

*Living on Borrowed Time: Opium in Canton, 1906–1936.* By Xavier Paulès. Translated by Noel Castelino. Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2017. Pp. x + 334. \$25.00.

Xavier Paulès's well-written, carefully researched volume on opium in Canton, thankfully (and well) translated into English by Noel Castelino, represents a scholarly analysis of patterns of opium consumption in China, as opposed to the focus on foreign supply that has been the academic standard for quite some time. The study covers the decades from the start of the nationwide opium suppression campaign in 1906 to the eve of war with Japan in 1936 when Canton fell again under central government control. The specificity of a case study has the potential to obscure the broader historical landscape, but in this case, the careful mining and analysis of a rich array of sources has enabled Paulès to provide the kind of depth that has often been missing in more sweeping treatments of the social history of opium in China. He defends his choice of Canton by noting not only the city's long history with opium, but also its administrative structure (less divided by foreign claims to concessions), and the wealth of source material. The result is a readable and valuable addition to existing scholarship on the history of opium in China.

The book begins with an introduction that establishes the reasons for the author's approach as a case study and as a focus on Chinese "demand," which is actually a detailed examination of supply and demand in Canton. He also provides a comprehensive overview of the Chinese and non-Chinese scholarship, and details his own sources. The first chapter, which lays out "The Material and Structural History" of the drug in Canton, is an excellent overview of who was consuming opium, how and why they did so, as well as the different forms of the drug and how much it cost. Paulès documents the growing importance of the Chinese supply of the drug from Yunnan and Guangxi after the cessation of imports from British India, and both the legal and illicit routes by which it arrived in the city of Canton over time.

The next two chapters follow the internal debates over the merits of the prohibition and legalization of the drug, and the byzantine politics of opium from the late Qing to the warlord era. The first of these chapters examines Canton's vigorous response to the nationwide opium suppression campaign of 1906–1913, and the fate of the campaign after the death of Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 and the fledgling Republic, focusing on the Guangxi Clique's domination from 1916 to 1920, followed by the energetic attempts of Chen Jiongming 陳炯明 from 1921 to 1923 to continue the fight against opium. The following chapter explores the dizzying developments from the defeat of Chen in 1923 until 1931, a period of time when opium suppression efforts disappeared, and government instability meant a constant struggle to control the revenue from the lucrative opium monopoly established by Sun Yat-sen through tax

farming, smoking permits for individuals, fees and taxes for opium retailers, and other schemes. Paulès also examines the re-establishment of stability from 1931 to 1936 that masked merchant control over the trade in the Canton area.

Although the previous chapters on the policies and initiatives that determined how much of the drug was available and where it could be obtained are crucial in understanding the political and economic framework that structured patterns of consumption, and in Paulès's words on page 9, "defining this 'horizon of choices,'" I found much more engaging the chapters that follow—"The Geography of Consumption," "Life in the Opium Houses," as well as Paulès's analysis of Republican-era anti-opium propaganda, and his penultimate chapter entitled "An X-ray of the Opium Smoker."

"The Geography of Consumption" is a fascinating analysis of the many ways in which opium smoking marked or did not mark the urban landscape of Canton by exploring the wide variety of places where smoking occurred. Along with the more familiar opium dens/houses, which, Paulès claims, were far fewer and far less visible than one might have expected, Chinese also smoked in their homes—often by necessity, given the opium suppression policies that characterized much of the time period covered by the book—as well as in hotels, teahouses, restaurants, houses of prostitution, clubs, and gambling parlours. The types of places where smoking took place were determined primarily by the wealth and gender of the smoker(s), as well as their motivation for smoking. Many of these (shifting) locations revealed not only the consequences of evolving government policies and resulting bureaucratic schemes for licensing and taxation, but also the enduring power of the social appeals of opium smoking. It would have been easier to follow the discussion about this geography, particularly the sections that explore the tendency of opium houses to cluster in more marginal, peripheral regions of the city, had a map been embedded in the chapter, but that is a minor issue.

Building on this, Paulès devotes his next chapter, perhaps the best section of the volume, to a detailed examination of "Life in the Opium Houses" from 1925 to 1937, using as his sources newspaper articles, diplomatic correspondence, anti-opium publications, fiction, and firsthand reports, among others. The chapter examines the changes in regulations governing the access to and inspections of opium houses (when they were legal and licensed), the kinds and amounts of opium these establishments were allowed to sell, and the taxes on opium. There were different types of opium houses, from the luxurious to the squalid, each seemingly characterized by a distinctive clientele, services, and appearance, although Paulès notes that some of the distinctions were likely eroded in practice. His evidence also suggests that opium houses, even the upscale versions, did not seem to last long in an environment in which taxes and other fees could profit the authorities more than the proprietors.

In fact, the author believes that the Canton authorities were far more interested in making opium consumption less visible than eliminating a lucrative revenue stream for the administration.

Paulès goes on in the same chapter to analyse what it was like to visit an opium house, examining and seeking to debunk some of the negative stereotypes about these places that appeared in newspapers and fiction from that period. Available sources and deeply held prejudices necessarily limit Paulès's depiction of opium house life to those that were more profitable and well-established. The author revisits the prevailing notion that opium houses were dangerous due to gang and military activities, and the strong likelihood of violence and theft. He concludes on page 196 that although the newspapers at the time did indeed highlight crimes like this in the opium houses, "in a given period, the level of violence in the opium houses reflected the general level of violence in the city at large." That does not entirely dispel the stereotype, as Paulès claims, but it does provide the needed context. The same goes for his brief attempt to determine if opium houses were perceived by the public as shameful.

The reader is then taken even deeper into life inside an opium den by following a fictional Everyman in the person of Mr Chen, the opium smoker, into a luxury opium house, where we are encouraged to see, feel, and even hear what went on. The virtual visit illuminates some of the reasons why even wealthy individuals smoked in opium houses rather than at home and establishes the opium house as an important location for socializing. We also meet the staff, most notably and extensively, the female attendants (*yanhua* 煙花 or "flowers of smoke") who prepared opium for customers to smoke and performed other services. They generally were not synonymous with prostitutes, as newspapers often assumed, although some did take that route for economic reasons. The *yanhua* were an intriguing group of young, usually unmarried, working women whose job was to make the customers comfortable, despite frequent attempts to prohibit women from entering the opium houses in Canton, especially after 1932. Their lives may not have been something to publicly celebrate, due to the stigma associated with opium houses and the divans on which they reclined with their customers, but they did not have to perform arduous labour and the environment could be conducive to meeting a wealthy patron.

In his examination of Republican-era opium propaganda, "Opium in the Collective Mind during the Republican Period: The Imperfect Victory of Propaganda," Paulès explores the Chinese sentiment favouring and opposing opium smoking, acknowledging that the sources for the latter stance are far more numerous and normative. For the pro-opium side, he does a good job of mining very limited sources to reconstruct the values of camaraderie, moderation, and connoisseurship that wealthy opium smokers likely shared at a time of pervasive anti-opium propaganda and government campaigns against the drug. He makes the important point that

addiction worked to undermine the social nature of smoking and was the antithesis of refined opium consumption. He also mines the propaganda and extracts a set of common visual and textual images that come to represent opium smokers in Republican-era propaganda. Paulès presents that set as a “system” or “matrix,” to my mind an overly complex and unnecessary notion when the image set is clear and brief enough to constitute a simple list, but the extraction of that list of qualities attributed to the smokers is intriguing and valuable. Paulès concludes that the pervasive use of these images successfully stigmatized opium smoking and opium smokers, often by conflating the use and abuse of the drug.

Paulès closes his analysis with his penultimate chapter, entitled “An X-ray of the Opium Smoker,” much of it based on information garnered from the records of clinics treating opium smokers. In this section of the book, he seeks to establish how many opium-dependent and occasional opium smokers lived in Canton in the mid-1930s, how much opium they smoked, and who they were, concluding that most were males between twenty-five and forty-five years of age, the majority of whom claimed to have started smoking opium for pleasure and not for medical reasons. The largest percentage of smokers came from the ranks of manual labourers or merchants. Elites were underrepresented, most likely because they could smoke at home, avoiding raids of opium houses where those arrested were then sent to the clinics for compulsory treatment, although a relatively large number of elites did voluntarily enter the clinics. Paulès pays particular attention to rickshaw men, soldiers, criminals, and opera actors, four groups in which opium smokers were allegedly particularly prominent. Overall, he believes that opium did not have a particularly prominent impact on Cantonese society during the time under consideration.

If I had to identify weaknesses, and that *is* part of the job of a reviewer, one would be the very minor complaint that the maps are not incorporated into the text, but rather appeared with the other illustrations near the end of the volume, making it sometimes awkward to follow the geography of supply and demand that Paulès so carefully traces. More substantively, the tapestry that he has woven of the world inhabited by Canton opium smokers seems to relegate the medical benefits and uses of the drug to the sidelines of the analysis. This may be a result of the author’s sources or, as he believes, because most smokers truly were recreational users, but given the prominence of that issue in the scholarship, it does seem worthy of a bit more emphasis. In addition, Paulès’s belief that pervasive and persuasive anti-opium propaganda depicting opium smokers as low class and impoverished was so effective that it generated a stigma, especially among Chinese elites, that actually resulted in fewer wealthy smokers in the period is ultimately unprovable, which he does admit, albeit a provocative possibility.

But these critiques should not detract from Paulès's laudable accomplishment. He has crafted a thought-provoking, very readable, and carefully researched volume that adds much-needed depth to the study of opium in Chinese cities. His mastery of Chinese and European archival sources, complemented by a comprehensive examination of the popular press and several eyewitness interviews make even his speculation plausible and well-reasoned. I have particularly enjoyed the innovative structure of the volume, where Paulès takes the analysis deeper into the subject as it progresses, beginning with an overview of the political and economic framework that shaped the patterns of opium trafficking and consumption in Canton, then laying out the geography of opium smoking in that city, moving inside the opium houses, using propaganda to explore the general *mentalité* of Republican-era Chinese, and finally figuratively x-raying the individual smoker. The analysis is well done and a very important addition to the scholarship, one that highlights the long-term impact of the 1906 anti-opium campaign in the decades when the opium situation was presumed to have returned to the late Qing status quo. This is a book that can be used extensively in class by undergraduate and graduate students, and challenges scholars of opium to dig deeper.

JOYCE A. MADANCY  
*Union College*

***Merchants of War and Peace: British Knowledge of China in the Making of the Opium War.*** By Song-Chuan Chen. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017. Pp. ix + 230. \$50.00/HKD375.00.

第一次鴉片戰爭是一個前人已作充分研究的題目，史家提出各種理論解釋戰爭起因，而新近學術成果更作出了多樣的探討。本書作者陳松全，年前方從新加坡南洋理工大學轉任英國 Warwick 大學歷史系教席，本書是其2007年劍橋大學博士學位論文修訂後的成果。作者表示，1839年英國外相 Lord Palmerston 決定與遠在五千哩外、大部分英國人幾無所知的中國交戰，主意實來自一群在廣州通商的英國商人。作戰須師出有名，本書根據史實，分析廣州及倫敦英商戰爭論的發展史如何產生有關英國對華的新知識，探察商人和政客如何辨明其軍事行動為正義之戰。全書聚焦於英國私商（不包括東印度公司在內到廣州貿易的英商）及他們與清政府的互動。作者力言他們對華關係的新觀念——十九世紀三十年代在當日中國唯一的通商口岸廣州發展起來，通過戰爭與中國交往——為開戰本源，成功遊說開戰則為戰爭後面動