



澳門大學

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The Maritime Customs Service and the 1911 Revolution

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Abstract

The 1911 Revolution is usually narrated as a purely Chinese affair, as a nationalist and republican revolution against a Manchu monarchy, with little involvement from foreign countries. But the 1911 Revolution was important in all kinds of ways to foreign countries, who only a decade earlier had invaded China during the Boxer Rebellion, as well as to foreign banks, businesses, and communities in China. The Indemnity Loans had ensured that China had become important in international banking, the Treaty of Shimonoseki had made China an important place for industrial investment, and foreign communities in the Treaty Ports had become sizeable. The 1911 Revolution was never just a Chinese affair.

This study uses the Maritime Customs Service as a case study to illustrate the importance of the international context in which the 1911 Revolution took place. It suggests that foreign financial interests, while not involved in starting the 1911 Revolution, played a significant role in determining its outcome, including Yuan Shikai's emergence as the first President of the Republic of China. It was not just in Beijing, but also in London, that the outcome of the 1911 was decided.

The lecture will suggest that as a consequence of foreign involvement, the 1911 Revolution led not to an independent Republic but to China becoming a client state. That reality had a great impact on subsequent political and diplomatic developments. The paper will also show that because of its important role in financing China's debt, the 1911 Revolution ensured that the Chinese Maritime Customs Service became even more important to Republican China than it had been during the Qing Dynasty.

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