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## Opium, Empire, and Modern History

Alan Baumler, editor. *Modern China and Opium: A Reader*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. 190 pp. Hardcover \$55.00, ISBN 0-472-09768-7. Paperback \$22.95, ISBN 0-472-06768-0.

Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, editors. *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. xiv, 444 pp. Hardcover \$60.00, ISBN 0-520-22009-9. Paperback \$22.95, ISBN 0-520-22236-9.

Glenn Melancon. *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2003. 158 pp. Hardcover \$59.95, ISBN 0-7546-0704-6.

Carl A. Trocki. *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 208 pp. Hardcover \$49.95, ISBN 0-415-19918-2. Paperback \$33.95, ISBN 0-415-21500-5.

Opium was, in the nineteenth century, one of the most empire-friendly commodities circulating in the global economy. It had the capacity to balance imperial books, attract a seemingly endless number of customers, and, in a world where cargo space, like time, was money, take up little if any of the room on the ships of merchant princes, smugglers, and pirates. And, like all truly empire-friendly products, it was versatile and adaptable to new conditions. Yet, it has long been the case that opium has normally been linked to China and the Chinese, as well as the horrors of drug abuse. Recently, however, it has become increasingly clear that, by the nineteenth century, the drug was important to the economies and cultures of regions well beyond the "East."<sup>1</sup> Opium had become a truly global phenomenon, one that would seem to require historians to think in global as well as regional terms, if its historical significance was to be understood.

Three of the four works under review here deal with the role of opium in modern history and offer new views of its significance in China and in the political economy of colonialism in Asia. The fourth, by Glenn Melancon, addresses an

issue that has been at the center of scholarship on opium and China for over a century: the cause of the first Opium War (1839–1842). Given the importance of that conflict in shaping the historiography on nineteenth-century China, I will begin with a discussion of Melancon's efforts to revise our understanding of why Great Britain went to war in 1839. By revisiting the debate over the causes of conflict it will then be possible to focus attention on the important contributions made by the other scholarship considered here.

Nineteenth-century observers and later scholars have differed on the significance of the opium trade in explaining the first Opium War. Chinese scholarship has been unequivocal on the issue: when the Qing government cracked down on the trade, war resulted.<sup>2</sup> Some British historians agree. In this view, an ascendant commercial-industrial class in Britain, fresh from successful political battles that altered the makeup of Parliament (the Reform Act of 1832) and ended the monopoly of the East India Company in Asia, insisted on greatly expanding British economic interests globally, and especially in China. Strong advocates of free trade, this group demanded that state military power should be brought to bear to alter the situation in China and thereby further national and individual interests. Government was more than willing to oblige, historians argue, because it was in the thrall of these class interests.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly the significance of this interpretation is the foregrounding of economic and class interests as the primary cause of the opium wars. The economic-causation model finds advocates in both liberal and Marxist versions of nineteenth-century European expansion and empire building and, in the age of globalization, remains popular. It is also an interpretation that fits neatly into the grand narrative of modernization, making war appear inevitable.

In *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis*, Glenn Melancon takes on the economic-causation model as outlined above. Although he does not deny that there were economic motives for British actions, he does not think that they were the main reasons why Lord Melbourne's ministry opted for war. Nor, he concludes, was the war itself an "inevitable consequence of Anglo-Chinese commercial contact" (p. 133). This assertion is grounded in the wealth of new studies of British social, economic, and political development, some of which argues that the basic ingredients of the modernization model were not present in early nineteenth-century Britain. Therefore, the model itself is a faulty projection onto the past. Britain remained a primarily agrarian society in which aristocratic values continued to dominate. From his research in the private papers of members of the Melbourne ministry—rather than the heavily edited Blue Books—Melancon concludes that it was these values, particularly the notion of "honor"—individual and national—that accounts for the decision to go to war in 1839 (pp. 105–108). The affront to the flag and the insults borne by Her Majesty's subjects—and not commercial issues—was "the most important mo-

tive" (p. 99) that led Melbourne's government, with the Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston in the lead, to decide on war. Melancon insists that the notion of honor be taken seriously, and that it not be read as mere rhetoric masking baser motives.

I have little problem with this. Indeed, I think that a broader cultural understanding of the Anglo-Chinese conflict of 1839–1842 is important, especially if, as in the case here, we move away from the reified category of "Western culture" to the complex cultural milieu of Victorian Britain. As we know, not only does honor cause conflicts, but also, if World War I is any example, it can keep war going and profoundly shape the public memory of conflict. And, of course, honor also had a role in inaugurating the second Opium War in 1856. National honor was affronted when, as the story went, the British flag on the lorcha *Arrow* was unceremoniously hauled down by Chinese officials.

Yet it was also the case that a concern with honor was not the exclusive preserve of members of Melbourne's cabinet. Although Melancon does not state it as such, honor also appears to have been important to one of his main foils, James Matheson. In his jeremiad published in the wake of the Napier fiasco, Matheson, the prominent opium merchant and key source for the economic interpretation of the war, pointed directly to the daily "injuries and insults" to "national honour" heaped upon British merchants by local officials, to say nothing of the "indignities" suffered by the Crown representative, Lord Napier himself.<sup>4</sup> In Matheson's polemic, the question of honor was fused with national and individual commercial interests, such that the one could not be upheld without maintaining the other. The failure to recognize this connection, according to Matheson, was where the East India Company had gone wrong—it had sacrificed honor for the sake of commerce.<sup>5</sup> The result was that Great Britain, in the person of the Company and private traders, had continually suffered the indignity and dishonor of being characterized by emperors and mandarins as a "reverently submissive tributary."<sup>6</sup> How, then, to rectify matters? How to bring the private in line with the national? The solution for Matheson and others, such as John Quincy Adams,<sup>7</sup> who saw the cause of the war in the Chinese insistence on humiliating foreigners by making them *kowtow*, was to impose a treaty arrangement on the Qing and back it up with force whenever necessary—gunboat diplomacy, in other words—but in the name of honor.

It is also somewhat misleading to suggest that historians have been blind to the role of honor in the conflict. Peter Fay, for example, has this to say about the Melbourne cabinet's decision for war: "So Her Majesty's government prepared to go to war to efface an unjust humiliating act, to recover the value of certain property plus expenses . . . , and almost by the by to put England's relations with the Middle Kingdom on a new and proper footing."<sup>8</sup> This list of causes neatly parallels Lord John Russell's summary of the government's objectives in March 1840

(cited by Melancon, p. 123). In other words, honor was important, but there was more than one reason to go to war.

Melancon himself grants that there were other motives affecting decisions. The government had an extremely thin majority in Parliament, which it would lose not long after the war began, leaving most of the cabinet out of the decision-making process when the Treaty of Nanjing was signed in 1842. There were also other local and international difficulties—troubles in Ireland, great power rivalries in the Near East, Russian machinations on India's frontier, French adventures in Mexico and Argentina (pp. 88–93)—all of which was grist for opposition mills and, hence, required some kind of response from the government. Given the many problems and pressures the Melbourne ministry faced, the decision for war with China on the grounds of national honor might have taken some of the heat off the cabinet. Yet, oddly enough, the government kept its decision secret until after the war had begun (p. 122). It was only when debate began in Parliament in March 1840 over the government's actions, much of which centered on indecision and bungling, that Palmerston and others, including the aged Lord Wellington in the House of Lords, silenced critics by raising the banner of national honor (p. 128).<sup>9</sup>

Melancon's efforts to replace one primary cause (economic) with another (honor) seem questionable, therefore, when one considers the complexity of causation to which other historians, such as Fay, have drawn attention. As J. Y. Wong aptly shows in his analysis of causal interpretations for both the first and second opium wars, the historical record provides ample evidence to arrive at a variety of most important motives, all of which run the risk of overly simplifying complex historical phenomena.<sup>10</sup> In this case, the dynamic interaction between imperial metropolises and colonial peripheries, so carefully worked out in recent scholarship, is displaced by an interpretation that places all the action in the highest councils of the imperial center.

Yet if the prioritization of one cause obscures the multifaceted nature of imperialism (to follow David Cannadine<sup>11</sup>) and the often contradictory elements involved in decision making, Wong also argues that attention to a primary cause may contain valuable insights. This is the case with Melancon's focus on honor. By insisting that honor be taken seriously, Melancon helps to place foreign relations or diplomatic history within the realm of cultural history. And although he does not pursue the subject in depth here, one can easily see the potential of such an analysis. What seems especially worth pursuing is the specific ways in which an aristocratic ethic became generalized through nonaristocratic groups. To put this another way, if we take Lord Palmerston seriously, then there is no reason not to take Matheson seriously as well. The question then becomes how the values of nobility came to define national and individual interests, particularly those of businessmen, and how they became intimately linked with British imperialism,

far-flung commercial activities, and a historically specific form of masculinity. Research on these lines would explore the emergence of a distinctly British imperial culture and show how global conflict helped to transform as well as to reproduce that culture.

The reduction of complex historical processes to a most important motive is, however, only part of the problem posed by Melancon's interpretation. Also occluded in the shift of focus from the periphery to the center, from a global framework to politics in London, is the opium trade and the nature of British imperialism.<sup>12</sup> In the former case, Melancon suggests that the trade may not have been all that critical to the British establishment in India, and that matters were in the works on the eve of the war that would have ended the India government's monopoly.<sup>13</sup> I will have more to say about the drug dependency of the British empire in a moment. For now it is sufficient to note that here Melancon runs the risk of reproducing the dubious argument among British imperial historians that the war was not about opium at all (the commodity in question could have been widgets), but rather China's restrictions on and antagonism to commerce.

The effort to shift the focus from the specificities of opium to broader issues has, of course, been part of the debate over the causes of Sino-Western conflict for some time. Some scholars have seen in the conflict over opium a good example of the unavoidable tensions between tradition and modernity. An expansive, dynamic West confronted an isolated, tradition-bound China (John K. Fairbank<sup>14</sup>) incapable of accommodating itself to new forms of international contact; again, war was inevitable. In a variation on this theme, others have argued that conflict lay in irreconcilable cultural differences or in the clash of civilizations.<sup>15</sup> Still others find a classic confrontation between free trade and monopoly. The remainder of the works under review here move away from these broad generalizations, with their macro-civilizational implications and overly economic causes, to focus instead on the networks in which opium circulated and the multiple meanings that adhered to it in many different kinds of practices and discourses. As such, the authors take issue with arguments that have naturalized the conflict, refusing their tendency to reduce the complexities of "opium regimes" to an "Asian problem" or to the "Oriental's distinctive vice."<sup>16</sup> More importantly, these studies open discussion on topics that to date have received scant attention. Beyond the wars themselves and the occasional piece on aspects of opium use in China, we know precious little about the role of opium in imperial politics, the broader commercial aspects of the trade, the relationship between the spread of commercial capitalism into Asia and the opium trade, and the many different efforts to eradicate or manage opium consumption.

More importantly, perhaps, this research indicates that it is not plausible to deny the enormous significance of opium or the opium trade in modern global history. It might be helpful, therefore, to begin the discussion of opium in China

with scholarship that focuses attention on the importance of stimulants and addictive substances in the creation of European empires and for the development of capitalism. Exemplary in this respect has been the work of Sidney Mintz. Tracing the commodity trail of sugar in *Sweetness and Power*, Mintz established the links between the Atlantic slave trade, plantation economies in the Americas, sugar production, and the creation of new mass-consumption patterns in Europe. The history of sugar demonstrates how a new commodity could trigger cultural, social, and political changes that quite literally transformed life in the entire Atlantic world. Coffee, tea, tobacco, and, of course, opium, as well as other southern- and eastern-hemisphere stimulants and additives, also worked transformations on a transregional scale.

These first truly mass-produced, mass-marketed global commodities rearranged fundamental relations of power and authority all along the trajectories of their production, movement, and consumption. Ecological changes, new patterns of land use, new rulers and political formations, new forms of government-farmer relations (e.g., commodity taxes and revenue farming), and cash economies resulted at the colonial end.<sup>17</sup> In imperial metropolises, new social groups, new social patterns, and various kinds of dependencies appeared (e.g., tea without sugar became unthinkable for British and American tea drinkers).<sup>18</sup> In between these two poles appeared novel networks of capital accumulation and circulation<sup>19</sup> and new technologies of transport and communication, both of which altered patterns of material flows and generated new population movements (e.g., silver from the Americas to Asia to pay for Chinese tea, Africans to the Atlantic seaboard and the Caribbean, and Chinese “coolie” labor to Cuba). These shifts were, in turn, codified and circulated in new representational forms (e.g., commercial maps and dictionaries, and statistical charts). Much as the internet has stimulated a new global imaginary today, novel forms of representation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created an imaginary that already had begun to compress time and distance. In these processes, an enormous amount of wealth was generated, the control and expansion of which set European nation-based commercial enterprises against each other in keen competitions that included warfare, piracy, and shady dealings (again, not unlike the global transnational corporations of today, but without the formal organizations and international regimes that now exist). Out of these struggles emerged the first truly global empire, that of Great Britain, which maintained a hegemonic position for much of the long nineteenth century (1789–1914).

One of the recurring questions in global history has been how to account for the triumph of the British over other European competitors. In economic history there have been a number of answers to this question: better double-entry bookkeeping, a second-to-none Protestant work ethic, industrialization, clever economies of scale, superior monopolistic practices, and, eventually, cutting-edge



free traders. This mixture of cultural and economic factors often occludes the interactive relationship between transforming state apparatuses and commercial enterprises. For example, would Britain's Royal Navy have been able to dominate Atlantic shipping lanes without the infusion of fiscal resources provided by the sugar and tea trade? Could Britain have constructed and maintained a global empire after the Napoleonic Wars without its base in India? And could the Indian colonies have worked without opium?

In the search to answer these questions, stimulants and addictive drugs take on monumental significance. By the early part of the nineteenth century, British Indian opium had stanching the flow of New World silver into China, replacing silver as the commodity that could be exchanged for Chinese tea and other goods. By the 1830s, silver was flowing out of China to India and beyond. As opium imports in China steadily increased, the political and economic results in India, Britain, and the greater empire were profound. As suggested above, tea and sugar duties helped to pay for the Royal Navy's upkeep and development.<sup>20</sup> Opium revenues in India not only kept the colonial administration afloat, but sent vast quantities of silver bullion back to Britain. The upshot was the global dominance of the British pound sterling until World War I.

In this respect, the figures compiled by John Richards in his study of opium revenue in India are instructive.<sup>21</sup> Managed through the East India Company monopoly, opium, by 1839, accounted for around 11 percent of the total revenue of the British establishment in India, a figure that held for the next decade. After 1850, the opium produced 16–17 percent of revenues, peaking at 100 plus million rupees (10 million pounds sterling) annually by the early 1880s. Over this period of time, opium revenues equaled around 42 percent of the land tax, the other main source of monies of the British Raj. Although there was a drop-off after 1890, opium still generated around 8 percent of total revenue for the next two decades at an average of about 75 million rupees annually. The direct revenue generated by opium in India was supplemented by the inflow of silver from sales of the drug in China. In 1839, the figure was 22.6 million rupees, and it steadily increased to around 41 million rupees per year on average in the decade from 1865 to 1875. There was a reduction afterwards, but around 22 million rupees per year still entered India through the mid-1890s. In addition to these monies, there was also a movement of silver bullion from the British trading firms in China, such as Jardine and Matheson, to London banks.

As Carl Trocki has argued, and Richards' data supports, without opium the British global empire is virtually unimaginable. With a small population and limited natural resources, Britain gained from opium revenues a competitive advantage globally until larger entities with more resources and new technologies (Germany and the United States) caught up with Britain in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Even then, opium continued to keep Britain in the game,



providing resources for administering new territories in Southeast Asia and keeping the global imperial ledger in the black.

It is perhaps not too surprising, therefore, for Trocki to suggest that the British opium empire might best be understood as a global drug cartel, one that had as its *raison d'être* the maximization of profits and the protection, at all costs, of the revenue of India. While the British empire may not have been created to trade opium, the trade was central to its survival. When key decisions were made, none were ever directed against the trade or against opium revenue. That was certainly the case when British governments decided to use force in China in 1839 and again in 1856. Even as late as 1918, after spectacularly burning the opium crop, the Government of India knowingly turned a blind eye to the “non-certified” opium still making its way to Singapore and Hong Kong. When a scandal arose over Japanese involvement in trans-shipping some of this store into Tianjin, the Indian government claimed no obligation for smuggling by third parties of India opium into China, especially at “the sacrifice of Indian revenues.”<sup>22</sup> However leaders may have justified these decisions to the public or themselves (e.g., national honor, India’s revenue), their choices were consistent with Trocki’s assessment of the “keystone” role that opium played in making and sustaining empire and in spreading commodity-based commercial capitalism throughout Southeast and East Asia.<sup>23</sup>

It is within this global context that the articles in *Opium Regimes* and Alan Baumler’s sources take their place. In what follows, I will deal in detail with the contributions to *Opium Regimes*. As I move through the essays, I will note the sources in Baumler’s collection (Baumler, essay title) that seem to fit with the themes of particular pieces in the volume edited by Brook and Wakabayashi. At the end of this essay, I will have more to say about Baumler’s reader.

Spanning over one hundred years of history and covering locations throughout the region, the chapters in *Opium Regimes* are linked together by the novel notion of a regime. Brook and Wakabayashi define such an entity as an authority that “declares its right to control certain practices, and develops policies and mechanisms to exercise that right within its domain” (p. 4). The advantage of this definition is that it allows for attention to the activities of governmental units, international organizations such as the League of Nations, nongovernmental organizations such as anti-opium leagues, and businesses such as the peculiar East India Company itself, with its own army, navy, and administrative bureaucracy. “Employing this concept,” they conclude, “allows us to highlight the systematic and comprehensive character of drug-control structures and to stress their capacity for operating in the political realm—and the awareness of their necessity to do so” (p. 5). Key to the politicization of opium was its frequent shape-shifting between official monopoly and contraband commodity.<sup>24</sup> The strength of this volume lies in its detailed and nuanced exploration of these regimes in action.

Following introductory comments, *Opium Regimes* is divided into four parts: the international context, distribution and consumption, control in China and efforts to end the trade, and the crisis of the Japanese invasion and the successful opium suppression by the Communists after they came to power. The first part opens with Gregory Blue, who reinforces the argument made above about the central role of opium in the British empire. The complex and overlapping networks that were produced by the post-opium war treaties bound together Indian peasants, British and Indian governing entities, a vast mass of Chinese consumers, and an array of European, American, Parsee, Sephardic, and Chinese merchants in an immense revenue-generating system. As a result of this complex network of relations, when questions were raised about the morality of the trade, there were ample “authorities” on many fronts prepared to defend it. Anticipating the cultural-relativist arguments of a later age, boosters argued that opium to a Chinese was no different from a stiff drink to an Englishman: it relaxed one after a hard day’s work. Such rationalizations hardly silenced critics and anti-opium movements, some uniting Chinese and foreigners, who fought long and hard to end the trade. Always acting as an impediment to abolition, however, was what Blue identifies as the bifurcated nature of the framework in which opium circulated: “formal colonialism” in India and the “imperialism of free trade in China” (p. 45).

And, of course, there was the revenue. Something as lucrative as the opium trade could not but attract attention. Colonial regimes and existing state administrations tapped the wealth of the network for new funds. Although the Qing dynasty initiated a forceful policy of opium suppression in the late 1830s (Baumler, “The Debate on the Legalization of Opium, 1836”), eventually the prohibition was ended (Shanghai Tariff Agreement, 1858), and the drug was taxed at its point of entry into China. Meanwhile, smugglers attempted to circumvent such controls by finding new sources of opium, and farmers and local administrative units in many parts of China saw opium production as a solution to the problem of scarce resources and revenues. In spite of efforts by some Qing officials to eliminate opium from Chinese society (Baumler, “The Qing State and Opium Suppression”), opium consumption grew. As it did, pressure increased in China and in Europe and America to end the trade (Baumler, “Missionaries and Opium”), and various commissions sought hard data on the scale of the opium problem (Baumler, “The Philippine Commission”). After World War I, the postwar international order, codified in part though the League of Nations, moved to constrain the trade in opium and its derivatives, morphine and heroin. Such efforts at international control were about as effective in the 1920s and 1930s as they are today—that is to say, not very effective at all.

Complementing Blue’s discussion is Bob Wakabayashi’s analysis of the Japanese reaction to and eventual involvement in the opium trade in China. Originally sympathetic to China’s plight in the face of British military aggression and

imposed trade, particularly insofar as the latter might presage developments in Japan, attitudes began to shift after 1860. In part this was a result of Japan's ability to have opium trading banned in the initial treaties with the European and American powers and of strong anti-opium policies at the beginning of the Meiji era. In this context, the Qing seemed weak and ineffectual by comparison. When Taiwan was taken, the Meiji state, like other colonial powers, established a lucrative opium monopoly and tolerated its own subjects trading opium in China. China's continued inability to deal with the opium plague was one reason why Fukuzawa Yukichi argued that Japan had no choice but to leave Asia and join the West (pp. 70–73).

Part 2 of the book, on distribution and consumption, opens with a piece by Carl Trocki, parts of which rehearse his main arguments discussed above. Here, however, Trocki is primarily interested in fleshing out the relation between capitalism, the colonial state, and opium in Southeast Asia. The key players in the development of state-sponsored opium production were Chinese who had migrated into the region. Some of them came to manage plantation-like opium farms that generated huge revenues for colonial regimes and, in the case of Thailand, a modernizing state apparatus. In Singapore, Penang, Siam, and Indochina, Chinese converted their opium profits into commercial capital, opening banks and other businesses, while acquiring landholdings from destitute peasants who had become hooked on the drug. Fearing the creation of insoluble social and economic problems in rural areas, colonial regimes were forced to end the farming systems and set up state monopolies. At the same time, however, no one seems to have thought of abandoning the trade—it was a far too critical contributor to government revenues and commercial growth.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see opium playing an important role in Hong Kong as well. Here, however, the results, from the point of view of the colonial government, were less positive. Hoping to milk the golden revenue cow as other British colonial regimes had done, the Hong Kong government opted for a farming system in which monopoly rights to the annual crop were auctioned to the highest bidder. The system did not generate the anticipated revenues, however, because the only participants, Chinese businessmen, formed syndicates that effectively dictated the price of opium to colonial authorities. As Christopher Mann notes, in spite of many efforts to break the power of the syndicates, revenues remained low until the government allowed outside bidders. As a result, revenues increased dramatically after 1914. Under pressure from the anti-opium movement, the Hong Kong authorities created a monopoly as part of a drug suppression campaign (a pattern of “control” that would be repeated by a succession of Chinese governments on the mainland over the next three decades), which had the stunning result of raising revenues to unprecedented levels. Like India, the

Hong Kong colonial regime soon found itself addicted to revenues from its opium monopoly to balance the imperial books.

During the late nineteenth century, Hong Kong continued its traditional role of also being the main point of entry for illegal opium. It was not only on the east coast of the Qing empire that smuggling was a problem, however. In an article that builds on observations made by Joseph Fletcher concerning the involvement in the opium trade of merchants from the Central Asian kingdom of Kokand, David Bello explores how the drug demand generated on the eastern edge of the empire stimulated entrepreneurial efforts along what would later become the Xinjiang frontier. Significantly, this trade was occurring at the same time as the growth of the traffic that led to the first Opium War. Bello notes that, as in the east, the drug trade came to corrupt the Qing political structure and the populace at large. Opium, perhaps more than any other single entity, exposed the thin veneer of that structure to a degree that makes it understandable why the Qing were unable to carry out a level of political and military mobilization that might have saved the dynasty.

If the Qing were weak at controlling the distribution and production of contraband on the imperial frontiers, the dynasty proved even more feeble in the treaty ports established after 1842. In Tianjin, for example, Japanese and Korean (!) migrants flowed into the port to escape the lack of opportunity or poor economic conditions at home. Many of these immigrants became involved in selling opium and, increasingly in the 1920s, morphine. Motohiro Kobayashi estimates that as much as 70 percent of the Japanese population in Tianjin may have been involved in the trade.<sup>25</sup> By the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Korean immigrants alone ran over two hundred opium dens in the Japanese concession. When consular police cracked down on the trade, dealers simply continued operations under the cover of Chinese front men. Opium had become a form of primitive accumulation for those marginalized by empire building.

But what of consumption? Alexander Des Forges takes up the issue with a focus on Shanghai, while later in the volume Mark S. Eykholt adds some observations from his study of Nanjing (pp. 361–363). Of interest in Des Forges's approach is his insistence that opium be treated as a mutable signifier in discourses on drug use and in social practices. This allows him to account for a kind of romance with the drug among some writers, its commonplace presence at social gatherings of the Shanghai elite, its emergence as a sign of individual excess and ultimately national degradation, and its close link to a discourse of leisure that emerged in Shanghai after 1870. The latter was particularly significant because it marked the entry of at least a part of China into an international consumer culture (Baumler, "Opium and the Exotic East: The Chen Family Opium Den"). Des Forges also cites a bit of turn-of-the-century Shanghai verse by Qing Rongguang:

The opium pipe is a gun that kills bloodlessly; the tiny fire in the bowl can scorch an ocean dry. It melts away one's capital and sucks up the spirit, weakening the people, impoverishing the nation, and speeding China's demise. (p. 178)

Observations like these make it easy to see how opium could become a rallying point for anti-imperialist, nationalist movements in the twentieth century regardless of political ideology (Baumler, "Opium and the New China," "Opium and Imperialism").

This section of *Opium Regimes* leaves the reader with an overwhelming sense of how, by the turn of the twentieth century, opium had insinuated itself into every crevice of the late imperial polity. As it did so, opium polluted social and economic relations from the top to the bottom of Qing society and transformed China into "the sick man of Asia." But was the polity itself so enfeebled that it was incapable of throwing off the opium yoke? This question is taken up in part 3, which begins with an analysis by R. Bin Wong on the effects opium had on the capacities of the Qing state to mobilize itself for reform and regeneration. His conclusion is that the burden of opium was so great that it made it virtually impossible for the dynasty to launch new institutional structures that would have brought it in line with Meiji Japan. At the same time, however, when the Qing did move tentatively in 1906 to suppress opium again, it became possible to mobilize levels of support and penetrate into local society to an unusual degree (Baumler, "The Guangxu Emperor's 1906 Edict on Opium: The New Policies in Action").

It was, in other words, smart politics to be anti-opium, particularly as larger segments of the public and educated youth linked national aspirations, anti-imperialism, and China's many weaknesses with the opium plague. Judith Wyman and Joyce Madancy look at Sichuan and Fujian, respectively, to assess the effectiveness of Qing suppression efforts. Wyman shows how strong and capable leadership at the provincial level enabled an effective campaign in Sichuan. In Fujian, the Qing found a ready audience among gentry and urban elites, and they attempted to exploit and direct anti-opium organizations that emerged there.

The Qing were also aware, however, that localized efforts to suppress opium use could only be half of the equation. The question of supply also had to be dealt with. After an opium-suppression edict was issued by the imperial court in 1906, the government opened negotiations with Great Britain, the goal being to end the India opium trade. A deal was hammered out in which imports were to be reduced by one-tenth annually until completely eliminated by 1917. In 1911, the British agreed that it would not import opium into any province where the case could be made that the cultivation and importation of domestic opium had ceased (Madancy, pp. 239–240). This gesture was a welcome acknowledgment by Britain that opium suppression should be a joint effort. Moreover, in Fuzhou, where the combined efforts of the state and nongovernmental organizations had eliminated

local production and domestic imports, it meant the end of Indian imports as well. These positive outcomes of the campaign could not be sustained, however. The Republican Revolution resulted in a weak central authority and competing factions in the provinces. By 1920 warlords found opium a good source of income for paying for armies and armaments (Baumler, "Opium and Warlordism").

Around the same time, there was renewed international interest in the control of narcotics, especially opiates. Even before the end of World War I, foreign doctors and Christian missionaries established the International Anti-Opium Association (IAOA) in China. It suffered, however, from having much of its literature available only in English. Following upon the strong condemnation of opium by Sun Yat-sen (Baumler, "Sun Yat-sen on Opium, 1924"), the gap was soon filled by Chinese Christians, who created their own organizations to translate and disseminate the IAOA literature, but political disorder prevented the launching of an effective campaign. Then, in 1924, a group of over five hundred Chinese met in Shanghai and created the National Anti-Opium Association (NAOA) (Baumler, "The Anti-Opium Association"), whose first order of business was to elect representatives to a League of Nations-sponsored opium conference in Geneva (November 1924–February 1925). The problem the NAOA faced, as Edward Slack points out in his contribution, was to steer a course between foreign missionaries and Chinese nationalism. The organization's success, at both the national and international levels, is apparent from its staying power and from its ability to mobilize a populist anti-opium movement. The NAOA's activities were vast. They included a host of publications in magazines, books, pamphlets, and posters (wonderful examples of which are provided in Slack's article). These publications reported studies of the drug situation in China, for distribution locally and internationally. They identified opium dens in foreign concessions in treaty ports, exposed warlord involvement in the trade, and criticized the opium monopolies of European imperial powers in Asia. The NAOA also promoted a national anti-opium day and, eventually, week, in China. Its strategies for dealing with the opium plague were so effective that branch chapters increased from 188 in 1924 to 450 by 1930.

The new Guomindang (GMD) government that came to power in 1927 obviously could not ignore such a potent force, especially when its initial plan was to legalize a state-run opium monopoly, ostensibly for three years, as the first step in opium suppression (Baumler, "The Guomindang and Opium, 1927"). The NAOA vehemently opposed the plan. The situation was even worse than the NAOA thought, however. As Alan Baumler demonstrates in his article, Jiang Jieshi and his cohorts had decided that opium revenues were a key resource for building the GMD state apparatus. The problem they faced was that opium was controlled by far too many hands, many of whom were hardly supporters of the new national government. The monopoly that the GMD created was designed, Rockefeller-like,



to control the movement and distribution of the drug along the Yangzi corridor and to gradually eliminate competition (Baumler, "The Yangzi Opium Trade"). The GMD also created the Farmer's Bank of China to finance the purchase and mortgaging of opium stocks.

Control, in turn, was presented as the means by which opium use would eventually be eliminated, a ploy designed to diffuse criticism from organizations like the NAOA and the League of Nations. The latter kept up the pressure, however, and Jiang's government was continually involved in spin control to deflect criticism domestically and internationally. Finally, in 1934, Jiang announced a six-year campaign to completely eradicate opium (Baumler, "The Six Year Plan to Eliminate Opium, 1936"<sup>26</sup>). The opium-suppression campaign was complemented by the launching of the New Life Movement in the same year. The two campaigns, both of which were begun with fanfare and firm statements of commitment by the GMD leadership, suggested an extended effort at reform. Critics were effectively marginalized. With the Japanese invasion in 1937, opium suppression understandably went on the back burner for the duration of the anti-Japanese struggle.

Just how successful the suppression would have been, even with a major effort by the GMD, remains an open question. Lucien Bianco reminds us that once smallholders had gone over to opium production—whether by force or by choice—it was difficult to give up a lucrative cash crop and return to subsistence production. Many forms of resistance emerged, including open rebellion when officials tried to squeeze the precarious margins upon which peasants survived. Much more would be required than simply telling peasants what to plant or cynically taxing or fining their poppy production, while carrying out opium suppression campaigns. Governments would have to make a full commitment to promoting a new kind of life in rural areas. Such lessons are obviously no less pertinent today in Latin America, or in Afghanistan, where poppy cultivation has reemerged with a vengeance following the overthrow of the Taliban.

With the advent of global war came changes—but the eradication of opium was not one of them. Rather, as Timothy Brook and others in the final section of the volume demonstrate, opium revenues continued to fuel state-run projects. Once the Japanese Imperial army had invaded and occupied much of eastern China, the normal channels of opium flows—legal and illegal—were disrupted. And while the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere had, at least in principle, the goal of ending opium production and consumption, neither the Japanese occupation forces<sup>27</sup> nor Wang Jingwei's collaborationist regime at Nanjing could do without opium revenues. Both also agreed that they needed to control supply and eliminate smuggling. The two were not, however, in clear agreement as to how these goals should be achieved. On the Japanese side, the army moved to create a monopoly over supply and distribution much as the GMD had done. This included finding a new source of supply in Iran. To express at least a modicum of

independence, Wang's regime set up an Opium Suppression Bureau modeled on that of the GMD, but the Japanese occupiers found various ways to guarantee that they held the upper hand. In large part the Japanese had to maintain control because, as Motohiro Kobayashi's second contribution to the volume makes clear, by 1941 they were increasingly dependent on opium revenues for the procurement of matériel to continue the war effort in China. Some gestures were made at suppression (Baumler, "Opium Control in Manchuguo"), but a Japanese front organization maintained control over distribution of the drug until student anti-opium protests broke out in 1943. Then the situation changed dramatically.

By late 1943, Wang Jingwei's regime had moved to take over the opium monopoly in occupied China with an eye to enhancing desperately needed revenues and asserting a degree of autonomy from Japan. Apparently with support and perhaps some instigation by the Nanjing government's propaganda department, students were encouraged to launch an anti-opium campaign. Styling themselves the "Youth Purification Movement," students broke up opium dens, loading drugs and drug paraphernalia into rickshaws to be carted off for destruction. The movement grew and spread downriver to Shanghai. There seems little doubt that the officials in Japan were horrified by this activity, particularly by its overt nationalist rhetoric. By the spring of 1944, the opium monopoly had been shifted to the Chinese government, and broad promises were made to eradicate opium. This, of course, did not happen; the Nanjing regime was just as dependent on opium revenues to finance its state apparatus as were the Japanese occupation forces and the GMD and European colonial regimes before them. No political configuration in China, particularly ones that had national unity as their ultimate goal, seemed capable of getting the monkey off their backs—until, that is, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in 1949.<sup>28</sup>

Just how the CCP accomplished what no other political entity in China had been able to do for over one hundred years is taken up by Zhou Yongming in the book's final contribution. Drawn from a longer study on the CCP and opium that comes down to the present,<sup>29</sup> Zhou begins with an analysis of CCP anti-opium rhetoric in which the drug was relegated to the capitalist-feudal past, and eradication linked with the creation of a new culture. Zhou then quickly moves on to the first mass campaign, which took place between 1950 and 1952 (Baumler, "Opium Suppression under the Communists"). Efforts ranged from rehabilitating addicts to eliminating poppy cultivation and drug trafficking. Although these initiatives were inconsistent and inefficient—in large part because China was then engaged in a war with the United States in Korea—where they were successful the eradication of opium production was closely tied to land reform. After 1952, anti-drug campaigns were piggybacked with other, well-known mass campaigns such as the Three Antis (corruption, waste, bureaucracy) and Five Antis (bribery, tax evasion, embezzlement of state assets, shoddy work, and pilferage of information about

the state economy). This second effort not only eliminated production and consumption with a minimum loss of life but was also an effective means of state-building and for welding the masses to the Party.

There was little public notice of these successes at the time, however. Given how central opium had become in identifying all that was wrong with government and society from the late Qing forward, it seems reasonable to wonder why the CCP was so modest about its achievements. Zhou suggests that the main reason for official silence was that the Party hesitated to give any material to the propaganda machine of the United States, one way or the other, that could be used to discredit the People's Republic. While this explanation on the face of it may appear a bit disingenuous, one needs to recall the global anticommunist smear campaign in which the American government and media were engaged in the early 1950s, to say nothing of the show trials and public humiliations of suspected communists. Owen Lattimore's *Ordeal by Slander* testifies to how any statement, however innocent, could be, Alice-in-Wonderland-like, turned on its head and made to seem part of a massive, depraved anti-American conspiracy. Down that rabbit hole there was plenty of other mischief afoot. In operations on a par with our current crop of executive and legislative fear-mongering, hysterics, and Orwellian language, the Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings, and H. J. Anslinger, the head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, wrote a book on drug geopolitics. The conclusions drawn by the Judiciary Committee and Anslinger were aptly summarized by the title of a booklet written by Richard Deverall, a representative of the American Federation of Labor in Asia (I'm not making this up): *Mao Tze-Tung: Stop This Dirty Opium Business!* In this tract the author charged that Red China had become the center of the international opium and heroin trade, with the poisoning of the West with drugs as a means to global supremacy as their goal.<sup>30</sup> Lord only knows what American propaganda apparatus would have done with a high profile opium eradication campaign in Communist China; perhaps it really is best that it was not given an opportunity.

At any rate, two decades later Alfred McCoy demolished the allegations made in Congress and in these works. In his masterful study *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, McCoy argued that the Anslinger-Deverall broadsides were not simply anticommunist propaganda but more than likely part of disinformation campaigns by the CIA designed to protect its network of agents, some of whom happened to be engaged in the drug trade.<sup>31</sup> Among those being protected were elements of Jiang Jieshi's ill-fated GMD army. They had made their way into Burma and set up their own opium regime, called, in the sexed-up language of the day, the Golden Triangle. (One also has vague recollections that somehow these golden goods, years later, had some connection to the Iran-Contra Affair, but that's another story).

I have little to quibble with in these fine papers collected by Brooks and Wakabayashi. I would have welcomed a piece on drugs and sex tourism in eastern Asia between the world wars, and perhaps something on the imagery of the “Orient” and drugs in popular media in the United States and Europe into the 1950s. But these are desires rather than criticisms. It should also be clear from the in-text annotations presented above that Alan Baumler’s reader nicely complements the essays in *Opium Regimes*. The selections in the former book reinforce the key arguments of the latter: (1) opium had a central role in creating and maintaining European empires in Asia and in spreading capitalism and a consumer culture into the region; (2) new and old empires and state-building regimes were dependent on opiates; (3) there was outrage, both in China and abroad, at the inability of any political entity to eradicate the drug; (4) opium had a central role in fostering Chinese nationalism and in stimulating various kinds of conflicts in East Asia from the first opium war forward; and (5) it was only the Chinese Communists, ultimately, who were willing and able to end China’s opium plague. Given the sheer scale of the problem, there seems little doubt that anti-opium campaigns were one significant way in which the Communists established and maintained their legitimacy. And that probably should not be forgotten.

Taken together, *Opium Regimes*, *Modern China and Opium*, and *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy* transform our understanding of the place of stimulants and addictive substances in modern global history. They cut to the very heart of a whole series of taken-for-granted assumptions that continue to provide the underlying narrative structures for local, regional, and global histories. For example, modernization theory (recently resurrected under the sign of globalization) seems almost cartoonish when opium enters the picture. The paradigmatic model is, after all, nineteenth-century Great Britain, which was not only a global empire but an empire that could not function without the drug trade. Opium regimes challenge as facile the explanations of colonial bureaucrats, merchants, and others that purport to account for “Western” superiority and “Eastern” backwardness on the basis of morality. And the importance of opium in the reproduction of the British empire seriously calls into question interpretations that argue that conflict was either a clash of cultures or a trade war. The opium trade should also raise a host of doubts about the efficacy of market capitalism and the orthodoxy that it will somehow lead to democratic governance and more healthful societies.

From these perspectives, the works reviewed here are not so much revisionist history but subversions of dominant interpretations that have long ruled the understanding of Sino-Western contact and conflict. These essays and documents undermine the very foundations on which an apologetics for imperialism has been grounded and continues to circulate (e.g., cultural misunderstanding, Chi-

nese intransigence vs. Western openness, and the relativist argument that different times call for different values). Collectively, these works draw our attention to regimes—as opposed to civilizations, aggregate populations, universal institutions, or cultural characteristics—and their specificities of composition, formation, objectives, and, perhaps most importantly, their articulation with other regimes. Perhaps for the first time they move the discussion of opium out of the moral discourses where it has long resided and relocate it within histories. If nothing else, the contributions of these authors ought to stimulate a substantial amount of rethinking about how we understand Chinese and global history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and how we present these histories in our classrooms.

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- NOTES
1. Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards, *Opium and the People* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981); Kathryn Meyer and Terry Parssinen, *Webs of Smoke* (Lanham and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); Barry Milligan, *Pleasures and Pains* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995); and Terry Parssinen, *Secret Passions, Secret Remedies* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1983).
  2. See, for example, Hu Sheng, *From the Opium War to the May Fourth Movement* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), vol. 1, chap. 3.
  3. See, for example, Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China, 1840–1842* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), which is based on an in-depth study of the Jardine Matheson archives.
  4. James Matheson, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1836), pp. 5–6, 51–55.
  5. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
  6. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
  7. John Quincy Adams, “J. Q. Adams on the Opium War,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 43 (1909–1910): 295–324.
  8. Peter Fay, *The Opium War, 1840–1842* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976), p. 195.
  9. See *ibid.*, pp. 202–205.
  10. J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism and the Arrow War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 31–39.
  11. David Cannadine, “The Empire Strikes Back,” *Past and Present* 147 (1995): 182.
  12. The imperialism debate is succinctly reviewed by Wong; see *Deadly Dreams*, pp. 472–478.
  13. The evidence Melancon presents involves a passage in a letter from Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India, to John Hobhouse, head of the Board of Control, which oversaw the East India Company establishment in India. For reasons that seem a combination of wishful thinking and bad math, Auckland thought the government of India could survive without the opium revenue (pp. 99, 101). Melancon mentions no other British officials who agreed with Hobhouse and Auckland.

14. This was the version of the conflict that appeared in Fairbank's most popular work, *The United States and China*. In the final edition, Fairbank added that the opium trade was also "one of the longest-continued international crimes of modern times. See John K. Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 162.
15. For a useful overview of this and other interpretations of the cause of the opium wars, see the discussion in Tan Chung, *China and the Brave New World: A Study of the Origins of the Opium War* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1978), pp. 1–12.
16. Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 6, and David E. Owen, *British Opium Policy in China and India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), p. 2.
17. Trocki, in *Opium*, gives useful examples of these changes in India and Southeast Asia; see especially pp. 137–159.
18. Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (New York: Viking, 1985), pp. 157–159.
19. For an example of one such network, see Trocki, *Opium*, p. 55.
20. In the early 1860s, tea and sugar produced around 10.7 million pounds in revenues annually (4.5 million and 6.2 million pounds, respectively). Government expenditures were approximately 67 million pounds, 11.5 million of which went to the Royal Navy. See Sidney Buxton, *Finance and Politics: An Historical Study, 1789–1885* (1888; reprint ed., New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 293, 305–309, and 324–330.
21. John F. Richards, "The Opium Industry in British India," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 39, nos. 2 and 3 (2002): 149–180. Richards draws on official government figures over a 140-year period to provide a comprehensive picture of opium revenues and their relation to other revenues and silver flows.
22. Gregory Blue, "Opium for China," in *Opium Regimes*, p. 43.
23. Trocki, *Opium*, pp. 58–59, 86, 164.
24. The complicated history of opium may, in fact, account for contradictory assessments among scholars.
25. For a parallel view of Japan's involvement in the opium trade in China, see John M. Jennings, *The Opium Empire: Japanese Imperialism and Drug Trafficking in Asia, 1895–1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997). He notes that administratively the imperial state had to deal with opium once Taiwan was taken. Their now familiar solution was to register addicts and create a state-run monopoly, a pattern similar to Qing efforts soon after. Similar controls were established in Korea.
26. Included are 1935 statistics on registered users by province; hospital treatment centers; drug confiscation, including heroin, morphine, and cocaine, as well as opium; and the number of death sentences for narcotics trafficking. See pp. 154–156, 158.
27. Some twenty years ago, Japanese historian Eguchi Keiichi found and then published a cache of occupation documents that substantiated the deep involvement of the Japanese army in opium traffic in China during the war. See Kobayashi in this volume, pp. 153–154, for a discussion of Eguchi's work.
28. Even the CCP appears not to have been immune to the lure of opium revenues. During a fiscal crisis in the Shaan-Gan-Ning base area from around 1941 to 1943, the Communists seem to have been engaged in selling locally produced opium in other parts of China. The practice ceased after 1945. See Chen Yung-fa, "The Blooming Poppy under the Red Sun: The Yan'an Way and the Opium Trade," in Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven, eds., *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 263–298.



29. Zhou Yongming, *Anti-Drug Crusades in Twentieth-Century China: Nationalism, History and State-Building* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

30. Hearings before the Subcommittee on the Improvements in the Federal Criminal Code of the Committee in the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, 84th Congress, 1955, especially v. 3:739 and v. 8: 3894–3899; H. J. Anslinger and W. F. Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1953); and Richard Deverall, *Mao Tze-Tung: Stop This Dirty Opium Business! How Red China is Selling Opium and Heroin to Produce Revenue for China's War Machine* (Tokyo: Toyoh Printing and Book-Binding Co., 1954).

31. See Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), especially pp. 145–147.



Albert Chan, S.J. *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome: A Descriptive Catalogue: Japónica-Sinica I–IV*. Study of the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History. An East Gate Book. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001. xliii, 627 pp. Hardcover \$145.00, ISBN 0–7656–0828–6.

On February 23, 1555, Ignatius of Loyola wrote a letter to the Negus of Ethiopia, an alleged descendant of the mysterious Prester John, stating his willingness to intercede on his behalf to facilitate full reconciliation with the Holy See.

According to historical accounts, this unfortunate Jesuit enterprise in what was then known as Abyssinia revolved around the Negus Galawdewos, Claudius, who had been appealing to the King of Portugal, John III, to defend his tiny kingdom from Muslim assaults. The Portuguese king, in turn, believing that these requests in fact were a loosely disguised bid to unite the African nation with the Roman Church, sought the help of the recently constituted Society of Jesus, asking Ignatius to select from among his brethren a suitable candidate for appointment as Patriarch of Ethiopia. The plan was that the Patriarch would be assisted in his mission by two bishops and a group of twelve other Jesuit missionaries. The exuberance of the Portuguese king, who evidently envisioned the union of the Church of Ethiopia with the Roman Church as a giant step toward a more lasting consolidation of his colonial empire, provoked a comparable response from Ignatius. The Ethiopian mission was in fact the only case in which the saint agreed to make such an exception to the rule which forbade Jesuits from promotion to episcopal and prelatial appointments. The motivation provided by Ignatius is significant: The appointment would not imply the usual “*pompa y descanso*” (pomp and repose), but “*fatigas y trabajos*” (fatigue and labors).<sup>1</sup>