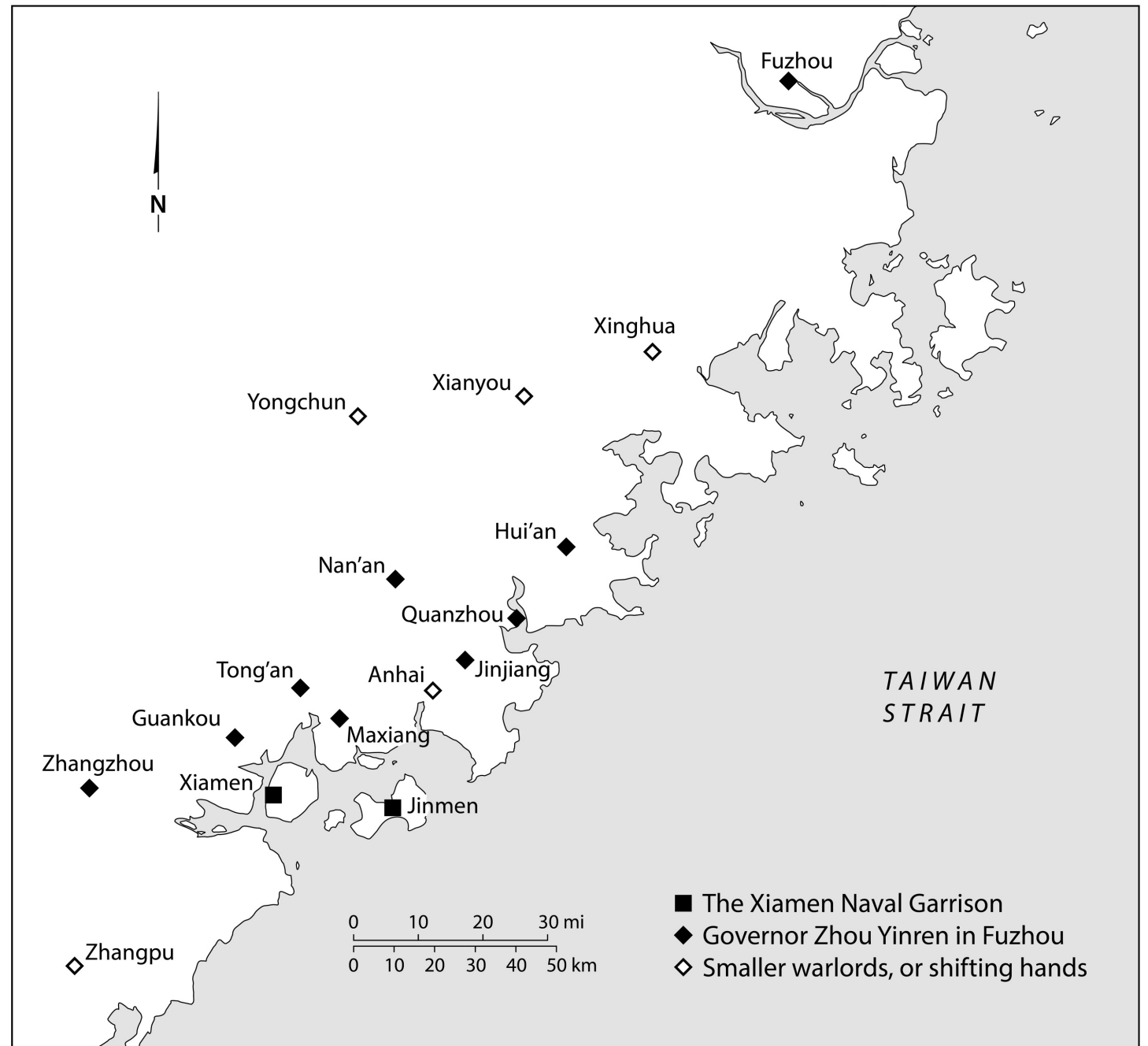
**Peter Thilly**  
University of Mississippi  
[pdthilly@olemiss.edu](mailto:pdthilly@olemiss.edu)

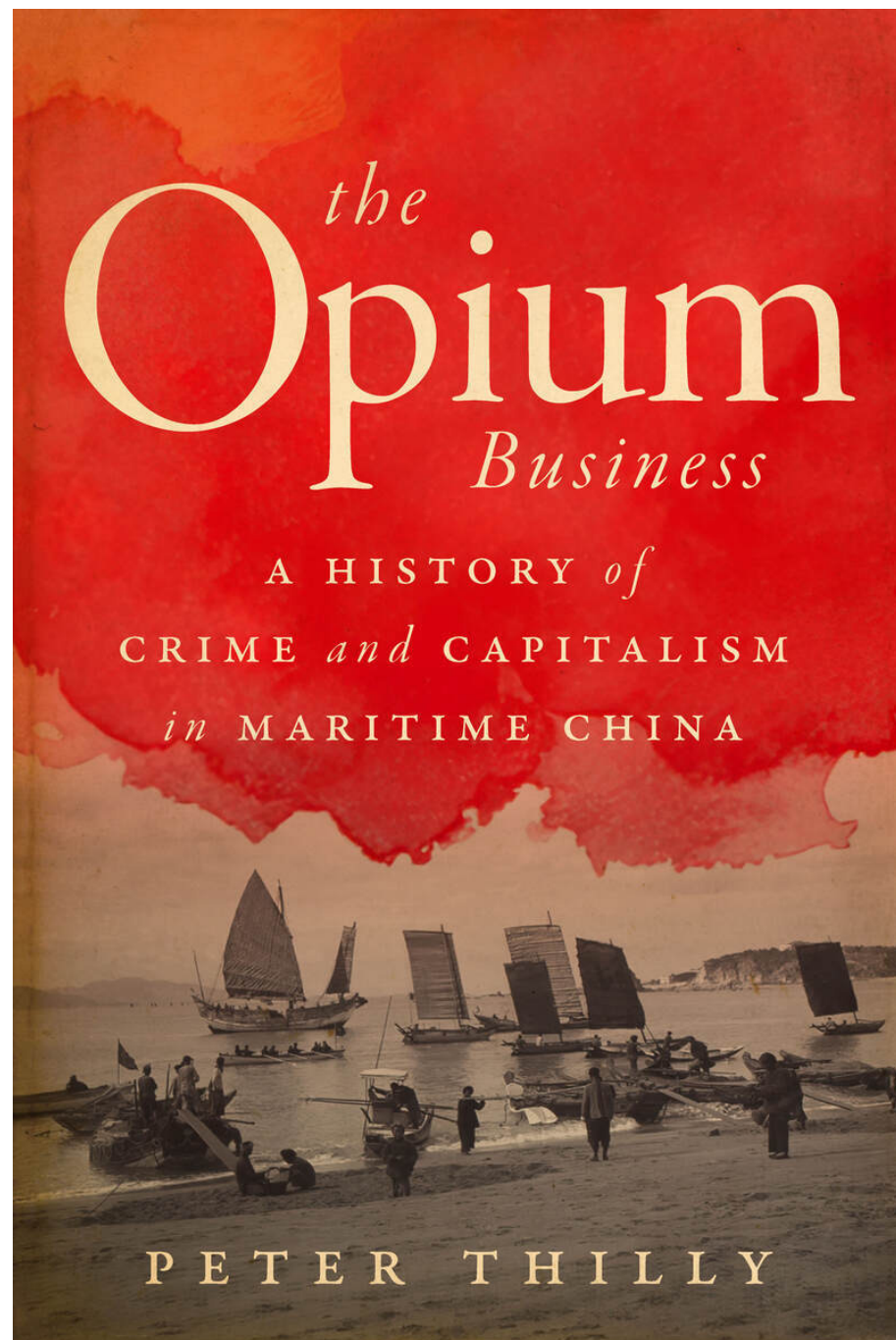




RIGHT:  
Opium Taxation in 1925-26

BELOW:  
Opium export tax stamps, 1925  
(League of Nations Archive)





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**Conclusion** Following the Money, Today and in the Past

# TIMELINE of OPIUM'S LEGALITY

~1839: Illegal

1839-41: The Opium War

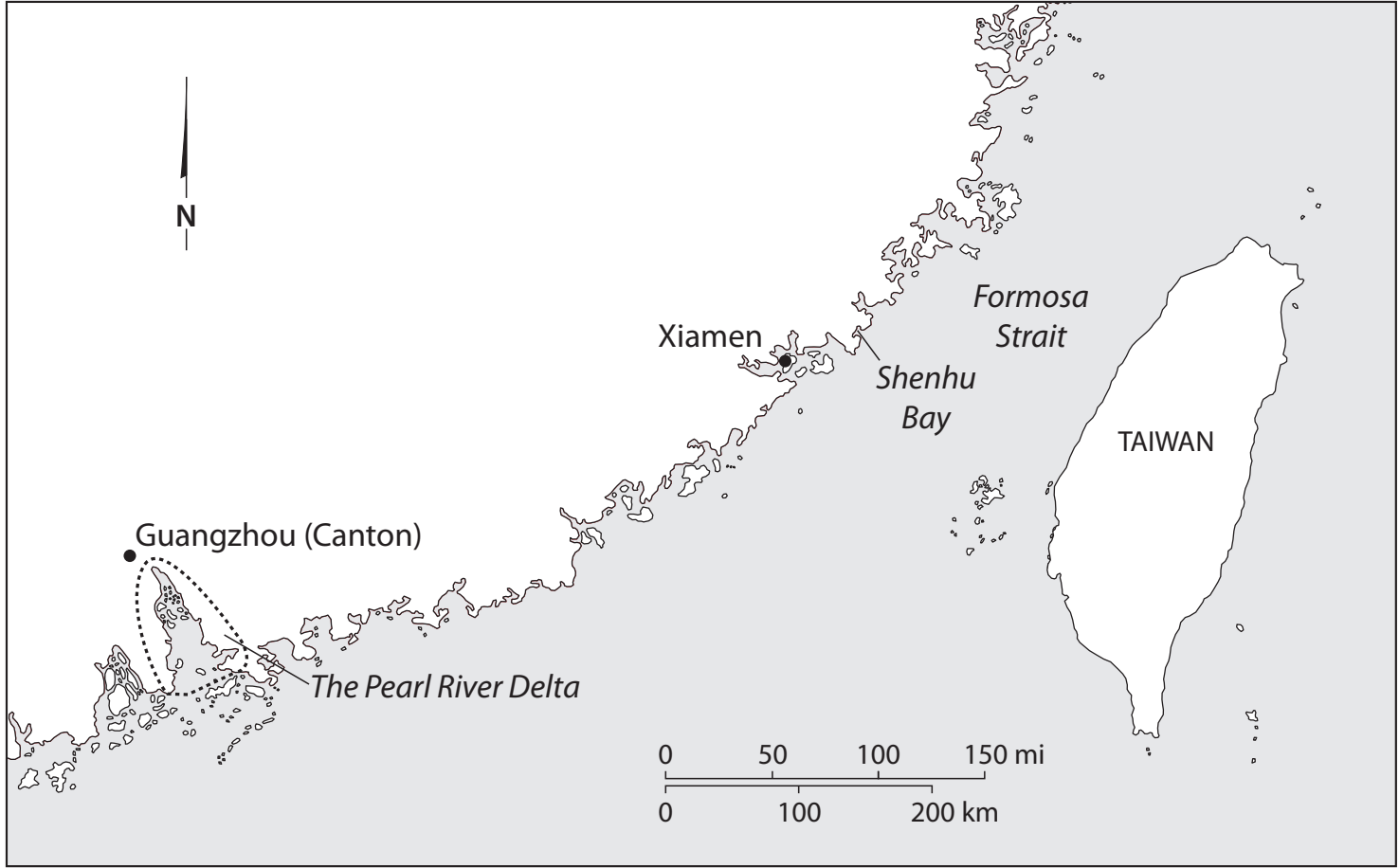
1841-59: Nominally Illegal, Purposefully Ignored

1860-1906: *de facto* legalized by the creation of import  
and transit taxes

# Maritime Fujian









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謹祥芳揭

肅清煙土  
肅清煙土  
肅清煙土  
肅清煙土  
肅清煙土

奏

十月二十九日

載

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1837 Palace Memorial on the opium criminal Shi Hou. First Historical Archives, Beijing.  
軍機處漢文錄副奏摺

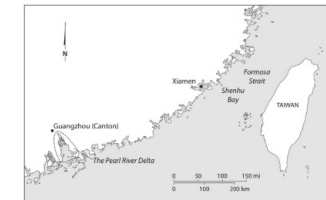
MODULES (14/17)

# The Coastal Opium Trade in 1830s Fujian

*Peter D. Thilly*



This module tells the story of how a transnational coalition of maritime traders came together to operate one of the largest illicit drug markets in history. The importation of opium into China prior to 1832 occurred exclusively in the [Pearl River Delta](#) in Guangdong Province, where Fujianese and Cantonese ships would load up on the drug for delivery to other parts of the empire.



Open Access Digital Module on the Opium Trade in 1830s Fujian

Bodies and Structures 2.0



大李 小李

“The foreigners, Big Li and Little Li”

*also known as*

Thomas Rees and John Rees

(Right) Letter in the Jardine Matheson Company Archive (JM H1.51 01)

Addressed to “Captain Li,” and labeled “Ya Cow” (Yakou).

Contents: Requesting that Captain Li (John Rees) take his boat out of Shenhu Bay due to an impending government raid on opium traders.

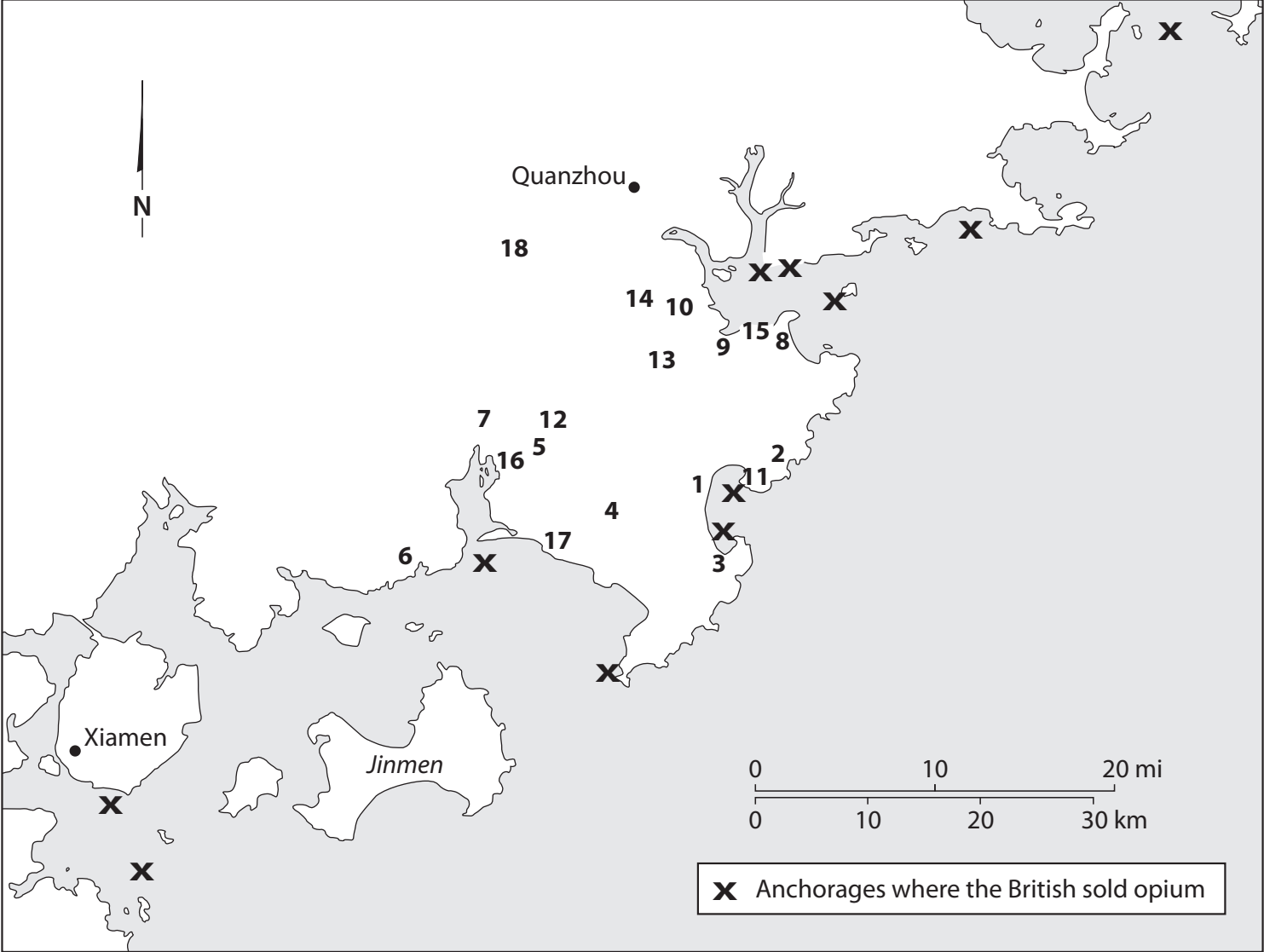
屢蒙雅愛弗叙浮文敬啟者近聞官  
府十餘所要到 倣鄉拿鴉片案件又廈門水  
師提督金門總鎮并哨船大小二十餘隻  
哨泉州府道爺并六營兵丁六千要各細  
搜索 老仁甚見字切將大船史出外面  
且候几天安靜生理畧作再回信通知將船  
入宋大陸生理餘無別囑此奉  
近安未一  
李子船主 全  
老先生錦兄  
丁五月初七日

“The smugglers and Mandarins have come to an arrangement in this place, that they are to be paid \$10 for every chest we deliver...We have a man put on board, who receives the cash and a chop has been delivered to me.”

-Captain Jauncey in Shenhui Bay, November 1835.

“The Mandarines are about collecting their fees prior to the New Year and I believe are squeezing the brokers that we deal with rather hard.”

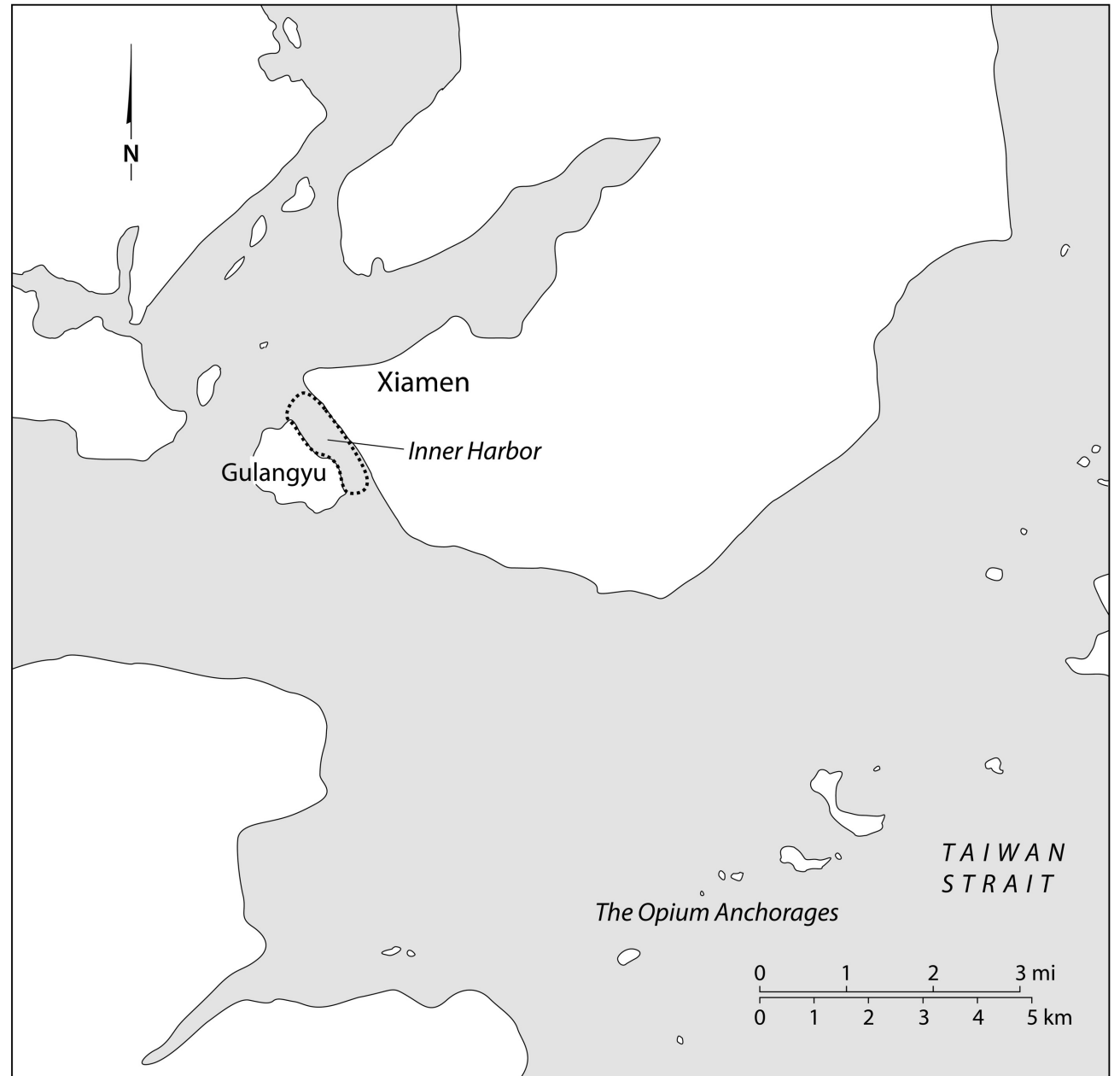
-John Rees in Shenhui Bay, January 1837 (the month of Shi Hou’s arrest).

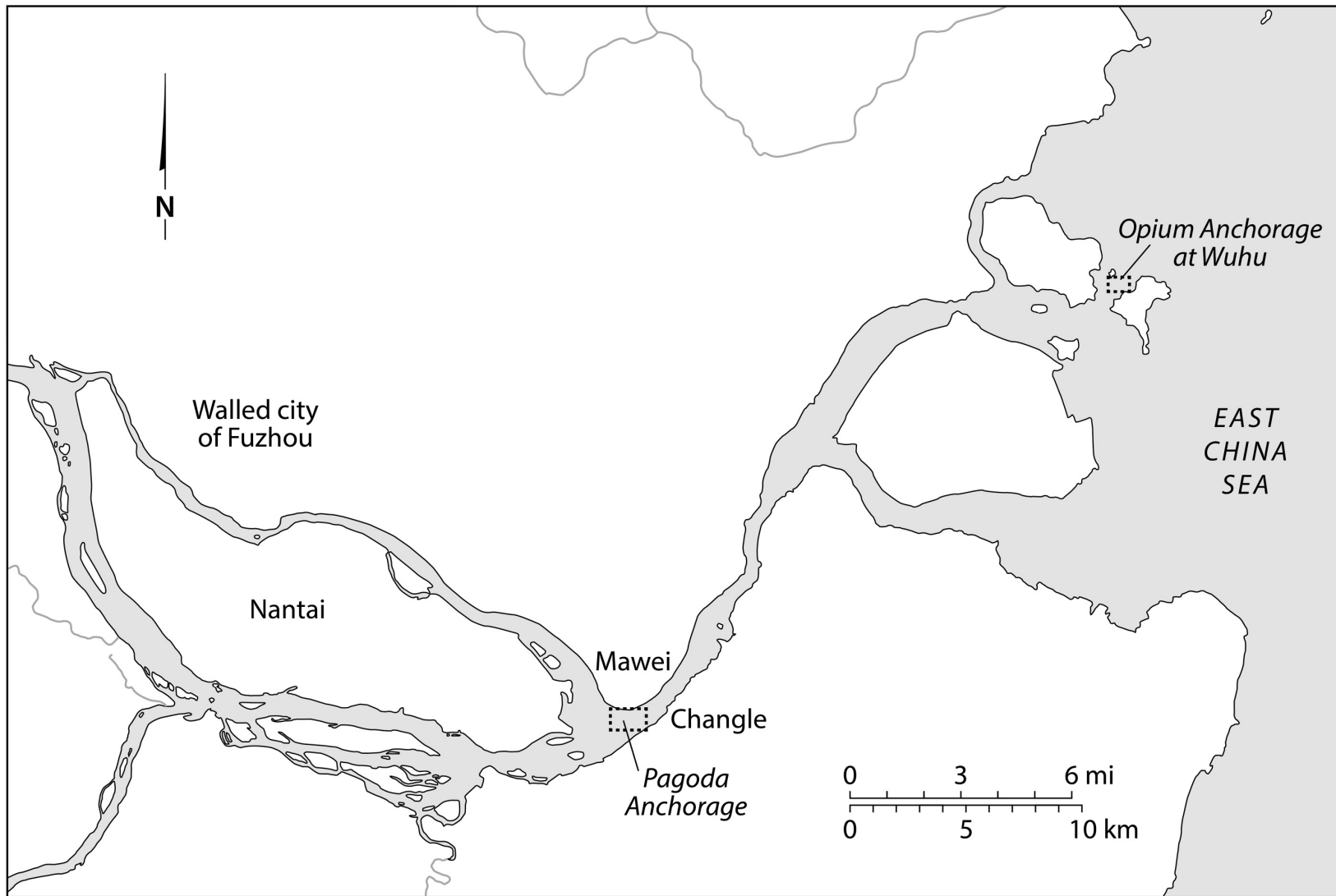


Villages and lineage in Jinjiang County with suspected opium merchants

- |                         |                            |                             |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Yakou, Shi Lineage    | 7 Shati, Gong Lineage      | 13 Shati, Gong Lineage      |
| 2 Xicen                 | 8 Qingyang, Zhuang Lineage | 14 Qingyang, Zhuang Lineage |
| 3 Shenhui, Chen Lineage | 9 Hanjiang, Wang Lineage   | 15 Hanjiang, Wang Lineage   |
| 4 Dong'an, Wu Lineage   | 10 Xindian, Li Lineage     | 16 Xindian, Li Lineage      |
| 5 Xibian                | 11 Chengbian, Luo Lineage  | 17 Chengbian, Luo Lineage   |
| 6 Cendou                | 12 Xiayang, Luo Lineage    | 18 Xiayang, Luo Lineage     |

# The Inner Harbor and the Opium Anchorages in Inter-War Xiamen, 1843-1860





The Harbor and Opium Anchorage in Fuzhou





Left: Opium *lijin* stamp



Right: Opium *lijin* bureau office





# Opium Taxes in Fuzhou during 1875 (per chest):

Import tax: 30 taels

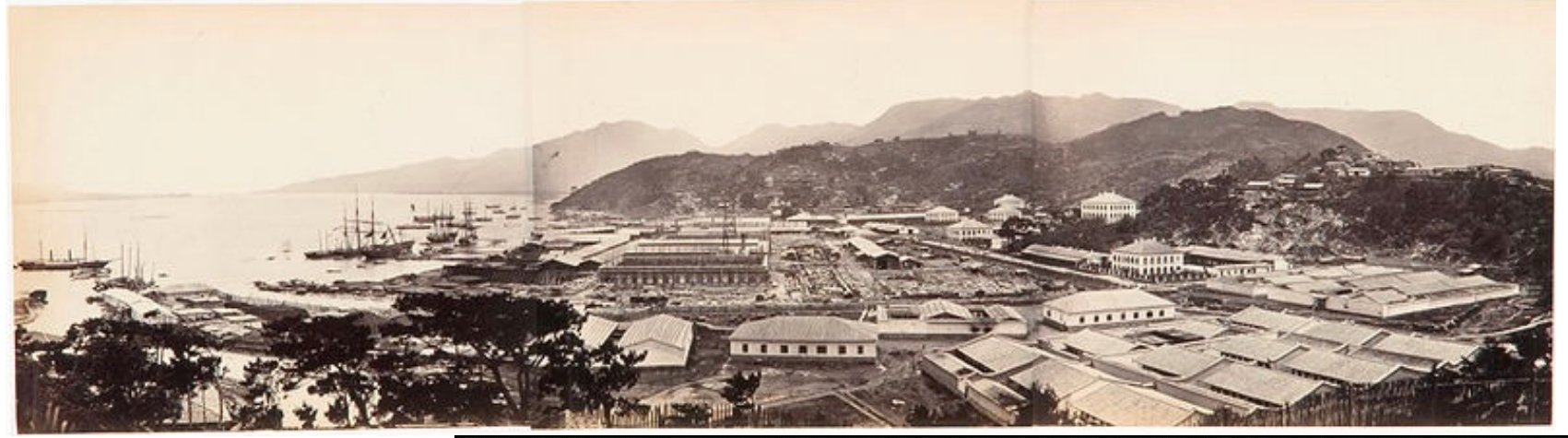
Lijin (transport tax): 84 taels

Total: 124 taels

Monthly wage of a laborer in Fuzhou: 3 taels



# DRUG\$



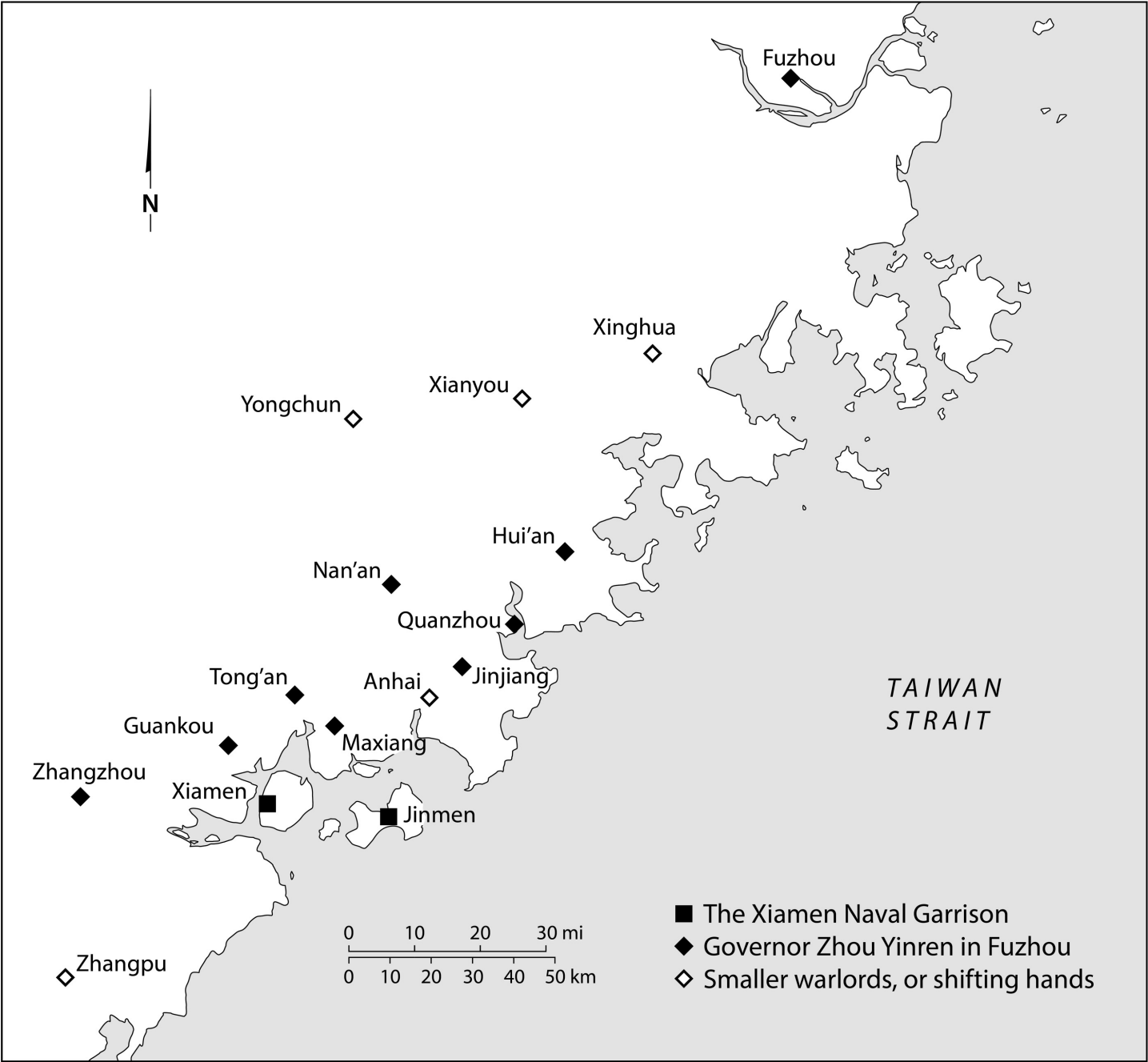
## Opium Revenue Destinations:

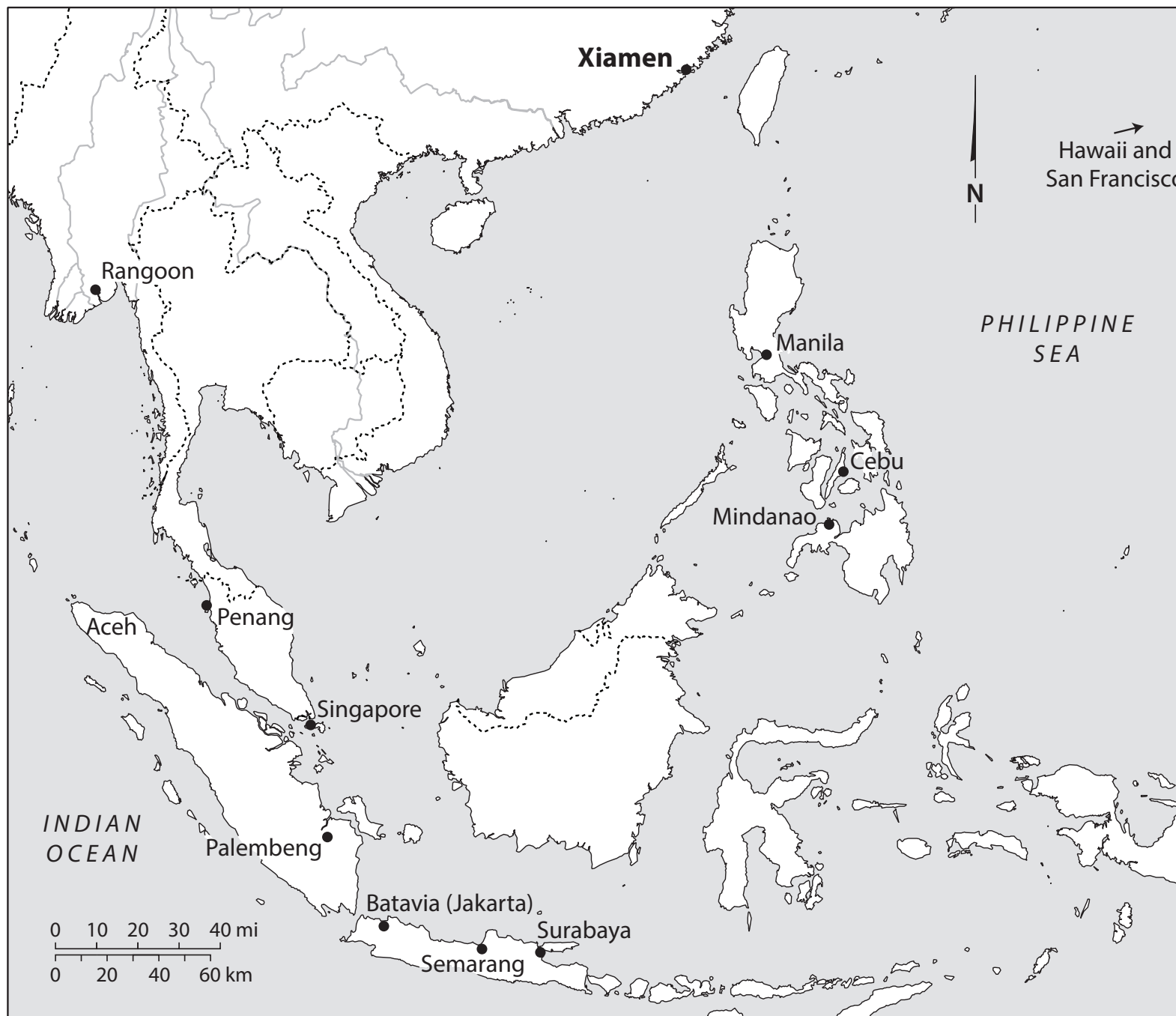
- The Fuzhou Arsenal and Naval Yard (above)
- Zuo Zongtang's war to consolidate direct rule in Qinghai and Xinjiang (right)
- Troop upkeep (land and sea) in Fujian.
- Urban infrastructure
- Social services



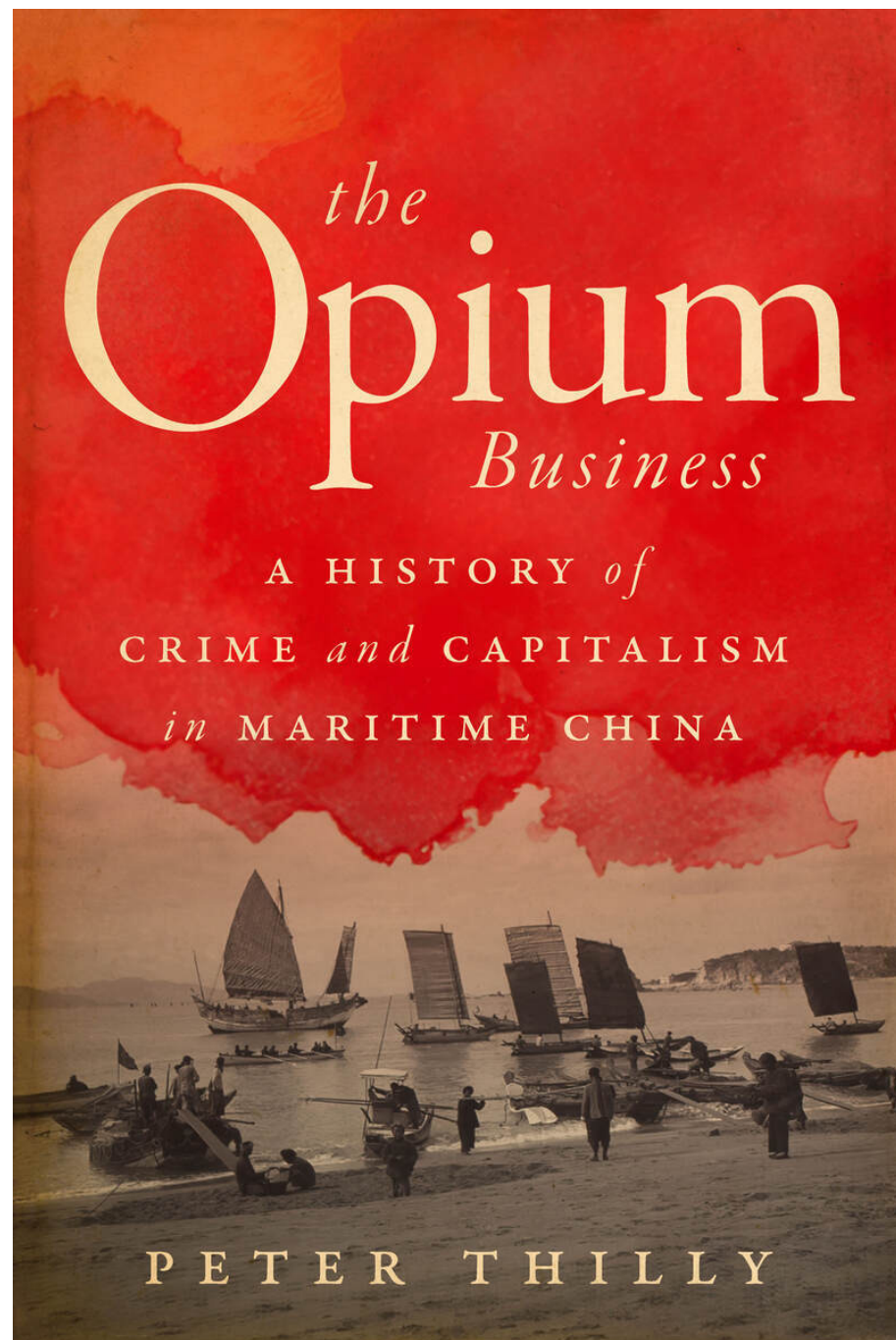
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