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A Brief Historiography Of The Opium Trade With A New Evaluation Of Dr. William H. Park's Opinions Of Over 100 Physicians On The Use Of Opium In China

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A BRIEF HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE OPIUM TRADE WITH A NEW
EVALUATION OF DR. WILLIAM H. PARK'S
OPINIONS OF OVER 100 PHYSICIANS ON THE USE OF OPIUM IN CHINA

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

May
2014

This thesis, submitted by Kimberly A. Gasparini in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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 Dr. William H. Park's *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium
 in China*

Department History

Degree Master of Arts

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Kimberly A. Gasparini
May, 2014

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For Andy, Nico, and Megan.
You have been my strongest supporters.

ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a brief historiography of the opium trade between Britain and China from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, followed by a reexamination of Dr. William H. Park's *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China*. While Dr. Park's compilation was critical in the fight to outlaw the legal opium trade, there were inherent problems with the document. R. K. Newman challenged the veracity of this document in 1995, but stopped short of offering an in-depth appraisal of the report. This thesis provides that critique, followed by suggestions for future utilization of this important primary source.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are few substances known to man that have the power to inspire both fear and fascination like opium. Celebrated as a miracle pain reliever and vilified as an exceptionally pernicious drug, the debates surrounding opium and its derivatives continue to rage.¹ Modern opium has its roots in the lake regions of Europe, dating back more than 10,000 years. The increased cultivation and expansion of use throughout the modern world have been well documented, through both the archeological record and the written word.

The origins of the opium trade between China and India can be traced back to Moghul rule. Finding it a convenient way to line their pockets while enjoying the medicinal and recreational attributes of the drug, the Moghul rulers in Bengal quickly established a monopoly over the opium supply. When the East India Company established firm control over the area of Bengal in the mid eighteenth century, it seemed a natural progression to take over the already existing and controlled opium production. Despite intense objections raised by free-traders in England, the monopoly was granted

¹ Medical doctor and toxicologist, Kevin J. Temple stated the following in our personal correspondence through email on July 23, 2013: Modern medicine, in its discovery of a series of neurotransmitters and their corresponding receptors in the human body, determined that the effectiveness and the addictiveness of opiates is largely due to its ability to closely mimic endorphins, which are naturally produced in our bodies. In fact, the opiates mimic that neurotransmitter so well, that those receptors responsible for taking up those chemicals have been labeled opiate receptors.

legal recognition by Parliament in 1773 and the Company was allowed to reap the profits, while providing ever-increasing amounts of opium to China.²

Although historians continue to debate most aspects of the opium trade, a general consensus exists that the primary purpose of exporting Indian opium to China was to pay for tea the British Empire demanded. For years, the flow of bullion out of Europe and in to China had troubled governments, but if Europe wanted China's precious silk and tea, silver was the price that had to be paid.³ While the supply of silver from New Spain provided much of the required specie, the search continued for a product the Chinese desired. Well before the eighteenth century, the British realized that by taking part in the "country trade" they could secure silk and tea from China without the loss of bullion. Two products, Indian cotton and Indian opium, were in demand in China, and private traders associated with the East India Company established commodity exchanges that resulted in supplies of Chinese products without the loss of silver.⁴ From that moment, trade in the region slowly altered and by the nineteenth century, the Chinese began to export bullion in exchange for opium. This shift in the balance of trade caused increased tensions between the Middle Kingdom and the British Empire that culminated in the "Opium Wars." This left China in a decidedly weakened position and the British in a position of unprecedented power.

² Kathleen L. Lodwick, *Crusaders Against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China 1874-1917* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), 1-3.

³ K. N. Chaudhuri, ed., *The Economic Development of India under the East India Company 1814-58: A Selection of Contemporary Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 33.

⁴ Carl A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 48; Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China: 1800-42* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 106-107.

When the first commentaries regarding the opium trade appeared in the popular press during the nineteenth century, their tone reflected a paternalistic attitude that condemned the traders for poisoning the supposedly vulnerable Chinese. The rhetoric spread to America, where Dr. Nathan Allen published *The Opium Trade* in 1850, outlining his moral and economic objections to the trade⁵. By 1910 the opium trade was firmly on its way out, and J. F. Scheltema published an article entitled “The Opium Question” arguing that the civilizing efforts of the West had led to disaster in the East.⁶ In the same year, H. B. Morse published his tome chronicling the years leading up to the Opium Wars.⁷ Although many disagreed with his analysis, from that point on, every major work regarding the trade utilized Morse as a cornerstone. In 1934 David E. Owen introduced the other major work in the historiography of the opium trade, *British Opium Policy in India and China*.⁸ Relying heavily on Morse for his source material, Owen’s work was even more widely read and referenced than that of his predecessor.

The years between 1934 and 1950 yielded little in terms of new studies on the trade, but that changed when Michael Greenberg published his doctoral thesis under the title *British Trade and the Opening of China: 1800-42*. Utilizing the papers of Jardine, Matheson & Co. as his primary sources, Greenberg provided the first real economic

⁵ Nathan Allen, M.D., *The Opium Trade: Including a Sketch of its History, Extent, Effects, Etc. as carried on in India and China* (Boston: Longwood Press, 1978).

⁶ J.F. Scheltema, “The Opium Question,” *The American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 16, No. 2 (Sep. 1910): 213-235.

⁷ H. B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire: The Period of Conflict 1834-1860* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910).

⁸ David E. Owen, *British Opium Policy in India and China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

analysis through the eyes of the private traders involved in opium.⁹ Between 1951 and 2002 a series of articles and books explored the opium trade in new ways. By the time J. F. Richards published “Opium and the British Indian Empire” in 2002 the historiography had undergone a series of transformations.¹⁰ From its inception as part of the temperance movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the study of the opium trade grew to encompass diplomatic and socio-economic perspectives. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the study of the opium trade has moved away from viewing the trade as an inherent evil, a black mark on the page of history, to an institution that not only supported an empire but also spurred the growth and expansion of capitalism and improved living standards for people all over the world.¹¹

Many different approaches have been explored over the last fifteen decades, and though Morse and Owen remain invaluable to historians, the current trend examines more levels of complexity, including studying the effects of the trade at the lowest levels of Indian society and the dramatic effects it produced within the Far East. Each new work adds depth to the study and to the historiography, helping historians to appreciate fully the intricacies of the trade. While acknowledging that some contemporaries and historians considered the opium trade to be the gravest of evils, the evolving historiography asserts that it was part of a larger process of economic growth enmeshed in a complex set of poorly understood social customs. Furthermore, if we accept that the

⁹ Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China: 1800-42* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951).

¹⁰J. F. Richards, “Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895,” *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 36, No. 2 (2002): 375-420.

¹¹ *Trocki, Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy.* R.K. Newman, “Opium Smoking in Late Imperial China: A Reconsideration,” *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Oct. 1995): 765-794.

prejudice against the drug and its users was largely a result of a desire to assign blame for larger social problems to a particular cause, namely opium use, rather than acknowledge a failing socio-economic system, then it becomes necessary to examine where those ideas were promoted most strongly.

Many historians embrace the premise that Protestant missionaries in China shaped contemporary attitudes regarding what to think of the Chinese customs and consumption of opium; those attitudes also determined how future historians thought about it. The missionaries dictated the terms of the discourse and for many years historians made little effort to test the boundaries of that discourse. This thesis will demonstrate the inherent problems with one of those fundamental documents. The subsequent use, or more precisely, misuse, of missionary testimonies by historians means that a large portion of the historiographical picture and implications of opium use and trade have been ignored.

For example, Kathleen Lodwick specifically utilized Dr. William H. Park's work, *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China*, in her doctoral dissertation in 1976 and again her 1996 work, *Crusaders Against Opium*, in order to support her argument that the Protestant missionaries were almost exclusively responsible for the cessation of the legal Anglo-Chinese opium trade. Her assertions that these missionaries raised public awareness and forced Parliamentary action are correct, but her use of *Opinions* was flawed. Lodwick asserted that "medical missionaries in China gathered the first scientific data" regarding opium use, and that the missionaries had a purely "altruistic interest" in both the opium trade and its use by the Chinese.¹² She

¹² Lodwick, *Crusaders*, 3, 10.

supported those statements by providing an abbreviated assessment of *Opinions* with a few specific excerpts to support her claims. The majority of the document was disregarded.

Fortunately, R. K. Newman published his work, “Opium Smoking in Late Imperial China: A Reconsideration,” at the same time as Lodwick’s work. In direct contrast to Lodwick, Newman used Park’s *Opinions* as something other than an authoritative, scientifically valid source. Newman asserted that the missionaries, and specifically those doctors who worked with Park to contribute to *Opinions*, were biased in their views and gravely mistaken regarding Chinese attitudes and opium addiction levels. Using Park’s compilation along with other missionary writings, Newman compared the missionary reports to secular sources regarding opium use. Like Lodwick, Newman credited the missionaries with swaying public opinion, but Newman charged that the missionaries were wrong in their assessment of the situation.

Although he clearly argued that these types of reports and compilations were flawed, Newman stopped short of offering specific evidence or a systematic evaluation of any of the missionary reports. As such, his arguments are subject to the same speculation that has plagued other historians who chose to accept missionary testimonies as verified fact. In order to continue moving the historiography forward, it is essential to correct this oversight.

The chief endeavor of this thesis is to continue Newman’s work. His contention that the missionaries provided flawed testimony must be investigated and supported. To that end, this thesis will reconsider Dr. Park’s compilation, *Opinions of Over 100*

Physicians on the Use of Opium in China. By systematically evaluating each question and response in that document, this thesis will prove that *Opinions* was indeed flawed, and as such, historians cannot continue to use it as an authoritative source regarding Chinese opium consumption. This thesis does not deny the addictive or harmful properties of opiates; rather it is an attempt to reevaluate what we believe about Chinese opium use. Michel Foucault's works regarding discourse, specifically his *Birth of the Clinic*, and Edward Said's *Orientalism* are used in conjunction with a post-structural approach in the study of this record.

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on the pivotal works of the historiography, providing a background on the trade as well as a basis to demonstrate how the historiography has shifted its focus throughout the last century. This is followed by a brief discussion of William H. Park's compilation of *Opinions of over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China*. This document served as a major tool used by the anti-opium factions in their fight to end the trade, despite what this thesis will demonstrate concerning its inherent issues with intent, design, and content.

An in-depth examination of each question and response offered in *Opinions of over 100 Physicians* is the focus of chapter two in this thesis. Using a systematic, question-by-question approach, this chapter highlights the issues with the document itself, as well as the answers provided. Next, an examination of the essays and letters that accompanied the questionnaire responses in Dr. Park's compilation is necessary in order to increase our understanding not only of the Chinese users, but also of the foreign physicians who treated those users. Finally, this chapter will make several suggestions as

to further areas of inquiry based on statements made by the participating physicians. It will be argued that by bringing in the skill sets used by economists, political scientists, anthropologists, archaeologists, and material culture scholars, the expansion of the study of the opium trade can and should continue in several interesting new directions.

The discourse surrounding the opium trade is well established. This thesis challenges a specific document that helped create that discourse, revealing that the use of missionaries as authoritative sources in this particular area is problematic. By offering a critique of a crucial piece of the primary source body, as well as suggesting new avenues for research, this thesis contributes to the formation of a new discourse regarding the opium trade.

CHAPTER II

THE CHANGING HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE OPIUM TRADE

The historiography of the opium trade between Britain and China has been expanding since the late eighteenth century, but took on a new urgency in the second half of the nineteenth century. The expanding evangelical Christianity movements and their companion temperance movements were gathering steam. These Christian groups and temperance societies decided that opium, in addition to alcohol, was a major obstacle to achieving eternal salvation for the soul. The growing opium traffic, coupled with greater numbers of Western missionaries reporting on the effects of opium in China, provided an impetus to increase efforts to eliminate the trade. To that end, a concerted effort was made to compile and publish material decrying the opium trade.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, historians had noted the extensive writings produced by the anti-opium societies, and began to incorporate them into their own work. Nineteenth century writers laid the foundation for the progressive style of the early twentieth century historians, who in turn provided an increasing body of work for later scholars.

It is impossible to discount the tremendous value of these evangelical Christians and their associated missionaries to the historiography of the opium trade. These groups

provided a wealth of primary source material for historians while focusing public attention on this incredibly important issue. However, the subsequent dependence on those materials has resulted in a series of misinterpretations and missed opportunities to enhance the study of the opium trade. Despite the twentieth century paradigm shifts in the historiography, historians have continued to rely on early interpretations of missionary reports, such as *The Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China*. In order to understand fully the metamorphosis of the historiography, as well as the effects of our continued dependence on old interpretations of missionary writings, a brief examination of some of the major historiographical works regarding the opium trade is necessary.

In 1850 Dr. Nathan Allen, an American medical doctor practicing in Massachusetts and associated with evangelical Christianity and the temperance movements, published his work *The Opium Trade: Including a Sketch of its History, Extent, Effects, Etc. as carried on in India and China*. Dr. Allen's work is an early example of the paternalistic approach that regarded the Chinese as unable to help themselves. As a result, his conclusion stressed that it fell to the American and British governments to eradicate the opium trade, freeing the Chinaman from the vice.

Dr. Allen firmly believed that the Chinese people and government were unable to effect this change on their own because of "the character of the Chinese people." As Allen put it, [they] "have a naturally excessive acquisitiveness and fondness for those temporary enjoyments which do not require great efforts of body or mind...they have

never been trained to the rigid exercise of moral principle or decision of character.”¹³ Claiming that more than 5,000,000 Chinese were addicts to the drug, and that 500,000 died each year as a result of their addiction, Dr. Allen made opium out to be one of the worst plagues to ever strike mankind.¹⁴ Living in the midst of the abolition movements in America, Dr. Allen compared the opium addict to a slave, declaring that “There is no slavery on earth, to be compared with the bondage into which opium casts its victim.”¹⁵ The contemporary view was that opium removed all semblances of a person’s wit and character, leaving only a broken, dehumanized shell that would waste away, destroying families and the social fabric.

Dr. Allen firmly believed that if the traders and governments involved could personally witness the effects of the drug, “their souls would rise in indignation against a traffic so vile, so destructive to the lives, property and happiness of their fellow creatures. They would abominate and abandon it.”¹⁶ Unfortunately, Dr. Allen’s assertions regarding the traders were not tested, and though he believed them to be of superior moral character due to their station in life, there is no indication that the majority entertained such humanitarian tendencies. Instead, all accounts seem to reveal a more cynical nature, indicating that the governments and businessmen believed that since the Chinese were intent on self-destruction it would behoove the clever trader to profit from

¹³ Allen, *The Opium Trade*, 64.

¹⁴ Allen, *The Opium Trade*, 30.

¹⁵ Allen, *The Opium Trade*, 32.

¹⁶ Allen, *The Opium Trade*, 42.

that intention, as is demonstrated by the continued participation of American and British traders.¹⁷

Dr. Allen's essay was based on two premises: first, western cultural superiority demanded aiding those who were less fortunate; and second, that the missionaries could not do their work if the Christian nations continued to supply opium for financial gain. Dr. Allen lamented, "That the government of British India should be one of the prime abettors of this abominable traffic, is one of the greatest wonders of the nineteenth century."¹⁸ Plainly, Dr. Allen expected more from the civilized western world, and despite small pockets of detractors, the American and British governments seemed content to continue the traffic. Allen argued that if the people of the western world wanted to maintain their status as civilized nations, they must eradicate the opium trade, lifting the Chinese out of their vice-stricken state. Moreover, the British and American governments needed to support the Chinese government in its work of destroying the smuggling trade, as was its right as a sovereign nation.

The second issue Dr. Allen raised showed how the lack of progress made by Christian missionaries was the direct result of the opium trade. Dr. Allen quotes Reverend Smith and Reverend Talmadge concerning their experiences with the Chinese:

If those who profess to doubt the magnitude of this obstacle to the progress of Christianity in China, could hear the more patriotic of the Chinese, frequently with a sarcastic smile, ask the missionaries whether they were connected with those individuals who brought them poison, which so many of their countrymen ate and perished – they would perceive it is vain... The same breeze that wafts the Christian missionary to that benighted land, brings on its wings the elements of

¹⁷ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 104.

¹⁸ Allen, *The Opium Trade*, 73.

moral destruction in that illegal traffic, which stamps with inconsistency the country of Christian mission . . . and what is peculiarly painful is the fact, that this nefarious trade is carried on by men from Christian lands; so that the leading idea which the Chinese have of the Christian religion is, that it permits its votaries to violate all law. . . . Wherever we go, in the cities and villages, we are continually liable to be questioned about opium. It is a great hindrance to the progress of the gospel among the Chinese.¹⁹

If the Chinese linked the missionary with opium, it is easy to see why they would prefer to retain their traditional spiritual beliefs rather than adopt Christianity to please the zealous lot who had been sent to convert them. Dr. Allen's brief essay addressed governments and concerned individuals, and he closed his work with the following series of questions:

Are the difficulties attending this contraband trade still to be the occasion of frequent broils and interruptions of commercial intercourse as in years past, between the Chinese and foreigners? Must there be another opium war? Is this ancient and extensive country to be ruined commercially, politically and morally? Will the Chinese suffer the devastations of this evil to go on till the great Celestial Empire with her three hundred and fifty millions of inhabitants lose, like some neighboring provinces, her own independence and become tributary to a foreign power? Or to escape such a melancholy fate, will her government either resort to the extensive cultivation of the poppy within her own borders, or else legalize the importation of the drug from abroad?²⁰

Although these questions provide an eerily accurate view of the future, it is difficult to say to what extent the opium trade actually contributed to the demise of the Chinese Empire.

¹⁹ Allen, *The Opium Trade*, 71. While Allen clearly expects the Chinese to be objecting to the use of the drug, other research indicates that the Chinese may have been objecting to the presence of foreigners who condemned their ways – both religious and social – and tried to force them to give up an established social custom along with their religion. It seems that the Chinese may actually have been turning the missionaries' own words against them, stating that the evil opium was provided by the Christians, and therefore there was no real need to abandon their traditional beliefs or their opium use.

²⁰ Allen, *The Opium Trade*, 74.

In the years following Dr. Allen's publication, historians and social scientists continued to emphasize the superiority of western civilization and the paternalistic responsibility it held in regards to the Far East. Clinging to the idea of a certain racial and cultural superiority but recognizing the harm done by western traders, J. F. Scheltema published his article "The Opium Question" in 1910 in which he stated that "Civilization, no unmixed blessing ... has brought down many evils upon the East: the spread of opium among them."²¹ The East India Company had formally taken over the exportation of the drug to China in 1767 and by 1840 the Chinese government and populace, increasingly alarmed by the amount of opium flowing into the country, took steps to protect themselves. Scheltema portrayed the active involvement of the Chinese people in this movement by citing the example of a mob in Hunan province, driving out a missionary and shouting "You have burned our palace, you have killed our emperor, you sell poison to the people and now you come to teach us virtue?!"²² Though it is unlikely that the mob used these words, it points to an important aspect of this period of the historiography. It was typical of Western writers to portray the Chinese as victims who desperately wanted to be helped as the civilized nations turned their backs. A well-respected anthropologist who specialized in Asian culture, Scheltema represented many progressive writers and historians who were able to simultaneously comment on a

²¹ Scheltema, "The Opium Question," 213.

²² Scheltema, "The Opium Question," 215. Again, while it can be verified that the palace had been burned and the emperor killed, there is no real evidence to suggest that this statement was actually made. It is possible that the paternalism and the need to portray the Chinese as victims drove Scheltema to include this quote in his writings.

historical event and provide direction for current public policy makers to follow, namely that it was their responsibility to reach out to those less fortunate.²³

In the same year, H. B. Morse, a Canadian by birth who served thirty-five years in the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs Service before retiring in 1909, published the first volume of his tome *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire: The Period of Conflict 1834-1860*. Interestingly, while Scheltema's article assigned responsibility and advocated a humanitarian direction in public policy, Morse chose to compile a record of "events on the selected scene, and during the selected period, in the light of history, " and to "give the events of the period such relative importance as they deserve; to lay no undue stress on picturesque episodes . . . and to omit none of those minor occurrences which, dull and uninteresting though they might be, were still important elements in the molding [of] the actions of the principal actors on the scene."²⁴ Consequently, Morse created a new type of history of the opium trade, in which the running chronicle of events shied away from promoting a particular viewpoint, and resulted in a work that was more useful as a reference book than as an analytical history. As such, Morse's work is monumentally important to the study, as his narrative directly or indirectly influenced all subsequent work. Given this, it is important to note that the reviewers of his time claimed his work to be tedious and uninspiring, failing to do justice to the dramatic events he described. However, his observation that the Chinese government believed "Opium smokers are worthless in the community, and can well be spared; but measures

²³ Many historians from the period 1900-post World War II emphasized the progressive views of history, with the dominant themes revolving around class and sectional conflict. In addition, economic and sociological considerations were considered to be necessary to constructing the historiography.

²⁴ Morse, *International Relations*, vii.

cannot too soon be adopted against the drain of the country's wealth" resulted in a major break with the traditional conviction that the Chinese were morally opposed to the drug and were instead concerned by the economic ramifications of the opium trade.²⁵ This laid the groundwork for a century of historiography focused on the economic issues involved in the trade.

Morse opened new lines of study and encouraged greater inquiry into more aspects of the trade by shifting the inquiry away from moral implications to economic factors. Subsequent writers built on his foundation and developed a more thorough understanding of the cultural and economic matters surrounding the trade, shifting the focus of the historiography from traditional political history to encompass more fields. Morse's careful documentary work is as an essential piece of the historiography.²⁶

Building on Morse's economic argument, in 1934 David E. Owen published *British Opium Policy in China and India*, a comprehensive study on the trade and the East India Company's responses to the Chinese and local traders. Adhering closely to Morse's work, Owen spent the greater part of his efforts detailing the development and conclusion of the East India Company opium monopoly, as well as the events leading up to the opium wars. Although free-traders in Britain strenuously objected to the proposition for a monopoly, Parliament was won over, and the monopoly was granted in 1773. Owen presented the monopolists' argument that "It was impractical to prohibit the consumption of . . . a pernicious drug. Accepting this as an impossibility, the best means

²⁵ Morse, *International Relations*, 186.

²⁶ John King Fairbank, Martha Henderson Coolidge, and Richard J. Smith, *H. B. Morse, Customs Commissioner and Historian of China* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1995). In addition to this work regarding Morse's standing in the intellectual community, it is worth noting that nearly every historian of British relations with the Chinese uses Morse as a source in their work.

of controlling its ravages was a monopoly in the hands of the government. As Owen went on to note, that system, in turn, would enable the monopolist to impose what prices he pleased.”²⁷ In other words, the East India Company monopoly would simultaneously control production and consumption of a dangerous product and reap large profits from the trade, helping to pay the costs of the administration of British India.

Owen’s portrayal of Company officials showed them to be resolutely paternalistic, regretting the fate of the addicted Chinese, but determined that if it was necessary to have the drug, the Company should be their supplier. However, numerous failed attempts to control the supply of opium led to a flood of the cheaper Malwa opium in the market, and the Company became less concerned with the moral implications of the trade and focused more on maintaining its share of the profits.²⁸ As the monopolists realized that a cheaper product would expand the customer base, they encouraged more opium production and established a duty system that allowed the Malwa opium to flow freely to market. Furthermore, by selling the opium to private traders at auction, the Company was able to distance itself from the illegal aspects of the China trade. Henceforth, the “Company concerned itself only with the production, manufacture, and sale of the drug in India, distribution was left to the purchasers at Calcutta sales. They might export the opium wherever they chose, with no questions asked by the

²⁷ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 104.

²⁸ Malwa opium originated from areas outside the direct control of the East India Company. Company officials maintained that the Malwa opium was an inferior product, not in keeping with the high standards of the Company’s opium. However, it is likely that the lower price of the product was a direct result of the lack of production controls imposed by the East India Company (EIC), and therefore the Malwa opium was produced in large quantities with little regulation. EIC officials feared that this would flood the market and eliminate the demand for their product. In order to help combat its impact, the EIC worked out a system of duties for the Malwa opium, in effect creating a system by which the Company received compensation for a product that it had no part in producing.

Company.”²⁹ The official advice to traders such as Matheson was to “do as he pleased but [that he] must under no conditions involve the Company,” providing the Company and the British government plausible deniability, but there was no question that their aid was expected in times of trouble.³⁰

Despite frequent crackdowns by Chinese officials in an effort to demonstrate compliance with the Emperor’s edicts, Chinese officials received payments from opium traders such as Jardine, Matheson & Co., Russel and Company, Dent and Company, and a host of others who dominated the opium business and allowed the trade to continue.³¹ The trading practice insisted on payment before delivery and led many to believe that the opium traffic was the “safest trade in China, because you got your money before you gave your order.”³² Even better, the responsibility for bribing government officials fell on the Chinese buyers, not on the European traders.

As drug smuggling increased, the Chinese government became increasingly concerned with the amount of silver leaving the country, and the “apparent drain of treasure was intimately connected in the Chinese mind with the opium trade. The edicts of 1809, the one prohibiting opium, the other the export of specie, were issued simultaneously.”³³ Though it can be said that many British officials, such as Captain Elliot, had no affection for the trade and supported the Chinese right to enforce their trading laws, when Commissioner Lin was sent to end the trade in 1839 he “alienated the sympathies of the British superintendent [Captain Elliot] not by the end that he sought to

²⁹ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 27.

³⁰ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 77-78.

³¹ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 115.

³² Owen, *Opium Policy*, 117.

³³ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 67.

gain but by the means which he adopted.”³⁴ When Lin effectively held the resident foreigners hostage in exchange for delivery of the contraband opium he ended all hope of a peaceful negotiation. When describing this incident, Owen stated:

To seize contraband by direct assault upon the guilty parties was the right of a sovereign state, but to extract it by such indiscriminate pressure as Lin had applied was an outrage. The primary motive of Great Britain in taking up arms was to redress for this outrage and security for the future, not to pull the chestnuts of Indian revenue from the fire . . . To the merchants, then, the war was to effect an opening of China rather than to assure the prosperity of the opium traffic. Yet it was the activities of the opium traders, chiefly British, that provoked the harsh measures of Commissioner Lin and thus brought to the surface the latent conflict between the two countries.³⁵

Though Owen maintained that the British believed the opium trade was a symptom rather than a cause of war, he also pointed out that the Chinese judged it to be the main cause. Commissioner Lin had been sent to Canton “with an imperial mandate to exterminate the trade in opium and thus to save the nation from moral disintegration and the loss of its specie.”³⁶

It is necessary to note the importance Owen attached in this mandate to the loss of specie. Though earlier writers had focused on the moral aspects of the opium trade, Owen’s focus remained steadfastly fixed on the drain of silver from China, following Morse’s assertions that the Chinese economy was of primary concern for the Chinese government. This was further illustrated by Lin’s comment to Queen Victoria that “if the opium dispute could be settled, there remained . . . no obstacle to the resumption of normal trade relations.”³⁷ ‘Normal trade relations’ in the period before the rise of the

³⁴ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 168-169.

³⁵ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 170-171.

³⁶ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 174.

³⁷ Owen, *Opium Policy*, 174-175.

opium trade was a condition in which China had little use for British goods, and the Chinese goods that flooded Western markets were paid for in specie. In other words, Lin was advocating for a return to a balance of trade firmly in favor of the Chinese, while simultaneously eliminating the foreign supply of opium from the land.

Michael Greenberg picked up this theme again in 1951. Although he offered support for the idea that the main purpose for the opium trade was to get tea without giving up specie, Greenberg focused his arguments on the role private traders played in developing a new system, opening China to the flow of opium, cotton and other western manufactures and destroying the Chinese economic system, causing silver to flow out of the country.³⁸ “The drain of silver to pay for the opium caused a shortage of the circulating medium which sent up prices. This was noted by the local officials and reported to the Emperor.”³⁹ The opium trade was not a serious problem until it became an economic issue for the Chinese elite. Greenberg goes on to state:

It is notable that the memorialists to Peking, who in 1836 initiated the debate on Chinese opium policy, stressed the economic rather than the moral side of the question. Commissioner Lin himself was one of the shrewdest economists of his time. Before composing his memorial advocating the total prohibition of the opium trade he consulted merchants at Nankow and Hankow, both busy commercial centers. ‘All agree that the market is diminishing for all kinds of goods in the country. Those which were sold for tens of thousands of dollars thirty years ago find now a market but half as large as before. Where does the other half go? In short, opium.’ Ergo, it must be completely destroyed.⁴⁰

Just as the Chinese were concerned with the economic damage the continuation of the trade would inflict, the British were disturbed by the economic results of the ending of

³⁸ Greenberg, *British Trade*, 105-106.

³⁹ Greenberg, *British Trade*, 141.

⁴⁰ Greenberg, *British Trade*, 142-143.

that trade. In 1840, William Jardine and both Houses of Parliament claimed that it was “financially inexpedient to abolish the trade” as opium was “no hole-in-the corner petty smuggling trade, but probably the largest commerce of the time in any single commodity.”⁴¹ Furthermore, the opium trade was the basis for the establishment of the foreign merchant community in China. Were the trade abolished, the ramifications would be felt all over the world.⁴²

In addition to his analysis of Anglo-Chinese relations, Greenberg traced developments made by private traders and examined the benefit of the opium trade to the Western world. He credited certain advancements in banking to the opium trade, declaring that the bills of exchange issued by the Company demanded improvements in the credit industry, which spurred foreign investment. Moreover, progress in technology such as the development of clipper ships and steamboats were the direct result of the opium interests, as was the spread of all types of British trade along the coast of China. Greenberg stated that “Jardine, Matheson & Co. took the initiative in both directions – the development of a market along the East Coast and the laying down of a fleet of clippers on the Calcutta-Lintin run.”⁴³ The demise of the East India Company monopoly was attributed to the private traders, citing evidence that “James Matheson, still in his early twenties, conceived of the plan of sending a special ship secretly to the West Coast of India, to bring supplies of Malwa opium directly to China.”⁴⁴ Greenberg’s work continued Morse’s tradition of asserting that Chinese economic concerns were their chief

⁴¹ Greenberg, *British Trade*, 104-105.

⁴² Greenberg, *British Trade*, 107.

⁴³ Greenberg, *British Trade*, 137.

⁴⁴ Greenberg, *British Trade*, 125.

motive for ending the trade, but he went far beyond that both to examine the role of the private trader in more depth and to establish that the advancements made by the traders aided Western economic development. His work, which promoted the assertions that banking, credit and technological innovations were a direct result of the opium trade, opened the way for deeper and more varied analysis. Representing a major shift in the historiographical trend, Greenberg moved away from the study of class conflict towards an examination of the competition of entrepreneurs and businessmen, and the continuity of the ideals and policies that enabled the opium trade to continue as a profitable institution.

By 1958, the lack of work illustrating the individual Chinese players had been noted and addressed through the publication of Arthur Waley's *The Opium War through Chinese Eyes*. The importance of this work is indicated in Waley's opening statements when he asserts that "Some ten or more books on the Opium War have been written . . . yet in none of them does Commissioner Lin, the leading figure of the Chinese side, ever come to life as a human being. He remains . . . an automaton . . . awe-inspiring but completely incomprehensible . . . [figuring only] as a writer of formal documents."⁴⁵ By choosing to examine the diaries of Commissioner Lin, Waley brought to life the enigmatic Commissioner. A full reading of this important work demonstrates that the figure that inspired both awe and hatred among the British was a dedicated official who meticulously performed his duties in the face of a corrupt bureaucracy and insufferable foreigners. Long considered an excellent economist, Commissioner Lin was also

⁴⁵ Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), 11.

revealed to be a humanitarian who believed that it was “wrong to make a profit out of what is harmful to others.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Waley was careful to show that Lin was occupied with more than just the opium trade, enjoying the arts while doing his best to fulfill all aspects of his job that included, but was not limited to, ending the opium traffic. By revealing the private thoughts and writings of Commissioner Lin, Waley added an important layer to the historiography. It was no longer sufficient to examine the trade from the British viewpoint while ignoring the individuals on the Chinese side. An excellent start to correcting this one-sided view, Waley’s work is vital to the study of the opium exchange.

In 1971, among a renewed interest in conflict and polarization fueled largely by the Vietnam War and civil rights struggles, Brian Gardner published *The East India Company: A History*, and in it moved away from the previous focus upon the function of the private trader to shed new light on the East India Company.⁴⁷ Here, Gardner takes pains to point out that not all Indian opium was being sent to China or was being abused by indigenous people, but rather, officers of the British army and servants of the East India Company were among the opium addicts. Although he freely admitted that “some became, while still young men, among the finest of administrators the British have ever produced, others spent a career facing the demands of India in an alcoholic stupor or in an opium haze.”⁴⁸ Despite efforts of past historians to portray the British in India as many things, but always sober, Gardner’s work proves otherwise, and it calls into

⁴⁶ Waley, *The Opium War*, 33.

⁴⁷ Gardner was one of many historians who embraced a new phase of historiography. Breaking with more traditional consensus historians and Marxist historians, these writers focused more on “history from the bottom up” and reexamined issues such as imperialism, racism, and conflict.

⁴⁸ Brian Gardner, *The East India Company, A History* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), 182.

question not only the character of those involved, but also the decisions that were made regarding the trade. While it would be foolish to entertain a notion that all policy makers were under the influence of opium, it is certainly worthwhile to consider how British users in India played into the process of making decisions, as well as the carrying out of policy.

Next, Gardner turned his attention to the unsuccessful trading missions to China during the years of the drug trade. The East India Company had sent three trading expeditions to China in the period from 1792 to 1816 and none had met with success. He attributed these failures to the Chinese association of foreign traders with opium and the loss of specie.⁴⁹ By discussing the negative effects of opium on legitimate trade, Gardner connected with the traditions of Dr. Allen and H.B. Morse.

The year 1971 also saw the publication of *The Economic Development of India under the East India Company 1814-58: A Selection of Contemporary Writings*, edited by K.N. Chaudhuri. A collection of papers and documents from the nineteenth century, this work provided important primary source material for the study of the trade. Chaudhuri's extensive introduction served to unify the selected pieces while providing a twentieth century interpretation of their meaning and value. Despite not offering any radical new interpretations, Chaudhuri's analysis and document selection confirmed the work of earlier historians in regards to the policies and practices of the East India Company, and, as such, is valuable for those seeking to understand these matters. Furthermore, Chaudhuri added a new dimension to the historiography and shifted the

⁴⁹ Gardner, *The East India Company*, 206.

focus by suggesting that the “deliberate analysis of [India’s] economic problems, initiated by these early British writers, was responsible for giving rise to an entirely new tradition [in the historiography].”⁵⁰ Chaudhuri’s efforts provided evidence of the ensuing economic growth and initiative within the Indian region. His decision to highlight the positive effects of British policy, namely that many Indians took part in crafting those policies and that thousands benefitted politically and economically from the trade, laid important groundwork for future writers.

Further confirmation of earlier work was found in J. B. Brown’s “Politics of Poppy: The Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, 1874-1916.” Brown used this anti-opium society to illustrate the opposition to the “[government’s] position . . . to avoid any precipitate decision that might jeopardize Indian revenue.”⁵¹ As he noted, the profits from the opium trade were considered essential to the British raj, and there was “understandable government skepticism about the electoral popularity of taxing the British voter to make good the Indian loss.”⁵² However, the anti-opium movement was “convinced that the drug was responsible for the stagnation in legitimate British exports to China,” and that any losses caused by abolition would be compensated by the increase in legal trade.⁵³ Furthermore, advocates of this movement argued that the matter could be resolved by the “application of the old Gladstonian slogan of peace, retrenchment, and reform.”⁵⁴ Even though the Society denounced British involvement in the drug trade, it

⁵⁰ Chaudhuri, *Economic Development*, 45.

⁵¹ J. B. Brown, “Politics of the Poppy: The Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, 1874-1916,” *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 8, No. 3 (Jul. 1973): 108.

⁵² Brown, “Politics of the Poppy,” 108.

⁵³ Brown, “Politics of the Poppy,” 102.

⁵⁴ Brown, “Politics of the Poppy,” 106.

never advocated an abandonment of the Empire's presence in the East. Instead, Brown argued the Society maintained that abolition of the opium traffic would result in a more efficient form of British imperialism in the East, creating a favorable environment for legal trade and Christian missionaries.⁵⁵

In addition to confirming earlier theories, Brown made two additional contributions to the historiography. First, by rather simply describing the East India Company's attempts to control opium supply, he highlighted the problems these attempts produced. The Bengal system "implicated – both financially and morally" the British government in the administration of the system, while in "Malawa . . . the economies of several native states centered on the exportation of opium . . . In the opinion of the Raj, the anti-opium movement therefore threatened the political stability of the sub-continent by attempting to destroy the economies of the native principalities."⁵⁶ While previous historians focused almost exclusively on the external results of the trade, Brown chose to focus on the internal stability of India. His second contribution was made by joining his work to that of the growing number of scholars who were studying the British Empire as a series of interlocking relationships between the center and periphery.⁵⁷ Brown argued that "The growing wrath of the anti-opium sector against the Indian government . . . attested to its fear that the empire had succumbed to centrifugal forces – that it had

⁵⁵ Brown, "Politics of the Poppy," 98.

⁵⁶ Brown, "Politics of the Poppy," 99.

⁵⁷ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961). This movement towards a study of the periphery and the center of the Empire came largely from the pioneering work by Robinson and Gallagher in 1961. Their assertions that the scramble for Africa began as a reaction to not only the Irish question, but also as a means to protect the trade routes and interests in Egypt and India offered historians a new approach to traditional imperial history. Furthermore, their support of the importance of African history and the ties that bind Europe and Africa led to more work in the field.

become uncontrollable from London.”⁵⁸ In highlighting this conflict regarding control of the direction of Empire, Brown opened the door to new questions in the development of Imperial history. No longer satisfied with the traditional London-centric view, Brown pushed the study to consider how actions on the periphery affected not only the immediate area, but also policy and practice throughout the Empire.

In much the same spirit, J. F. Richards published his article “The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium in the Nineteenth Century” in 1981. Believing that previous historians of British India had neglected the role of opium in the internal economy, Richards set out to prove that “opium cultivation, as a cash export crop grown under uniquely restricted conditions set by a state monopoly, did have considerable importance for the peasant economy of the northern opium producing tracts.” Perhaps even more to the point, he argued that “some of the techniques and policies employed by the Indian opium monopoly suggest parallels with the solutions to similar problems on the world market attempted by agricultural exporting countries today.”⁵⁹ This article contained a detailed discussion of the process of opium cultivation, emphasizing the labor-intensive process that often required the efforts of men, women and children. However, despite the government insistence on a high quality, standardized product, which led to the practice of selective licensing of established cultivators, opium cultivation required very little skill and few special tools, which meant that large segments of the population could be employed in the production process.⁶⁰ This article

⁵⁸ Brown, “Politics of the Poppy,” 105.

⁵⁹ J. F. Richards, “The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium in the Nineteenth Century,” *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 15, No. 1 (1981): 61.

⁶⁰ Richards, “Peasant Production,” 67.

highlighted the shifting trend in historiography, as Richards focused almost exclusively on the effects of the trade on the Indian ryot producers rather than the British and Chinese governments or wealthy traders.⁶¹ By bringing to light the role played by the poorest workers, Richards added yet another level of complexity to the study. Furthermore, the traditional view that the Anglo-Chinese wars were fought over trade rights, not opium per se, was complicated when Richards argued that “so grave was any impediment to this trade that the London government was prepared to fight in the Opium War of 1839-1840 to preserve its outlet for Indian opium.”⁶² This open acknowledgement of the role of opium in Asian trade paved the way for future writers to examine more fully the effects of the trade on the area.

Between 1981 and 1995, historians remained rather quiet on the British-Chinese opium question, but as the century wound to a close, a different form of analysis was put forth. In 1995, R.K. Newman published an article entitled “Opium Smoking in Late Imperial China: A Reconsideration.” In a decidedly more liberal twist, Newman claimed his “main purpose is to show that opium smoking in imperial China did not deserve the opprobrium that was heaped upon it . . . [and] I am inclined to think that when a properly balanced view of the production and consumption of opium has been achieved, the foreign responsibility for the spread of the drug in China will seem less significant and new questions may be asked about the role of the Chinese themselves.”⁶³

⁶¹ As earlier defined, a ryot was an Indian peasant farmer or worker. In this case, it is specific to opium production.

⁶² Richards, “Peasant Production,” 67.

⁶³ Newman, “A Reconsideration,” 769. In the end of the twentieth century, the historiography underwent another paradigm shift, seeking to once again establish a type of consensus history, establishing patterns of unity and downplaying class conflict.

Although this was his stated purpose in the article, Newman spent most of his twenty-nine pages expounding on the variations of opium consumption in Chinese society. He stated that the missionaries mistook terminally ill opium addicts as a fair representation of all users, but they were gravely mistaken. Newman noted that in the case of terminally or chronically ill patients, the amounts of opium ingested increased over time, and when they succumbed to their disease, opium was erroneously blamed for their death. The missionaries then wrongly assumed that all opium users would become addicts and would die from the addiction.⁶⁴ A more realistic view of opium consumption is then provided, listing common reasons for use: To relieve stress, to relieve boredom, to fix the “shrewish disposition” of a wife, and for social or recreational use.⁶⁵ The drug had a well-established place in everyday life. Adult males often smoked to seal business deals, while the young people smoked to imitate their elders or satisfy their curiosity regarding the drug’s value as an aphrodisiac.⁶⁶ Even though it was true that some succumbed to addiction, Newman contended that, “most opium smoking in imperial China was a harmless and controllable recreation.”⁶⁷ As proof for his argument, he cited the success of the national campaign to eradicate the vice that began in 1906. He declared if the Chinese had actually been addicted at the levels claimed in earlier histories, the campaign could not have worked. However, since most users were ‘social smokers’ they found it easy to quit when it became unfashionable.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Newman, “A Reconsideration,” 776.

⁶⁵ Newman, “A Reconsideration,” 777.

⁶⁶ Newman, “A Reconsideration,” 778.

⁶⁷ Newman, “A Reconsideration,” 789.

⁶⁸ Newman, “A Reconsideration,” 790.

After making his case for reevaluating opium use and its effects during the nineteenth century, Newman offered two more areas he deemed necessary to revisit: First, he argued that “perhaps we should see the poppy’s presence in China as part of the geographical diffusion of a useful crop, and possibly as an element in the diffusion of central Asian cultures, rather than as a curse visited by imperialists on a weaker nation.”⁶⁹ Second, he promoted the notion that “the production and consumption of opium were, for most people, normal rather than deviant activities and it is the implications of this normality which ought to be explored, both for the sake of China’s history and for the sake of their relevance to modern societies learning to live with drugs.”⁷⁰

Though both are valid suggestions for future research, they are a far cry from the works of Dr. Allen. By urging current historians to reevaluate the traditional interpretations of opium abuse, Newman signaled an important split from the past while at the same time creating a model for future studies. Were opium not the pernicious drug that had been decried for centuries, it is necessary to reconsider the entire trade and its effects. A particularly vital topic for investigation is the role of missionaries in perpetrating the myth. Future historians should consider why these missionary testimonials were made and how they were interpreted, followed by an analysis of the society that accepted and encouraged those reports.

The renewed interest in the opium trade was continued with Kathleen Lodwick’s publication of *Crusaders Against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China 1874-1917*. Lodwick’s work was the first major attempt to examine the contributions of the

⁶⁹ Newman, “A Reconsideration,” 791.

⁷⁰ Newman, “A Reconsideration,” 794.

Protestant missionaries to the anti-opium movement that swept Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her premise was that these missionaries played a crucial role in keeping the issue at the forefront of public and parliamentary discussions, eventually leading to the end of the legal trade. She then argued that the foreign missionaries were the first Westerners to fully understand the physical and psychological danger of opium addiction, and that these same missionaries courageously pursued their quest to end the trade despite objections from merchants, traffickers, and British officials.

Lodwick specifically cited Park's *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians* in order to emphasize her point that the missionaries were instrumental in ending the trade and that their documentation and evidence clearly showed the dangers of the drug and its disastrous effects. However, her brief examination of the document showed a lamentable tendency to continue the historiographical trend of accepting the comments of the physicians without questioning their evidence, their motivation, or even their accuracy. This was a disappointing aspect of Lodwick's work, made more obvious by Newman's work that questioned the traditional historiography.

Building on Newman's ideas, Carl Trocki published *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950* in 1999. While heavily dependent on Owen and Morse for source material, Trocki put a new spin on their works and interpretations. Rather than examining the opium trade in isolation, he placed it in the context of a long line of "drug" trades that included addictive products such as sugar, coffee, tobacco and tea, establishing that:

It is possible to suggest a hypothesis that mass consumption, as it exists in modern society, began with drug addiction. And beyond that, addiction began with a drug-as-commodity. Something was necessary to prime the pump, as it were, to initiate the cycles of production, consumption, and accumulation that we identify with capitalism. Opium was the catalyst of the consumer market, the money economy and even of capitalist production itself in nineteenth century Asia.⁷¹

By creating a cash commodity, opium paved the way for the radical changes that needed to take place in order to convert the traditional Asian economy to a capitalist system comparable to that which existed in the Western world. Drawing on Owen's and Greenberg's work regarding the contributions of private traders, Trocki reiterated the role of the opium trade in the promotion and development of the technological and economic advancements of the age. However, in a break with Greenberg, who had focused almost exclusively on the benefits to the Western world, Trocki devoted much of his work to examining how these developments affected the Far East.

This change represents a shift from a Eurocentric view of history during the first half of the century towards a more global view. Towards this end, Trocki wrote:

If we look at the trading world of Asia as a system of interdependent relationships, the role of opium emerges as a pivotal agent of change. For most of the nineteenth century, the drug was the major export from India to China, pushing aside Indian textiles as the most valuable of India's products. At the same time, the drug revenue was the second most important source of income for the Indian government. For 50 to 60 years, it was China's major import from the outside. It was the major concern of Europeans and other Asian merchants gathered in Macao and Canton during the first half of the 19th century. Profits from opium not only offset the cost of the East India Company's tea investment, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century, they began to reverse the centuries old flow of silver into the Middle Kingdom. It was the realization by Chinese authorities that for the first time they were exporting silver bullion that galvanized their opposition to the trade and led to the Opium war. In addition, the new flow of cash out of China went into the hands of British and American merchants who

⁷¹ Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy*, 172.

used the money to bankroll their own transition to modern industrial and corporate capitalism.⁷²

Trocki took a broader view of the opium trade, and this approach created a new direction for the historiography, one that examined the entire system of interrelated parts, rather than focusing on one small component. Although difficult to do well, this development may open up the study of the trade in new ways and establish its value in the current debates on drugs. Perhaps the most important aspect of Trocki's contribution is that he encouraged historians to question how the opium trade changed traditional socio-economic and political structures in the Far East. Although Trocki argued that the trade was ultimately beneficial to the region, more work needs to be done before this can be fully accepted.

Adding to his earlier body of work, J. F. Richards published "Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895" in 2002, highlighting the changes in the historiography since the early 1980s. He began his article by noting that

Opium, like colonialism, is a sensitive and charged issue....Each society and culture is convinced that its own drugs of choice are normal and natural; and that those of other societies are depraved and unnatural.⁷³

This sentiment neatly expresses one of the major changes in the opium studies of the last century. Recognizing that societal and cultural differences have an impact on the way we think about drug use is a major break with the traditional historiography, and it is closely aligned with anthropological and sociological studies. His article goes on to examine the work of the 1895 Commission charged with making an official recommendation

⁷² Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy*, 58.

⁷³ Richards, "British Indian Empire," 375.

concerning the future of the opium trade. Richards argued that the Commission was given the task of determining the harm to India, not China, and to that end, it took all appropriate steps to gather an extensive body of evidence. The findings that the trade did no serious harm to India, but rather was accepted and even encouraged in India effectively removed the opium question from Parliament for over a decade. Richards also pointed out that Indians believed alcohol to be a greater evil than opium and that “both the Government of India, and most informed Indians, rejected the cultural imperialism of the opium reformers.”⁷⁴ His open acknowledgement of the paternalistic, cultural imperialism of the anti-opium forces demonstrated a continuing evolution of the historiography.

Clearly, since the first works on the opium trade were published, the study has undergone considerable metamorphosis. Early writers such as Dr. Allen, Morse, and Owen continue to be seen as foundational in the historiography, and the more modern approaches that encompass more aspects of the trade have left their mark as well. While reflecting the social and academic changes that occurred in the twentieth century, the historiography of the opium trade has remained relatively committed to the precedents established by early writers, and only in recent years have significant departures from their work been accepted. It is interesting to note however, that these departures often still rely on the early work, but have reinterpreted the data. For example, Newman and Allen are of differing opinions about the degree of damage done by opium. Both use

⁷⁴ Richards, “British Indian Empire,” 420.

missionary reports to support their arguments, but despite the fact that Dr. Allen used them to confirm his analysis, Newman chose to show how missionaries misconstrued the situation. However, the continued use of Morse and Owen, in particular, demonstrate that although the focus of the historiography is shifting, the inherent value of the early works is still recognized and they are still widely used. Furthermore, the evolution of the historiography provides a satisfying parallel to the evolution of the drug trade itself. While Morse and Owen focused primarily on the economic implications of the trade and the positions of private traders, East India Company representatives, and government officials, modern historians such as Richards and Newman focused on matters such as the lives of ryots and the opium users. Because they have chosen to expand the field of study to include more levels of society while questioning previous interpretations, these newer writers helped create a better understanding of past drug trades. In 1981, Richards stated that “Chinese sentiment for reform [and] the lessened importance of opium in the government of India budget contributed to the gradual phasing out of the monopoly,” and, in 2002, he added, “the Government of India was better attuned to Indian opinion than the opium reformers.”⁷⁵ Through his works, Richards indicated that there was room for even more growth in the study of the opium question. It was necessary to examine it from non-western viewpoints, and, equally important, it was imperative that historians reexamine the sources and ideas that had informed the historiography.

Throughout the historiographical debate, a common idea emerged, and that idea has its roots in the political, economic, and spiritual debates of the nineteenth and early

⁷⁵ Richards, “Peasant Production,” 69; Richards, “British Indian Empire,” 420, respectively.

twentieth centuries – particularly those fostered by the middle class religious reformers. In this regard, in order to understand the world view of the missionaries and doctors who shaped the Western world view of opium it is absolutely essential that one consider the evangelical movement of the day – and its closely related drive for temperance – for it was here that these largely middle class missionaries were formed. To this end, it is helpful to examine briefly one crucial example: the Methodist Episcopal Church in England.⁷⁶ In his 1882 work, *Methodism and the Temperance Reformation*, Reverend Henry Wheeler declared, with considerable justice, that

It is a notable fact that nearly all the societies for the diffusion of religious knowledge and the evangelization of the world, that are now in full tide of prosperity and activity have come, directly or indirectly from that great revival in which Methodism bore so conspicuous a part. We may also trace the influence of Methodism in the great temperance reform, which for a century past has agitated the hearts and minds of the pious and philanthropic.⁷⁷

The Methodist movement that swept England in the eighteenth century was remarkably successful in recruiting and maintaining a large base of supporters. Like other evangelical movements, the Methodists found their most fervent supporters, both in their leadership and the rank and file, among members of the emerging middle classes.

Davidoff and Hall noted the extremely close relationship between the middle class and evangelical religion in their work, *Family Fortunes*. As they put it,

⁷⁶Norman Etherington, ed., *Missions and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 15. The Methodists were certainly not the only evangelical group involved in missionary works, but their extensive documentation regarding their work and especially their leadership in the English temperance movement makes them an invaluable source. Britain's religious toleration and the characterization of missionary societies as voluntary bodies meant that no single denomination would come to dominate the field. Instead, a wide variety of evangelical Christians took up the task of spreading their faith and their cultural practices.

⁷⁷ Henry Wheeler, *Methodism and the Temperance Reformation* (Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1882), 11.

The “oppositional culture” of the provincial middle class cannot be understood outside a religious context. Middle class men and women were at the heart of the revivals which swept through all denominations. Their most vocal proponents had their sights fixed not on gentry emulation but on a Heavenly Home. The goal of all the bustle of the marketplace was to provide a proper moral and religious life for the family.⁷⁸

In the eighteenth century, the middle class was still an emerging group that bore several characteristics that separated them from the lower orders, the landed gentry and the aristocracy. Far from being homogenous, the middle class encompassed a vast array of people and professions, reaching from semi-skilled laborers to major factory owners, bankers, and other professionals.⁷⁹ Despite their geographic and economic differences, the middle classes had several unifying characteristics. A primary trait was the “growing desire for independence from the clientage of landed wealth and power.”⁸⁰

The reforms that led to increasing land ownership and voting rights for the middle classes also led to a growing awareness of the differences of middle class values in comparison to those of the aristocracy. According to Davidoff and Hall,

Aristocratic claims for leadership had long been based on lavish display and consumption while the middle class stressed domestic moderation. In particular, aristocratic disdain for sordid money matters, their casual attitude to debt and addiction to gambling which had amounted to a mania in some late eighteenth century circles, were anathema to the middling ranks whose very existence

⁷⁸ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 21.

⁷⁹ Clive D. Field, “The Social Structure of English Methodism: Eighteenth – Twentieth Centuries,” *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 28, No. 2 (Jun. 1977), 202. In this work, “The Social Structure of English Methodism”, Field used a five-tiered system for classifying of social groups most heavily involved in the evangelical movements. The main components are as follows: I: Major employers, merchants, bankers, property owners, professional people. II: Intermediate non-manual workers including minor employers, retailers, local government officers, teachers, clerks, commercial travelers, and insurance agents. III: Routine non-manual occupations, artisan crafts, skilled manual tasks chiefly in construction and manufacture. IV: Semi-skilled employees mainly in transport, agriculture, mining, wood, textiles, domestic and municipal service. V: Labourers and other unskilled persons.

⁸⁰ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 18.

depended on the establishment of credit worthiness and avoidance of financial embarrassment.⁸¹

Indeed, perhaps the greatest distinction between the aristocracy and the middle class was the need for the latter to “actively seek income,” rather than depend on traditional sources of aristocratic income.⁸² To that end, the middle class found it necessary to practice economy, self-sufficiency, and ingenuity in order to increase their income and thereby provide a comfortable living for their families. The need to act as both providers and protectors for their families, employees, or other dependents led the middle class to develop a certain pride in their own industry. This pride, coupled with their genuine desire to “protect the weak” was the basis of their belief that “individual action could make a significant difference.”⁸³

In order to increase their influence and efficiency, the middle class moved to a progressive system of measuring everything from minutes to a person’s exact chronological age and categorizing the world into the useful and the wasteful, purity and pollution.⁸⁴ Led by large-scale merchants who had successfully navigated the responsibilities of supplying a nation at war, the middle class “sought to translate their increasing economic weight into a moral and cultural authority.”⁸⁵ Their commitment to a peculiar blend of rationalism and romanticism, coupled with their dedication to a particular moral code, helped the middle class increase their influence throughout England. According to Davidoff and Hall, “Their claim to moral superiority was at the

⁸¹ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 21.

⁸² Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 20.

⁸³ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 15; Lawrence James, *The Middle Class: a History* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), 311.

⁸⁴ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 26-27.

⁸⁵ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 30.

heart of their challenge to an earlier aristocratic hegemony. They sought to exercise this moral authority not only within their own communities and boundaries, but [also] in relation to other classes.”⁸⁶

The middle classes, and the Methodists and other evangelical Christian groups in particular, while lamenting the economic and spiritual conditions of the lower classes that were addicted to alcohol, also targeted the aristocracy for their abuse of it, and of the vices that they believed were a direct result of intemperance.⁸⁷ Prostitution, fornication, disease, adultery, thievery, and neglect were all blamed on the consumption of alcohol.⁸⁸ Wesleyan Methodists made considerable efforts to eradicate alcohol from society. Ministers were asked, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” and were then encouraged to go among “habitual drunkards” in order to “rescue [them] from lives of intemperance, [to be] plucked from the burning and quenched and cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁹ Despite the reassuring invocation of the Lord’s strength, they understood this to be no easy task. The Methodists believed

It is a lamentable fact that millions of the offspring of Adam have been consigned to everlasting misery, whose principal crime dated their existence in the commencement of this detestable vice – drunkenness. How requisite, therefore, to guard against the least desire to indulge to an excess in the parent of crime . . . Of all the wretched slaves of Satan, the drunkard is the hardest to drag out of his chains.⁹⁰

In light of their focus on the consumption of alcohol, it would be easy to conclude that the Methodist movement was exclusively dedicated to the eradication of distilled

⁸⁶ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 30.

⁸⁷ Wheeler, *Methodism*, 11.

⁸⁸ Wheeler, *Methodism*, 156.

⁸⁹ Wheeler, *Methodism*, 13.

⁹⁰ Wheeler, *Methodism*, 157.

spirits. This would be a grave error. The Methodists worked to promote public education for all people, first by establishing Sunday schools, and later by encouraging the spread of publicly funded schools throughout England.⁹¹ Admittedly, part of the curriculum for these schools advocated for the Methodist religious viewpoint and the temperance movement, but their contributions to increasing access to education went beyond this.⁹² Within Britain, the education of the lower classes extended to many reform and rehabilitation programs, including the work of a group of middle class women in Birmingham to provide prostitutes with training for respectable positions as seamstresses or domestic servants. Similarly, wayward boys in Edinburgh “were taught what a manly thing it was to be a soldier.”⁹³ The Methodists strongly encouraged women to become involved in missionary work and in the broader reform movements that developed throughout England and America.⁹⁴ According to Wheeler, the Methodists fervently believed

The history of great moral reforms is of more importance to mankind than the history of war, and shows the progress of the people more clearly than changes in civil government, or the rise and fall of dynasties. The moral and spiritual forces underlying society silently work great changes in the thought and condition of the masses, and show themselves in great social movements, which tend to a higher place of civilization. These forces are the most important factors in a nation’s life, and demand the attention of the thoughtful of every age. They mold and fashion the generations. Every generation is in some measure the outgrowth of

⁹¹ Wheeler, *Methodism*, 213-235.

⁹² Etherington, *Missions*, 11. According to Etherington, “missions founded schools for their evangelical purposes: to train local people as ministers and missionaries; to spread literacy so the Bible could be read; and to form the minds of children when adults proved indifferent or hostile to the Christian message.”

⁹³ James, *Middle Class*, 306-307. In addition, Davidoff and Hall wrote that this gendered system was a particular nuance of the middle class. Men and women were assigned different roles, and there was considerable effort put forth to ensure that the gendered roles deemed proper to the middle class were passed on to those in the lower orders, who might ‘benefit’ from their imitation of that middle class system.

⁹⁴ Wheeler, *Methodism*, 246-259. Interestingly, Etherington declared on page 9 in his work, *Missions*, that Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts was founded in order to help women learn to become the wives of missionaries.

forces that were silently working in the generation preceding. If the force does not exist the people must sink into moral decay; where it does exist it will show itself in the efforts of the masses to lift themselves up to a purer and better life.⁹⁵

The Methodists and other Evangelical groups worked tirelessly in Britain and America to encourage temperance reforms and to improve the lives of their fellow man.⁹⁶ Educational reforms, medical care and reform, criminal law revisions, and the “quintessential middle-class virtue, self help,” can all be attributed, at least in part, to the efforts of these reformers.⁹⁷ These groups soon recognized that the larger world provided more opportunities to serve God through their reform work, and missionary groups were dispersed to all corners of the Empire.

With the influx of Western traders, Protestant missionaries found an opportunity to spread their influence into the Far East. The missionaries followed the traders to China and began the long process of attempting to convert an ancient people to Christianity, encouraging them to turn their backs on centuries of religious and cultural traditions. As Norman Etherington put it, China was the “great hope of European and North American evangelists.”⁹⁸ In addition to the missionary conviction that millions of Chinese souls were awaiting salvation through conversion to the Christian faith, the scourge of opium offered these temperance-minded missionaries the opportunity to adapt and apply their

⁹⁵ Wheeler, *Methodism*, 9-10.

⁹⁶ Despite their hard work and dedication, the temperance movements failed to gain an enduring elimination of alcohol sales or consumption in either America or Britain. The Eighteenth Amendment in America briefly outlawed the sale, distribution, or consumption of liquor, and it had the unfortunate side effect of turning otherwise law-abiding citizens into criminals and minor crooks into major underworld forces throughout America. The Twenty-first Amendment would overturn this “failed experiment” and the idea of eliminating alcohol consumption in America was relegated to fringe groups.

⁹⁷ James, *Middle Class*, 305.

⁹⁸ Etherington, *Missions*, 5.

anti-alcohol zeal to the Middle Kingdom. The resistance they met was understandable, especially when coupled with the Chinese resentment of the invasive foreign presence in their homeland.⁹⁹

In addition to ministers, the missions also sent people from many professions, hoping to convert the Chinese to a more “civilized” way of life. Included in this group were hundreds of doctors, determined to bring the knowledge and practices of Western medicine to this eastern area.¹⁰⁰ The inherent problem was that Western medicine was not proven to be superior to Eastern medicine. In fact, the traditional Chinese methods were often more effective in healing the native Chinese than anything Western doctors had to offer. Furthermore, the lack of understanding of their language, culture, and traditions hindered the efforts of Western-trained physicians even more, which often resulted in ineffective and frustrating encounters with patients.

In declaring Western medicine, to say nothing of Western culture, to be vastly superior to Eastern medicine, these doctors placed themselves in a position of power.¹⁰¹ This power was greatly enhanced by the tandem efforts of the ministers’ attempts at conversion and the medical efforts of these doctors. The decision to ignore their Eastern counterparts – in both religion and medicine – meant there was a distinct lack of understanding of both their patients and their would-be converts.

⁹⁹ Etherington, *Missions*, 8. He stated that “the areas that proved most resistant to Christian evangelizing were regions dominated by well entrenched universalizing creeds and sacred written texts [such as] China.” He reiterates that the Chinese did not welcome the missionaries, or their religious messages.

¹⁰⁰ Etherington, *Missions*, 4, 12. “Medical missions were mainly supported as a holy imitation of Christ the Healer and as bait for their preaching.”

¹⁰¹ This is an example of both Michel Foucault’s discussion of the establishment of the Western medical “clinic”, the discourse related to it, and Edward Said’s “Other” in regards to Orientalism and colonization.

As the anti-opium fervor heated up in England and America, coupled with the temperance movements in both nations, the same fervor gripped the missionaries in China. Much as they saw alcohol as a huge problem in the Western world, they viewed opium use as a great sin, responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths by overdose and suicide, as well as a destroyer of families, homes, and characters.¹⁰² They blamed opium use for the rampant poverty and destitution that ravaged China. They blamed opium use for the lack of interest in Western culture and ideas that they were working to bring to China. And, perhaps most important of all, they blamed opium use for the widespread refusal to convert to Christianity. Indeed, they concluded that the Chinese were abusing opium and were powerless to stop the use and spread of the pernicious substance. Therefore, it was necessary that the missionaries bring a version of their temperance campaign to China.

In 1895, amidst the raging opium debate and Protestant attempts to convert entire populations to Western religious beliefs, a missionary prayer group in Soochow decided that it was “high time for some action on this question by the great missionary body of China.”¹⁰³ The suggestion, made by the Reverend Joseph Bailie – a minister, not a medical doctor – was well received by the group and a plan was devised to send a questionnaire to a select group of medical doctors currently working in China in hopes of obtaining their support for the suppression of the opium trade.¹⁰⁴ This questionnaire

¹⁰² One could virtually replace the word alcohol with opium and all of the core messages of the temperance movement would apply to this Chinese vice.

¹⁰³ William Hector Park, M.D., *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1899), iii.

¹⁰⁴ It is necessary to point out that this questionnaire was likely developed with the best of intentions by a group that firmly believed they were doing the Lord’s work. However, their intentions resulted in a

would be used as an authoritative primary document by contemporary anti-opium societies and the scholars who would develop the historiography over the next century.

In this decision, several notable issues demand attention. First, the formation of the Anti-Opium League in China included a large number of ministers and only a few medical doctors. Second, the Committee appointed to design the questionnaire and compile its results contained two ministers and only one doctor. This was quite odd, considering the major factor cited in support for the suppression of opium rested upon a medical, rather than a spiritual, claim. Next, the questionnaire that was finally developed was sent only to foreign medical doctors, almost exclusively to those associated with the missionary movement. No practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine were surveyed, and this gives rise to several issues. One can draw a few reasonable conclusions from this omission. First, it is clear that the League felt that Chinese medicine was in some way lacking in substance and ability in comparison to Western medicine, and therefore the opinions of the native doctors had little value. Second, it is likely that those conducting the survey feared that the native doctors might not have supplied answers that supported the League's position. Third, it is possible that the language barrier between the missionaries and the native practitioners may have necessitated the exclusion.¹⁰⁵ Dr.

number of problems, which will be addressed throughout the body of this paper. Furthermore, their survey would not meet today's more rigorous standards regarding empirical research.

¹⁰⁵ If it were true that the language barrier was the chief reason for excluding Chinese doctors, then this would further complicate the assertions that the missionaries were able to communicate with any native Chinese. Further, a native Chinese man wrote the introduction to the work, and a missionary translated his words. Why then, could the same translator not accurately translate for native doctors? While the language barrier remains a possible reason for exclusion, it is not a likely one.

Park's assertion that they "wish[ed] answers from every practitioner in China" is in direct contrast to their carefully selected list of recipients.¹⁰⁶

An additional problem with this survey relates to the responses it garnered. The largest response came from doctors associated with the missionary groups; indeed, only four respondents are listed as being from outside the missionary movement. This self-selected group cannot stand up to statistical scrutiny. Furthermore, Dr. Park freely admits that the physicians, as foreigners, were able to speak some Chinese or were learning to do so, but certainly were not fluent in the language or with the culture with which they interacted and served. He does write that they "mingle" with the native Chinese on a daily basis, but he does not define whether this means in social groups, in the work environment as subordinates and superiors, or as part of a doctor-patient relationship.¹⁰⁷ The extent of this mingling would be useful information, as would some data on the nature of the interaction, as that can greatly color the impressions garnered by the individual.

Finally, Dr. Park wrote that the respondents had been in service in China ranging from one year to forty-four years, with an average of nine years of service. In that time, foreign doctors recorded an average of 750,000 medical visits per year.¹⁰⁸ This breaks down to approximately nineteen patients per day for each of the responding doctors. It is difficult to understand how this is statistically significant or representative of the population in a country of more than 400 million inhabitants. Presumably, of the 750,000

¹⁰⁶ Park, *Opinions*, iv.

¹⁰⁷ Park, *Opinions*, iv.

¹⁰⁸ Park, *Opinions*, iv.

individuals who sought medical treatment from a Western doctor, not all had a health concern directly related to opium. This brings the statistical significance of these reports to an even lower level.

Despite these issues, Dr. Park granted assurance that the essays, letters, and survey responses proved that there was “only one side to the opium question in China” and that we cannot argue with the learned opinions of the respondents.¹⁰⁹ However, it is not surprising – indeed, it is even expected – that a self-selected response to a survey issued to a small group with a common background and similar aims would return similar ideas. The resulting publication of *The Opinions of over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China* in 1899 provided a decidedly biased view of the situation. Though Dr. Park can be forgiven for his efforts to ignore the inherent problems in his survey, what is more problematic is that later historians continued to use his conclusions without examining his methodology or even the statements made by the individual respondents.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said noted that this type of attitude and survey was anti-empirical, sharing with “magic and mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are *because* they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter.”¹¹⁰ Indeed, the tendency of the Western world was to label and characterize the people and culture of China as being weak, unable to discern proper religion from heathenism, or to recognize the perniciousness of opium use. Certainly, in Western discourses, once opium use had begun, the Chinese lacked the character or

¹⁰⁹ Park, *Opinions*, iv.

¹¹⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 70.

fortitude to use it responsibly or free themselves from their addiction. This tendency to characterize the weakness of character and the rampant addiction to opium was furthered by the ongoing development of Western medicine's clinical practices. Michel Foucault interrogated the ongoing evolution of eighteenth and nineteenth century western medicine's analysis of signs and symptoms, and indicated that while the attending physician observed certain symptoms and signs, the medical language chosen to describe those symptoms as well as the discourse surrounding them created a diagnosis of a "disease" that might or might not have been rooted in the patient's reality. The diagnostic symptoms could lead to a degree of certainty, but the condition would always be dictated by the conceptual confusion related to an incomplete understanding of the body's physiology and pathology.¹¹¹ In the responses recorded in *Opinions*, it is painfully obvious that the respondents could not or would not discuss specific symptoms of opium addiction, often relying on statements such as the "effects of use were bad" or that the effects were "demoralizing and injurious," without providing any real information. Whereas Foucault indicated in *Birth of A Clinic* that the language and discourse of the time provided a framework in which this type of diagnosis was acceptable for medical professionals, it certainly lacks any type of empirical evidence and rather appears a confirmation of Said's assertion that this was a closed system.

The tendency towards Orientalism as described by Said was neither new nor unique to the academic world, and it has been applied to more than just the recognized "Orient." Civilizations have always based their knowledge and observations in that

¹¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (New York: Random House, 1973), 89-94.

which is most familiar and best fits their worldview. However, the intellectuals of the nineteenth century, including writers, government officials, and medical doctors, were well aware of the role the British Empire played in the world and how that imperialism would have an impact on every aspect of not only their upbringing but also of their thinking and intellectual work as well.¹¹² The relationship between the Western world and China was a “relationship of power, of domination . . . and it [the Orient] was discovered to be [lacking] by an average nineteenth-century European, because it could be – that is submitted to being – made so.”¹¹³ It is therefore not surprising that the Westerners would bring their worldview to their individual pursuits, including attempts to save the Chinese people from their heathen ways and their unfortunate propensity to opium addiction. The clear belief that the Chinese were somehow less than their Western counterparts, coupled with the ingrained ideals of the “White Man’s Burden to Civilize, Christianize, and Colonize” the world, gave rise to this tendency to belittle Chinese culture and understanding, while at the same time demanding protection for a population that was unable to protect itself.¹¹⁴

As the new historiography gradually moves beyond the interpretations of years past, it raises new questions about our understanding of all aspects of the opium trade. To that end, a reconsideration of the *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China* becomes necessary to the larger study. The next chapter will undertake an examination of the physician questionnaires and outline how those responses offered

¹¹² Said, *Orientalism*, 14.

¹¹³ Said, *Orientalism*, 6.

¹¹⁴ Rudyard Kipling, “White Man’s Burden,” 1899.

very little empirical evidence regarding any aspect of opium use by the Chinese population. This is followed by an evaluation of the essays and letters that accompanied the questionnaire responses for their empirical value and for suggestions of future research opportunities.

CHAPTER III

A REEVALUATION OF DR. PARK'S *OPINIONS OF OVER 100 PHYSICIANS ON THE USE OF OPIUM IN CHINA*

The twentieth century experienced amazing transformations. Mankind moved from dependence on horse and steam power to harnessing the awesome power of the atom. We sent humans to space, developed unprecedented weapons of mass destruction, and transformed communication capabilities from the early telegraph to today's reliance on email, social media, and the World Wide Web. In many ways, the historiography of the opium trade kept pace with these advancements. However, in one particular area, the historiography has lagged behind. For the last several decades, historians made use of evangelical Christian missionary testimonials regarding the opium habits of the Chinese. This reliance, despite the new information, technology, and resources available, means that modern historians have missed several chances to address numerous concerns, as well as opportunities to increase the scope of the field.

When the International Opium Conferences met in 1909 and again in 1911-12 to discuss the future of the opium trade, they looked to missionary reports, including Dr. William H. Park's *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China*, for accurate testimony regarding Chinese use and attitudes regarding the drug.¹¹⁵ Those

¹¹⁵ Lodwick, *Crusaders*, 3.

conferences were instrumental in increasing public support for anti-opium policies as well as convincing various nations to implement strict controls on opium and its derivatives. Historians and contemporary social commentators took note of the importance attached to those documents.

Despite the significant influence the International Opium Conferences exerted on both government policies and the developing study of the opium trade, this was certainly not the first time missionary statements swayed public opinion. For example, John Telford and Benjamin Barber's review of *Opinions of over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China* for the *London Quarterly Review* garnered support for the growing anti-opium movement within Britain. Their lengthy appraisal supported Dr. Park's assertions that the opinions of foreign medical professionals provided an accurate picture of the opium situation within China, ignoring the problems inherent in the compilation, while praising the doctors for their willingness to express opinions from which "there can be no personal gain."¹¹⁶ Their determination to disregard the purported spiritual gain obtained by the eradication of the trade was problematic, because Telford and Barber based much of their analysis on religious ideals, using the Lord's Prayer and similar rhetoric to assure the reader that it was impossible to be both a Christian and a supporter of the opium trade.¹¹⁷ Telford and Barber were among the first to use Park's *Opinions*, but they certainly would not be the last, as the manuscript became an important part of

¹¹⁶ John Telford and Benjamin Aquila Barber, "Opium in China," *London Quarterly Review Vol. 3, No. 93 (1900): 131, 136-139.*

¹¹⁷ Telford and Barber, "Opium," 133-134.

Parliamentary efforts to outlaw the opium trade. In fact, it was critical in establishing the discourse regarding drug use in general.¹¹⁸

As the progressive historians of the early twentieth century gave way to more focus on business competition and the growth of capitalism, historians largely ignored the missionary writings in favor of legal contracts and company ledgers. However, the political and social turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s refocused attention on those evangelical Christian accounts.

By 1976 when Lodwick used *Opinions* in her doctoral dissertation, the historiographical trend was clearly established: the Chinese despised opium and were dependent upon the Western world to eradicate the trade in order to stop the spread of addiction, and the Western missionaries were the best source for understanding the Chinese attitudes and practices regarding opium use. Lodwick's use of *Opinions* was repeated in her 1996 work, *Crusaders Against Opium*. Selecting several carefully worded quotations, Lodwick supported her proposal that the Protestant missionaries were instrumental in outlawing the opium trade, through both their moral entreaties and their scientific reports.¹¹⁹ Again, it was not Lodwick's assessment of the missionary influence on public opinion in Western nations, or their particular morality that was in question;

¹¹⁸ In addition to the use of Park's *Opinions* in the International Opium Conferences and Parliamentary proceedings regarding the opium trade in the decade after it was published, historians continued to use this work in their own research. Both Kathleen Lodwick and R. K. Newman use it specifically, and others, such as Charles Robinson's 1916 *History of Christian Missionaries* discuss not only the valuable contributions to the opium question made by missionaries, but specifically name several of *Opinion's* responding doctors as making significant scientific contributions. Park's compilation is currently listed as a primary source on the popular website Wikipedia for several articles related to the opium trade.

¹¹⁹ Lodwick, *Crusaders*, 182.

rather it was her claims that missionaries provided convincing empirical data regarding the effects of opium on the Chinese people that were problematic.

The first genuine challenge to the traditional historiography came in R. K. Newman's work, "Opium Smoking in Late Imperial China: A Reconsideration." Citing both Lodwick and Park in his analysis, Newman pointed out discrepancies between what the missionaries reported and what other evidence suggested regarding opium use in China. However, despite his rather lengthy commentaries on alternative explanations for Chinese opium consumption, Newman failed to explain adequately the problems inherent within *Opinions*. As a result, while the established historiography suffered from Said's problems of Orientalism as well as Foucault's quarrel regarding the establishment of the parameters of the discourse, Newman's analysis did not fully alleviate those concerns. In order to provide a starting place to address these issues and emphasize evidence to support Newman's claims, this chapter breaks down each aspect of Park's compilation to expose the most serious oversights.

The doctors who took part in this collection painted a picture of a drug that had very few benefits and, almost without exception, destroyed the lives that it touched. The historians who followed carried on this theme in the discourse, without ever challenging the value of the survey or its responses. The survey itself was riddled with inherent problems; problems that were exacerbated by the biases of the carefully selected group of respondents. To complicate matters further, their responses lacked concrete evidence or examples to justify their claims. This can be attributed in part to the survey questions, which often required a simple response, but there remains a possibility that the answers

were not embellished because the responses were based on opinions or biases with little empirical support. Further, the lack of native Chinese included in the survey meant that the responses were necessarily limited in the understanding of cultural and socioeconomic norms. One notable exception to this was the unnamed Chinese man who consented to write the introduction.

Written by the General Manager of the Soochow Salt Gabelle, a native of China, the introduction was translated by a missionary, the Reverend J. W. Paxton. While the intention of the Chinese native might appear to be above reproach, it is reasonable and necessary to question not only that motive, but also the influence of the translator on the text released to the English-speaking world. Furthermore, there are several indications in the introduction that cause the reader to question the original author's role as a representative spokesman for his countrymen. First, the author defined himself as a Christian and described his loyalty to the foreign missionary movement (a faith and a loyalty that was certainly not shared by the majority of his countrymen) when he stated that "the missionaries, being influenced by Divine Truth, are seeking to propagate the doctrine of salvation through Christ to all men."¹²⁰ He goes on to say that those Chinese who rejected the missionary teachings were ignorant and unable to help themselves without the aid of the American and British governments.¹²¹ This appeal to foreign powers for help in both spiritual and state matters was in direct contrast to the Chinese government's position of demanding that the American and British leave China. Indeed, the Opium Wars and the "Boxer Rebellion," (the latter of which would occur only a short

¹²⁰ Park, *Opinions*, vi.

¹²¹ Park, *Opinions*, vii.

while after the publication of this report), clearly demonstrated the desire to rid China of foreign influence. This discrepancy calls into question the extent to which this native author represented either the popular opinion or government-sanctioned views in his native land. Unfortunately, the English translation of his comments is the only preserved copy, thereby making it difficult to determine whether this difference is a result of the translator's will or if this Chinese Christian's own views were so far removed from those of his countrymen.

As noted in Chapter One, most historians agree that one of the major issues the Chinese government had with the opium trade was the drain on the Chinese economy, as specie was sent out of the country in exchange for Indian opium. Interestingly, in the midst of a discussion regarding the religious and corporeal degradation of an opium addict, the Chinese author of the introduction to *Opinions* also mentioned the impact on the Chinese economy, stating, “the number of depraved population increases daily, while the wealth of the country steadily decreases.”¹²² In an essay otherwise devoted to physical and spiritual disintegration, the brief mention of the loss of national wealth is seemingly out of place.

The author of the introduction then asserted that the foreign physicians had returned about one hundred replies (but no mention was made of the number sent out) and wrote that the physicians were in complete agreement, stating there was “no advantage but only injury” arising from the opium habit.¹²³ As we will see, this was a willful misrepresentation of the responses, several of which averred that for some

¹²² Park, *Opinions*, v.

¹²³ Park, *Opinions*, vi.

individuals opium use provided distinct advantages, including pain relief, bursts of energy, and mood stabilization. He then described the use of opium in other countries as being “medicinal” in purpose, whereas the Chinese uniformly abused the drug. He declared, “in China the use has been changed, so that persons once beginning, continue the use of it, and thus is developed a craving for the drug to such an extent that it becomes as necessary as food.”¹²⁴ He goes on to assert that suicides, accomplished through the use of opium, were the leading cause of death in China, numbering in the tens of thousands annually, putting the total number well into the millions.¹²⁵ No precise numbers were offered, no evidence was provided, and his comments ended with a final appeal to the British and American governments to take up their “duty” to save the Chinese from themselves.¹²⁶

The next problematic aspect of the survey is the list of recipients. As already discussed, the questionnaire was sent exclusively to foreign medical doctors practicing in China, and that population included British, Scottish, Canadian, French, German, Irish, and American physicians with a wide scope of training in both medicine and missionary work. Four doctors were indicated to be of Chinese origin, but they had received their training in America, so they were therefore considered “foreign” doctors. Further complicating the issue was the lack of standardization of medical training across the discipline, resulting in very different educational and practice standards. The majority, fifty-nine respondents, claimed an American heritage, while only twenty-four claimed to

¹²⁴ Park, *Opinions*, v.

¹²⁵ Park, *Opinions*, v-vi.

¹²⁶ Park, *Opinions*, vi.

be British or English in origin. Grouping the eleven Scottish physicians and one Irish physician with the British brought that total to thirty-six. In total, 106 physicians returned some portion of the survey for compilation. Dr. Park provided no information regarding the total number of requests originally distributed, so it is impossible to estimate the rate of response. Furthermore, the majority of responses contained short, vague answers, and most physicians did not provide answers to every question.

In his compilation, Dr. Park listed each question and then dutifully recorded each physician response. A total of seventeen questions made up the survey, and though the questions and responses become somewhat repetitive, each deserves to be examined individually. There is a need to address the questions and responses in this manner in order to evaluate the tone of each response and the actual information relayed in them. The first question asked, “what have you observed to be the effects of opium, moral, physical, and social on its consumers?”¹²⁷ Ninety-five physicians responded to this question. Of those, only fifteen (15.7%) gave an answer with any specific information. For example, Dr. John A. Anderson stated that moral effects included a loss of self-respect, and Dr. Cecil Davenport reported physical effects to be muscular wasting and diminished bodily secretions. Dr. Herbert J. Ilickin reported that the moral effect was lying, and Dr. J. S. Grant stated that neighbors looked down on opium smokers.¹²⁸ Dr. Horace Andrews Randle indicated that the worst effects might take twenty or thirty years to manifest, making it difficult to ascertain real damage.¹²⁹ The more common response

¹²⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 1.

¹²⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 3.

¹²⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 7. This assertion requires an inquiry to determine if the observed ill effects were the result of opium use or simply the effects of aging on the body. No such study was undertaken.

was found in Dr. Robert C. Beebe's "Bad, utterly bad" and Dr. Peter Anderson's "those generally enumerated."¹³⁰ Dr. J. H. McCartney took it one step further and declared opium use to be "the seat of all vice" and Dr. A. P. Peck professed that it resulted in moral perversion.¹³¹

In direct refutation to the introduction's claim that opium use was always ruinous, Dr. E. Ruel Jellison and Dr. Frederick Hudson Judd offered the following responses: Dr. Judd indicated that "In cases of incurable pain [it] afforded relief" and Dr. Jellison wrote "Some rich receive no injury in any way."¹³² Dr. A. Lyall elaborated on this socio-economic point and fully acknowledged that:

The social, moral, and physical effects are dependent to some extent on the financial condition of the consumer. The well-to-do opium smoker who has no difficulty in procuring opium and sufficient good, nourishing food, and who, moreover, may occupy a position demanding energy and incessant care and watchfulness, is not liable to succumb to the debasing effects of the habit. His health and strength are longer maintained; he is less liable to allow himself to become enslaved by the vice, and he, of course, is not exposed to the temptation of having to use dishonest means to obtain supplies of the drug.¹³³

Dr. John Rigg specified that "except for making [the addict] poor [opium] does not injure him much socially."¹³⁴ These four examples stand out because of their status among the fifteen that provided specific information, and indicate that there was an alternative opinion to the creed that opium use was inherently bad and deemed to be completely destructive.

¹³⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 1-3. As there are no enumerations of the effects listed anywhere in Park's work, the statement of "those generally enumerated" is supremely unhelpful.

¹³¹ Park, *Opinions*, 6.

¹³² Park, *Opinions*, 3.

¹³³ Park, *Opinions*, 4.

¹³⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 7.

Further examination of the tone of these answers sheds additional light on the subject. Overwhelmingly, the doctors reported that opium use was bad or ruinous. Perhaps more to the point, there was an undercurrent of hostility in their feedback, not only to the users, but also to the drug suppliers. This hostility, coupled with the overall lack of specific signs or symptoms of drug use or any type of useful baseline information, created a data set that, though interesting, was distinctly lacking in scientific rigor.¹³⁵ Most agreed that opiate use was degenerative, but few actually listed or explained what that meant in terms of physical health. Instead, respondents provided vague terminology and general impressions, which were as likely to be the results of preconceived notions as of any actual observance of the general population. Furthermore, it stands to reason that as medical doctors, this group would not see the fully functioning opium user who restricted consumption to social situations and/or used opium in moderation. The lack of degenerative symptoms meant that this group would not seek out medical attention for addiction; few people went to the doctor to state that they felt fine and would like their good health documented for posterity.

¹³⁵ The argument here is not to suggest that the physician's opinions were not incredibly important in shaping public perception or public policy. Indeed, it was extraordinarily effective in doing so, as is noted by the work undertaken to eradicate the trade. Rather, this statement is meant to suggest that as later historians took note of this piece and used it in their own work, it would have behooved them to examine more closely the opinions of these doctors in terms of the larger picture, namely that the middle class missionary movement had its own set of mores and values it promoted, and those employed by those societies would likely carry those ideas with them in their endeavors. Indeed, these opinions are likely to give us more information regarding the missionaries themselves, rather than any real actual data regarding drug use or addiction in China, as most historians have used it in their own research. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Dr. Park's second question was a continuation of the first and asked physicians to quantify usage by probing:

What are the proportions of those who smoke opium:

- A. Without injury
- B. With slight injury or
- C. With great injury (opium sots)?¹³⁶

In the analysis of the answers, it is clear that there was great variety in the statistics offered, and several doctors stated that they could not provide statistics but instead proffered their opinion. Sixty-six doctors provided answers to this query, and of those, thirty stated that "great injury" was the highest proportion, but the statistics for that category range from 40% to 100%. With this great margin, it is difficult to ascertain an accurate number from their responses. Furthermore, sixteen physicians stated that the largest group experienced slight injury, but their statistical support also varied widely and were mere estimates based on opinion rather than on any analysis of actual numbers.¹³⁷ Although no respondent claimed that the largest group was ever A (without injury), several did report that there was a percentage that escaped without harm, the most common estimate being 5% or 10% of the total user population. Again, this is not statistically insignificant. Five respondents broke the percentage down to 50% each for a B or C response, and others provided answers that left the reader unable to reach a clear determination.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 9.

¹³⁷ This is due to the neatness of the numbers, as it is always cited as a multiple of 5 – as in 5% or 30% as opposed to the much more likely chance of numbers that end in less-neat percentages, in addition to the use of words such as "I suspect" or "I believe" accompanying their answers.

¹³⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 9-12.

As introduced in the first question, it is again reiterated several times that the “better off” show fewer harmful effects, which may actually indicate that perhaps opium use was not completely to blame for the noted deterioration of physical or spiritual health in patients, but was a combination of several socio-economic factors or perhaps even a predisposition to poor health.¹³⁹ Furthermore, the clear recognition that some users suffered no ill-effects and even more suffered only slight injury leads the reader to conclude that opium use was not a surefire path to destruction, but perhaps that it could be used in moderation with few long-term effects. In fact, at least a part of the population used it that way. Notably, Dr. Arthur W. Douthwaite declared that the “The amount of injury depends much on the wealth of the smokers.”¹⁴⁰ This is in direct contrast to the often-repeated claims that opium use was a scourge on the nation and that the perpetrators of the trade destroyed the population. Instead, it seems likely that some users enjoyed the effects, much as people enjoyed the effects of other “drugs” such as alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and sugar.

The third query asked respondents to determine the following:

- A. Is the number of opium smokers increasing in your district?
- B. Do women smoke to any extent?
- C. Do children smoke?
- D. Do the effects of opium-smoking by parents sow in their children?¹⁴¹

Ninety-three doctors answered parts of this question, although most did not provide a response for all four areas. Again, a wide variety of answers were given, which seem indicative of regional differences as well as a lack of comparative data. In response to

¹³⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 9-10.

¹⁴⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 9.

¹⁴¹ Park, *Opinions*, 12.

Part A, regarding the increasing numbers of smokers, fifty-eight replied in the affirmative. However, eight replied that the number was not increasing, and Dr. P. Anderson declared that the number was actually decreasing. Whether this was due to efforts to eradicate opium use or an indication that it was not fashionable to imbibe is up for debate, Anderson did state very clearly that use was actually declining in his area. He then stated that despite the fact that women in his district used to smoke in larger numbers, fewer did at the time of his response.¹⁴² This assertion not only gave credence to the idea that the habit was controllable, but also that former consumers could stop using without grievous consequences. This idea was in contrast to the popular contemporary literature and studies that indicated that an opium user would continue to partake until it destroyed the individual, and that the user had no control over the habit once established. It also called into question the premise that sobriety was a markedly unusual occurrence after sustained drug use, something that very few individuals could aspire to achieve. Instead, Dr. Anderson's assurance that the number of female addicts had dropped significantly in his district seemed to indicate that the users who chose to rid themselves of the opium habit had a reasonable expectation of success.

In a separate response to part A, Dr. Eliot Curwen stated that opium use was increasing because "opium is getting cheaper" and was therefore available to the masses.¹⁴³ Even more doctors, including Dr. W. E. Macklin and Dr. Luella M. Masters said that they believed opium use was increasing, but did not offer evidence to support

¹⁴² Park, *Opinions*, 12.

¹⁴³ Park, *Opinions*, 13.

their convictions.¹⁴⁴ This is especially troubling when paired with Dr. P. Anderson's response and that of Dr. Richard Smyth who was quoted as saying there was "no evidence to show increase."¹⁴⁵

The second aspect of this question, regarding the number of women smokers was more difficult to pin down. Rather than coming up with a hard number or percentage of the population, many doctors chose to state the issue in terms of the number of men smoking. For example, Dr. James Baker Woods stated that the number of women smoking was "in comparison, with men, few."¹⁴⁶ In all, fifty-nine respondents claimed that they knew of women that smoked, while thirty denied any knowledge of it. Of those who claimed women used the drug, the answer was often given as a simple "Yes" or the more common "I have heard of a few."¹⁴⁷ The lack of descriptive responses made it difficult to ascertain not only the actual number of female users, but also the degree to which it had an impact on their lives.

Three particularly interesting observations made by several physicians regarding female users were as follows: First, wealthy women were more likely to use opium; second, prostitutes or "fallen women" were more likely to use opium; and third, female users became sterile and were not likely to have children.¹⁴⁸ The implications of these statements were far reaching. For example, when Dr. Frederick J. Burge stated that better wages had led to an increase in opium use in his district, and Dr. Dugald Christie stated that only the upper class women imbibed, opium was being presented as a luxury good,

¹⁴⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 16.

¹⁴⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 17.

¹⁴⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 12-18.

¹⁴⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 12-18.

to be enjoyed as a status symbol or as a way to emulate those higher on the social scale. Dr. Masters reinforced this idea by avowing that “very many [women] of the better classes” are regular smokers.¹⁴⁹ The assertion that fallen women or prostitutes regularly partook was suggested almost as often as the contention that opium use among women was reserved mainly for the upper class. Dr. Randle stated outright that “almost all fallen women (harlots) are said to use opium” while Dr. J. Russel Watson claimed that only prostitutes used the drug.¹⁵⁰

It is noteworthy that wealthy women and prostitutes were reported to indulge in the same habit. One possible explanation offered was that prostitutes used the drug to lessen the emotional or physical degradation of prostitution, but consideration of additional possibilities is required. All sorts of vices were related to the evils of drink and prostitution, and it stands to reason that viewing opium as an evil would automatically link it to prostitution in the eyes of a missionary, regardless if there was evidence for that or not.¹⁵¹ Regardless, simply stating that fallen women used opium is another example of the closed circuit of reasoning described by Said. Harlots used opium because they were evil, and opium was evil so harlots used it. It was, because it was.

The third observation, regarding the sterility of female opium users also had multiple levels requiring consideration. Dr. Jellison wrote, “women smoking do not bear

¹⁴⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 15.

¹⁵⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 16-17.

¹⁵¹ The development of a distinctly separate middle class, one that was equally appalled by the excesses of the very wealthy and the degradation of the very poor, gave rise to an entire movement designed to turn away from these excesses and return to the righteous path. The Wesleyan Methodists were instrumental in creating and spreading this idea, and the missionaries discussed in this work were directly involved with both the spread of this ideal as well as the work to save not only themselves, but also those others who would reject their particular evangelical Christian faith. For greater discussion on this area, refer back to Chapter 1.

children, but rarely.” Dr. John Rigg asserted that “opium smokers are usually sterile,” and Dr. Randle proclaimed, “their power for procreation is gone.”¹⁵² Again, there are many possible explanations for these statements, including a purported lack of sexual desire (by either the male or female) as a result of opium use, leading to the decreased frequency of intercourse and a corresponding decrease in the number of offspring. However, the Victorian undercurrent cannot be ignored in this context either, and it is important to remember that Victorians viewed good, Christian women as playing the central role of wife and mother. Failing to fulfill either of these aspects of the role meant failure as a woman, and it was almost inconceivable that any woman would consciously choose to remain childless. Therefore, it stood to reason that a childless female – married or not – who consumed opium was rendered sterile by its use. In this instance, the physicians were confusing proximity with causality.

In the portion of the third question regarding children and the use of opium, fifty-five physicians stated that children did not partake, but another twenty-five respondents claimed that they had seen or heard of childhood opium use in their districts. Most of those twenty-five responses were qualified by indicating that these children were born to addicted mothers and had the “yin” or the craving for opium.¹⁵³ This statement coincides with modern medicine’s belief that an unborn child can be addicted to substances used by the mother, while at the same time it serves as a direct contradiction to the infertility of opium-addicted women as previously mentioned. Several doctors, including Dr. Ellen M. Lyon, stated that older boys may partake, but girl users were a rare occurrence, and

¹⁵² Park, *Opinions*, 14-16.

¹⁵³ Park, *Opinions*, 17.

the boys who used opium were of “good families.”¹⁵⁴ This could indicate that opium use was a socially accepted activity for young men of good family. It was equally possible that these young men saw their introduction to opium use by older males as a sort of coming of age ritual, and looked forward to the day when they began to smoke with their elders. This is another indication that opium use in China may have been more social than previously thought.

The final aspect of the third question asked the respondent to comment on the effects of parental smoking on children. Many stated that the parental opium habits did not affect family life or the children, especially among those who were wealthy enough to afford their habit. The survey resulted in a 60%-40% split between respondents who claimed there to be some injury and those who wrote that they had not seen or noted any such injury. Of the “yes” respondents, the vast majority answered in the same vein as Dr. H. L. Canright who gave a simple “yes” without offering any description, explanation, or reasoning for his answer.¹⁵⁵ Among the affirmative answers that contained something beyond a simple “yes,” were statements such as “they are weak” or “they lack stamina.”¹⁵⁶ Though it may be true that opium addicts had weak or easily tired children, it was possible that the actual cause of the physical symptoms of the children were not a direct result of the habit of the parent, but rather that they were suffering from malnutrition, childhood disease, or some other medical issue. It would be ludicrous to claim that parental use never affected children, but it is just as nonsensical to assert a

¹⁵⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 15. Boy users, in this case, were suggested to be rarely younger than 16.

¹⁵⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 13.

¹⁵⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 14.

direct cause-effect relationship. Not all families that had “weak” children had parents who were addicted to opium, and not all addicts had “weak” children.

In direct contrast to the statement that children were directly affected, Dr. P. Anderson stated clearly that some opium smokers in his region had “large, and generally speaking, healthy families.”¹⁵⁷ Still, several others stipulated that the degree of parental addiction mattered but that there was a distinct lack of facts to draw that conclusion.¹⁵⁸ It is curious, then, in the face of these assertions regarding lack of facts and evidence to the contrary, that the allegation that opium use destroyed children and families continued to be made. Those who responded yes to this final aspect failed to provide any conclusive evidence or examples of harm, excepting the cases of those infants born to addicted mothers, while those that responded negatively laid out ample arguments to question the traditional findings. The failure to acknowledge these responses in the formulation of the arguments regarding the opium trade demonstrates a failure by contemporaries and historians to scrutinize *Opinions*.

The fourth question addressed in Dr. Park’s compilation was “is there a tendency to increase amount smoked?” Dr. Park indicated that there were ninety-five affirmative answers to this question, and then he included the comments made by respondents. The comments break down as follows: Five stated that the smoker would consume as much as he could afford. One stated that the amount increased in order to treat illness. Six avowed that the amount increased gradually over an extended period, and two responded that there was not a marked increase in the dosage over any length of time. It is

¹⁵⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 12.

¹⁵⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 13 & 15.

imperative to note that the only comments regarding this question failed to indicate that the amount would increase until it became physically or morally ruinous. In fact, the most common comment – that the amount would increase until the addict reached the extent of their funds – indicates that the users did not usually consume more than they could readily afford. In other words, no crime sprees were committed in efforts to obtain more of the drug. Furthermore, the report by two doctors that the amount consumed did not noticeably increase over a period of years indicated that at least some individuals were capable of limiting the amount they consumed and seemed to do so on their own terms. This hardly seems like the actions of helpless victims addicted to an all-powerful substance.¹⁵⁹

The wording of the fifth question was more complicated, querying, “Can a person, in your opinion, smoke opium, daily, without becoming a confirmed opium smoker?” This question is difficult for two reasons. First, it asks for the opinion of a third party regarding the activity and compulsions of another. Given that the third party has no way of ascertaining the nature of the relationship between drug and user, this is difficult to predict with any degree of accuracy. Second, and more importantly, the framing of the question creates a very strong bias of interpretation. The simple fact, as pointed out by Dr. Arthur Morley, was that if a person “smokes daily for years, he is a confirmed opium smoker.”¹⁶⁰ The phrasing of the question places conditions that require an answer, stating that the daily smoker would be a confirmed smoker.

Interestingly, however, most of doctors - nine out of the fourteen respondents – reported

¹⁵⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 18-19.

¹⁶⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 20.

that they had known smokers who had used opium for years and then quit with no ill effects. Furthermore, they asserted that the opium smoker was very different from the opium sot.¹⁶¹ In fact, Dr. Burge declared that a confirmed smoker “need not become an opium sot.”¹⁶² Dr. Park took it one step further and stated:

The difference between a confirmed opium smoker and an “opium sot” is hard to define. It seems to be a difference largely of personal appearance and of money . . . So long as a man has money enough to keep up appearances, he is only a confirmed smoker, and [only] when his money gives out and he has to pawn his clothes he becomes an opium sot.¹⁶³

This observation highlights an additional consideration regarding Chinese attitudes towards opium users and the drug itself. Clearly, if the smoker could afford to maintain the habit in comfort and style, there was no need to concern society with the habit. In this case, the condemnation of the opium sot was an economic consideration. The affluent “smoker” did not lose social status, nor was he considered to be in the clutches of a merciless, dangerous drug.

Dr. Park followed this discussion with the following series of questions:

- A. What percentage of laborers, merchants, and artisans smoke opium in the part of China with which you are conversant?
- B. What is the effect of opium smoking on their efficiency?
- C. Do many employers object to employing opium smokers?
- D. If so, what are some of the reasons assigned for not employing them?¹⁶⁴

In the response to the part A, many replies stated that they could not be sure or that it was a large percentage. A few, such as Dr. Mary L. Carleton and Dr. Stephen Barchet,

¹⁶¹ Park, *Opinions*, 19-20.

¹⁶² Park, *Opinions*, 20.

¹⁶³ Park, *Opinions*, 20.

¹⁶⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 21.

assigned it to a particular occupation such as chair coolies or laborers.¹⁶⁵ We have already discussed the problems associated with generating accurate percentages, so we will address the next part of the question, regarding the effects on efficiency. Two doctors indicated that there was no observable effect, and one indicated that opium use created a positive effect – namely increasing strength in the user.¹⁶⁶ Thirteen provided specific examples such as a degraded working ability, laziness, weakness, deceitfulness, weakened mental functions and decreased work attendance as the primary problems associated with opium use. Fifty-eight physicians claimed the effects were deleterious, but were vague in their descriptions, calling the effects bad, degenerating, or resulting in inefficiency.¹⁶⁷ The specific results of opium use on efficiency were not clear because these physicians failed to provide detailed accounts or empirical evidence of the symptoms.

The final two parts of the question related to employers and their practices and beliefs regarding opium users. Sixty-three respondents declared that many employers in their area objected to hiring opium users if there were alternatives available. Nine said it did not matter, and seven replied that only a few objected. The doctors reported that the employers' reasons for the hesitation were generally the same as their own reported observations regarding the opium users. This testimony is unsurprising, considering the physician who listed the negative effects on efficiency also listed the reasons for refusal to employ the addict. A question that was raised in this section was to what extent did

¹⁶⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 21.

¹⁶⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 21.

¹⁶⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 21-29.

the respondent discuss these hiring practices with employers in their area? Many made statements that relied on an estimate or on a third party observation. Canright reported “Seemingly few. Dr. H. C. Collins stated, “I think not.”¹⁶⁸

The follow-up question reads, “Is the opium habit condemned as degrading or injurious by the Chinese in general?”¹⁶⁹ Dr. Park reported eighty-nine affirmative answers and a few negative responses, albeit with qualifying statements for each. The important consideration here is the comments that accompanied the responses. Dr. Herbert J. Hickin wrote that it was regarded as a vice, and Dr. Douthwaite noted that “I never met a man who had a word to say in its favor; it is universally condemned.”¹⁷⁰ Then, Dr. Julius W. Hewett offered this response: “Yes, certainly! And when *wanting to confront a preacher of holiness, they ask, “Where does opium come from; who brought it to China?”*¹⁷¹ This tendency to blame the English was echoed by Dr. Richard Wolfendale in the statement “They like to blame the English for its introduction *wherever they can score a point.*”¹⁷² The question, then, is what do these two statements reveal about Chinese attitudes regarding the English presence in China? It is interesting that some Chinese detailed the evils of opium when confronted with a missionary seeking to

¹⁶⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 21-22. This goes back to an earlier point stating that the value of these observations must be tempered by the knowledge that they were made by a foreign third party who was not fully versed or raised to the culture and traditions of the area, nor were they enamored of the culture and lifestyle of those around them. Further complicating the matter is that these were educated individuals, raised in a period and atmosphere that would teach them that the Western world was more civilized than the Eastern world, and a paternalistic approach was needed to ensure the well-being of the people they “served.” The doctors likely felt no need to consult with many natives on the subjects at hand, because they felt their own views and ideas were morally, culturally, and intellectually superior and could not be improved upon by the addition of local fancy.

¹⁶⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 30.

¹⁷⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 30.

¹⁷¹ Park, *Opinions*, 30. Emphasis is mine.

¹⁷² Park, *Opinions*, 30. Emphasis is mine.

convert them to a foreign religion by professing that Chinese faith and practices were unworthy. It is also interesting that they bring it up when they feel they can use it as a weapon when discussing the English presence. Is this, then, an objection to the product opium and its use among natives, or is it an effort to object in a larger sense to the foreign presence in their country? Was it safer to malign the drug than the foreigners themselves, who may be able to threaten their physical or economic health? It must have been more prudent to attack opium use, which was already stirring up controversy throughout the world. As an avenue to object to foreigners, opium must have seemed like a very good place to “score points.”

Building on this argument, it is essential to note that a good number of doctors responded to this question by framing opium use as a question of the status and economic position of the user. Dr. Lyall wrote:

The well-to-do smoker does not lose caste to the same extent as his impecunious brother . . . the possession of money carries social influence . . . It is a fact that in the large mercantile hong, in Swatow, it is becoming more and more the custom, I am told, to keep the opium pipe for the use of friends and visitors.¹⁷³

Dr. Smyth emphasized, “the opium divan is as common in the houses of gentry as the billiard room in England.”¹⁷⁴ This indicated that wealth and social status, in some cases, made opium use not only acceptable, but also expected and embraced. Furthermore, Dr. Collins indicated that even the lower classes had reason to use the drug, testifying, “The Chinese have little moral objection to it. It gives the only enjoyment the low grade of

¹⁷³ Park, *Opinions*, 31.

¹⁷⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 32.

people are capable of.”¹⁷⁵ Dr. George C. Worth finished the commentary on this inquiry by noting, “I have seldom heard it honestly condemned.”¹⁷⁶ Clearly, some of the responding doctors recognized that the Chinese might have had a different opinion or different motives for opposing the trade than that of the missionaries.

The follow-up to this question read, “How do they regard the opium habit as compared with the alcohol habit?”¹⁷⁷ Dr. Park did not provide the actual responses to this question, only the notation that seventy considered opium to be worse, three considered alcohol to be worse, and twenty-nine claimed no knowledge; however, the comments he did include were rife with contradictions. For example, Dr. Eliot Curwen said that “to smoke opium is regarded twice as bad as to be a drunkard,” and Dr. H. Mather Hare contradicted that by asserting, “they [the Chinese] look on drunkenness as more degrading.”¹⁷⁸ This type of inconsistency makes it difficult to ascertain the actual opinions of the general Chinese population, but it does indicate that attitudes may have varied widely across the countryside. Therefore, it is difficult to believe that foreigners could accurately proclaim that the Chinese people – as a whole – vigorously objected to the drug. Dr. Lyall, again offered his comments, in addition to his presumed yes or no, noting

I have no recollection of ever hearing a Chinaman voluntarily comparing the opium with the alcohol habit . . . Opium is dear, alcohol is cheap, and therefore, socially the effects of the two are scarcely comparable, whatever the physical effects might be.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 30.

¹⁷⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 32.

¹⁷⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 32.

¹⁷⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 32.

¹⁷⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 33.

This answer illuminates another argument, namely that different cultures embrace different drugs, and that the relative ease with which a product is obtained produces both an economic value and a social value. In addition, despite the observed effects of the substance, cultures justify those that are widely used among our own population, while condemning substances that seem strange. Therefore, it makes sense that the typical Englishman, who often viewed the temperance movement as an interesting experiment but was not necessarily a fervent supporter of it, generally viewed alcohol as a part of life, and would think that the foreign drug –opium – was much more dangerous and therefore a larger threat to well-being.¹⁸⁰ The Chinese, who, according to Dr. Lyall, did not even consider the two worthy of comparison, would only think to do so if asked directly about their thoughts on the matter. Without claiming knowledge of how the Chinese felt about each substance, one can still determine how the Westerner felt about them. Dr. Park and his contemporaries set this question up with a bias to encourage the response that alcohol was by far the lesser of the two evils. In addition, because opium use was more common in many areas, the noted effects from opium were more numerous than those of alcohol. Furthermore, Dr. Park argued that the overindulgence of alcohol often led to vomiting, the body's natural response to overconsumption. In this way, the body was able to “purge” itself of the “poison” and the long-term negative effects were thus diminished. Beyond this, once an individual reached the point of physical sickness, Dr. Park implied, the individual quit drinking. However, when the opium smoker overindulged, the body had no way to purge itself of the “poison” and the effects were

¹⁸⁰ Richards, J.F., “British Indian Empire,” 59.

contained and multiplied. Further, because there was no physical signal – short of unconsciousness or death – that the body had clearly reached a limit, there was no motivation to stop smoking. Therefore, the effects were more likely to be noted in the long term.¹⁸¹

The ninth and tenth questions in the survey asked physicians to comment on the use of opium as a “prophylactic against fever, rheumatism, or malaria” in their own practices (question 9) and by Chinese practitioners (question 10.)¹⁸² This was a particularly odd set of questions, as they directly pitted the Western view of preventative medicine against that of the Chinese practitioners. In regard to their own practices, eleven abstained from providing a clear answer one way or another, seventy-seven stated that opium did not serve as a preventative measure, but fourteen declared, rather emphatically, that it did. For example, Dr. Henry M. McCandliss argued that “it does seem to protect from malaria” and Dr. E. Woods held that he had “never treated an opium eater for chills.”¹⁸³ A more common response, among all three groups of respondents, was that in “certain conditions an abatement of pain” followed use, and this, at least, was seen as beneficial.¹⁸⁴

In the discussion relating to the Chinese practitioners, twenty-seven refrained from providing a clear answer, sixty-four responded that the Chinese practitioners did not recognize it as a preventative substance, and only eleven replied that the Chinese recognized opium’s prophylactic properties. Given the vocal opposition of these same

¹⁸¹ Park, *Opinions*, 33.

¹⁸² Park, *Opinions*, 34-36.

¹⁸³ Park, *Opinions*, 35. An opium eater, in this context, referred to one who used opium – most likely by smoking it.

¹⁸⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 35.

foreign doctors to opium use in general, it is surprising that more of them reported using opium in that manner than observed the same type of use by Chinese doctors. It is possible that the foreign doctors attributed more medical value to it than did their Chinese counterparts.

It is apparent, based on the comments returned, that the Chinese believed that opium was not a preventative and they did not use it as such. They used it as a painkiller or as a treatment for those in hopeless cases when all other treatments had failed and the goal was comfort. Dr. Anderson reported that opium was only given because of the pain of rheumatism, and Dr. Barchet noted, “they regard it as a pain-killer only.”¹⁸⁵ Remarkably, modern doctors use the opiate family of medicines primarily as analgesics as well. This indicates that Chinese medical practitioners had a working knowledge of the properties of the drug – both good and bad – and that their knowledge on the subject matter could have been a welcome addition to this particular body of work. Furthermore, Dr. Park pointed out in a rather self-effacing admission, that there is “no such idea [that it is a prophylactic] in Soochow. Those I have questioned seem to think only a foreigner could have such a notion.”¹⁸⁶ Once again, the reader is forced to wonder why the native doctors were excluded, and what that exclusion implies not only about the Anti-Opium League in China, but also about the Western views of Eastern traditions, medicine, and ability. This implication is another indication that the Westerners viewed the “other” as lesser, simply because they were the “other.”

¹⁸⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 36.

¹⁸⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 36.

In question eleven, the practitioner reported on whether Chinese physicians prescribed opium for chronic illnesses and if the relief afforded was temporary or permanent.¹⁸⁷ The first problem with this question was the assumption that the foreign, widely scattered missionary doctors would be knowledgeable regarding the medical practices of their Chinese counterparts. Under the best of circumstances, this hypothesis would be a stretch, but considering the language and cultural barriers that existed, it involved a leap of faith. In regards to actual responses to the question, the doctors overwhelmingly reported that opium was prescribed for relief in chronic cases where no other treatment provided respite. Sixty-eight responded that their Chinese counterparts prescribed the use of opium in such cases, and only fifteen stated that they did not.¹⁸⁸ In regards to the type of relief obtained, fifty-seven stated that it was a temporary relief, not a cure.¹⁸⁹ Eight proclaimed long-term relief, but the doctors qualified the statement by writing that continued use of the drug was required. Again, Dr. Lyall provided a rather lengthy reply compared to his colleagues, and this is worthy of our attention. He wrote:

The Chinese physicians in the Swatow region, so far as I can learn, are not much given to prescribing opium smoking as a remedy; indeed, they do not seem even to know much about the therapeutic use of opium. I am told that when they prescribe it, they usually give it in a pill. Of course one frequently comes across subjects of chronic or incurable diseases, who have resorted to the pipe, but I am inclined to think that in such cases it is more generally self-prescribed, or begun on the suggestion of friends, who thinking that the man is doomed, would thus procure him a kind of euthanasia.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 37.

¹⁸⁸ An interesting and useful counterpart of this question would have been an inquiry into how many of the responding physicians prescribed opium use under these circumstances. However, that question was not posed by the committee and was therefore not addressed.

¹⁸⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 38.

¹⁹⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 38.

Although Dr. Lyall acknowledged that the Chinese physicians did not normally prescribe the substance, he indicated that they occasionally recommended it, albeit in pill form rather than the pipe. It is also telling that in cases of incurable disease, the man's friends might encourage him to literally smoke himself to death. Note that the Chinese physician did not. Further, the health condition preceded the euthanasia, and that is an vital consideration, both because of the continued belief that opium caused those conditions and also because it was widely believed that death by the opium pipe was the preferred method of suicide. In this explanation, it is presented as an act of mercy, as opposed to an uncontrollable urge.

The introduction to this questionnaire alluded to the massive rate of death by opium-assisted suicide in China at the time, but up to this point, little mention had been made of that allegation. The next question directly addressed that issue. Physicians commented on the suicide rate in their area and described what they believed to be the preferred method. Eighty-four reported that suicide was common; eleven wrote that it was not common at all. A glaring problem with this question is that it failed to distinguish what was common or uncommon. Phrasing the question in such a way as to obtain the number of suicides in a year compared to the total population would have been helpful, as would a request for information on the apparent reasons behind the suicide. Suicide, as we understand it, is rarely done on a whim and almost never done because of the ease of accomplishing the task. Yet, Dr. Park, in his commentary on this section, not only tried to apply the suicide rate from one particular area to a nation of more than 400 million people, but he also stated bluntly that the availability of opium led directly to a

dramatic increase in the number of people who chose to end their own lives. This statement is another example of a system of closed logic. His comments are as follows:

[An institution that treats opium suicides in Soochow], from January 24th to July 23rd, 1898, treated one hundred and eleven cases of would-be opium suicides. Of these, forty-seven were males and sixty four were females; saved: forty two males and fifty two females. As this institution treats only a fraction of the attempted suicides in Soochow, I estimate the whole number for the year at about one thousand. Soochow is said to have from 300,000 to 500,000 inhabitants. For the purpose of this calculation, let us take the higher number. This will give the percentage of attempted suicides as .002%, with a death rate of 15%. Not let us apply these rates to the 400,000,000 inhabitants of China, and we get 800,000 attempted suicides, with 120,000 deaths per year. Now suicides were common enough in China, I dare say, before the incoming of opium, but the introduction of this agent, which is easy to get, easy to take, and causes an easy death, has, I believe, more than doubled the number. If this is so, then 70,000 to 80,000 extra deaths annually are caused by opium, in addition to the awful ravages of opium smoking.¹⁹¹

Not only does this analysis suffer from the faulty logic that access increases intentional death, it also involves the questionable application of one regional trend to an entire nation. Furthermore, there is a distinct lack of identification of the causes behind the suicide drive. Complicating the issue even further, two additional concerns are raised. First, that women exceed the number of men attempting suicide due to opium is particularly striking, given that the responding physicians overwhelmingly stated that women used the drug in much smaller numbers than men across all regions. This issue is not addressed. Second, it is likely that many of these attempted suicides were dosages that produced unexpected effects, causing friends and family to seek help. The successful prevention of ninety-four out of 111 cases suggests that these were not serious suicide

¹⁹¹ Park, *Opinions*, 43.

attempts, and that there might have been another explanation.¹⁹² All of this refutes the premise that opium, itself, was the cause of the intended suicide.

In addition, the responses of the physicians who indicated that opium was not the primary method of suicide in their area further contradict this assertion. In fact, the doctors listed several other methods, including hanging, knives, arsenic, pan fa, matches, drowning, or strangling.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the evidence provided by Dr. Peck and Dr. Watson demonstrated that the preferred method of suicide then, as today, followed the dictates of fashion. Dr. Peck stated that “matches [are] the present fad” and Dr. Watson echoed the sentiment in his statement that it was “formerly opium, now matches.”¹⁹⁴ This pursuit of fads in method once again suggests that Dr. Park’s assertion that opium was causing suicide was incorrect. Furthermore, Dr. John Burrus Fearn provided a much more reasonable cause for the high prevalence of opium in relation to suicide. “It was easy to procure.”¹⁹⁵ An additional reason for the use of opium, besides its wide

¹⁹² Medical doctor and toxicologist, Kevin J. Temple stated in our personal correspondence through email on July 23, 2013 that a person’s tolerance for opium increases with use, and therefore a habitual user would require an increased amount to commit suicide. He stated that deaths from opium use were much more likely to have come from a newer user whose body had not yet adapted to the drug, and was therefore much more likely to have unforeseen and lethal side effects.

¹⁹³ Pan fa is a solution used in hair styling. Its popularity as an agent of suicide likely had to do with its known caustic effects as well as its wide availability. Note that it did not cause death by suicide, but rather provided a means to an end. Suicide in relation to matches can mean one of two things: first, it can refer to the scraping of the poisonous red sulfur from the matches themselves and then ingesting the substance. It can also refer to the burning of them and/or coal in a closed room and inhaling the resulting fumes, which will likely result in suffocation. Again, neither caused the suicide, they simply provided a means to an end. Unfortunately, the respondents do not indicate which meaning they attached to the word matches.

Strangling does not sound like death by suicide – rather it sounds like something imposed on a victim. It is interesting that these terms would be used, and may be an indication of something referred to as an honor killing, or disposing of a family member who has in some way dishonored the family. Examples include a daughter refusing a marriage match or becoming pregnant out of wedlock.

¹⁹⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 41- 42.

¹⁹⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 41.

availability, was that it was likely a more peaceful death than some of the other available methods.

The next three parts of the questionnaire refer to the breaking of the opium habit and the methods employed to do so. First, Park began with the following:

- A. Do opium smokers usually desire to get free of the habit? 72 responded yes, 18 responded no.
- B. Can they break themselves of it? 36 replied that it was possible and that they had observed it, 55 said it was not likely.
- C. Are opium-cure morphia pills freely sold in your city? 73 indicated that they were, 13 indicated that they were not sold.¹⁹⁶

In regards to the sale and use of opium cures, it is clear, both in the question and in the responses, that the cure only represented another, more expedient and less obtrusive form of the same drug. The morphia pill was a derivative of opium, and was widely considered to be, as indicated by several responses, a “cure [that was] worse than the disease.”¹⁹⁷ Dr. Arthur T. Kember also alluded to a more disturbing practice, when he stated that the “hypodermic treatment” was most common, implying that the injection of the drug was replacing the smoking of it.¹⁹⁸

When Dr. Park posed the question asking if opium users wished to stop taking the drug, the overwhelming response was yes. It is difficult to know from this concise response the motivation behind the desire to break their habit. It was possible that Chinese users genuinely wished to stop, but it was also possible that this was another

¹⁹⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 43-49.

¹⁹⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 44.

¹⁹⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 45; Kevin J. Temple, M.D., personal communication, 2013. We know that in terms of drug consumption and the subsequent “high” that ingesting the substance orally is often the beginning stage, as it produces the least effects. Following this is smoking or snorting the substance, and when the desired effect is no longer obtained addicts resort to injecting the drug directly into the blood stream. This indication that the hypodermic injection of the drug was touted as a cure is disturbing from an addiction standpoint.

instance of Western missionaries imposing their views and wishes on the “other” for various reasons. When providing specific reasons regarding the wish to cease the opium habit, there was often reference to it being for “financial rather than moral reasons.”¹⁹⁹ This common response supports the earlier conclusion that, for many Chinese, if the smoker could afford to indulge, it resulted in no loss of status and was not a problem. It was only when the habit caused financial hardship that it was deemed necessary to quit or reduce the amount consumed. Furthermore, this maintains the previous assertion that the Chinese, as a whole, seemed more concerned about the economic considerations of the trade than any moral damage it might or might not have been inflicting on the general population.

Although a great many of the physicians surveyed indicated that it was possible for addicts to end the addiction on their own, many disagreed. Some of this disparity can be attributed to the way they restated the question when answering it. For example, Dr. Mary Brown stated, “Some are very anxious to be cured.”²⁰⁰ By framing the addiction as a disease that needed a cure, Park created a situation where the next answer, regardless of evidence, must be that the addicts could not cure themselves. Several others indicated that it was necessary for users to genuinely desire to end the habit, and that desire was often indicative of the success individuals would have in eliminating use without outside aid.²⁰¹ This proposition was supported by several responses, including the one by Dr. Collins, which stated, “I have known cases, almost the only permanent cases [ended the

¹⁹⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 45,47.

²⁰⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 44.

²⁰¹ Park, *Opinions*, 49.

habit on their own].”²⁰² If they were going to break the habit, they must have the real desire (as indicated by their reason for quitting) coupled with the self-control to do it without aid of a curative pill or a physician. After all, only the one in the throes of the addiction can decide to end it. Several physicians recognized the strength and power of those Chinese who chose to quit and were successful, but belittled them by their responses and word choices throughout the rest of this questionnaire.

The two companion questions to the previous inquiry asked physicians to indicate their treatment methods for opium addiction and the results gained by the method. They were asked if the doctor cut off the opium gradually or suddenly, or used a combination of the two. Eight doctors reported using a combination with their patients; twenty-two said they did it gradually, while forty did it suddenly.²⁰³ With the recognition by several doctors in the previous question that the successful recovery from opium addiction was best accomplished by addicts on their own terms, it is interesting that seventy physicians responded to this question, suggesting that at least those seventy offered opium users addiction treatments. This practice stands in direct contrast to the earlier statements made by Dr. Collins and his contemporaries, which asserted that the Chinese who permanently broke the habit had the strength and power to do it on their own, without the use of aids or physicians. Furthermore, thirty of the physicians utilized the opium cures that they had described with derision in the previous query. Of those doctors who prescribed the sudden cessation of the drug, many reported side effects such as diarrhea, vomiting, sleeplessness, muscle twitches, pain, and mania. These effects were described as lasting

²⁰² Park, *Opinions*, 44.

²⁰³ Park, *Opinions*, 49.

“for a short time.”²⁰⁴ The severity and length of suffering was generally believed to depend on the level of addiction, and as many indicated that the suffering they observed was not intense or long lasting, it would stand to reason that the level of addiction they were seeing was not as severe as they had earlier indicated.²⁰⁵

Up to this point, this questionnaire focused on social and medical issues associated with opium use. It was easy to overlook the fact that most of these doctors were employed by missionary societies whose ultimate goal was not to save a population from a pernicious drug, but to save their souls by successfully converting them to Christianity. However, the true purpose of this mission -and its apparent abject failure – was brought into stark relief by the next question. If the purpose of the missionary movement was to offer the Gospel to the Chinese and to bring them to accept it, then the numbers of Chinese that ended their opium addiction and accepted Christ as their Savior were not encouraging. Forty-seven physicians responded that they had successfully worked with Chinese who had broken the habit. Of those forty-seven doctors, five purported that a “large number”²⁰⁶ had converted to Christianity; five allowed that none had joined the Christian church, and thirty-seven stated that the number was “few. Very, very few.”²⁰⁷ In fact, Dr. Mary Stone and Dr. Ida Kahn each put the number at one. That is few indeed, and probably not what the missionary doctors envisioned when they started their campaign to eradicate opium use in their areas. The results had to be disappointing, and it is possible that the doctors redirected this disappointment at the drug itself, rather

²⁰⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 50-53.

²⁰⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 50-53.

²⁰⁶ I defined a “large number” for calculation purposes as being 25% or more, or else taking the respondent at their word when they stated several, a great many, or many had joined.

²⁰⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 55-57.

than accepting that perhaps Christianity had little to offer a people with an established belief system that served their needs.

The final reference to the differing views of the Chinese natives and the foreign missionaries was clear in the responses to the final question. The committee posed the following question, “Can you give any estimate of the area under cultivation of the poppy in your part of China, and the average out-turn of opium?”²⁰⁸ By far, the most common response (thirty-six out of fifty-three) was “the area under cultivation of the poppy is increasing.”²⁰⁹ This indicates that some individuals in China recognized the profit potential of supplying opium to the markets, and were eager to take part in the trade.

Accompanying the questionnaire answers, eight doctors sent in essays and letters regarding their views on the use of opium among the Chinese.²¹⁰ These letters largely echoed the sentiments expressed in the questionnaire, namely that the use of the pernicious opium was a serious detriment to the Chinese, and that it caused untold problems, not just for the user, but also for the family and community of the user.²¹¹

The responses to the questionnaire also stated, quite clearly, that the more affluent an individual user, the less detrimental the effects of the drug seemed. This, too, was echoed in these last essays, indicating that these missionary doctors knew and understood that opium use was not limited to the poorest Chinese, but stretched into all levels of society. It is interesting to note that when pleas were made to outlaw its use, the focus

²⁰⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 57-60.

²⁰⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 57.

²¹⁰ Five from the original list and three additional practitioners, unmentioned earlier and with no information regarding their identity or origins.

²¹¹ Wheeler, *Methodism*, 159. It is important to note that this belief echoed the earlier teachings of the Methodists and their associated medical doctors. Wheeler stated, “The testimony of eminent medical men proves that distilled spirits bring on fatal diseases.”

remained on the afflictions faced by the poor and tended to ignore the rich who imbibed the drug without the same types of consequences. It is difficult to reconcile the idea that opium itself caused financial and physical ruin, when clearly these missionaries – the very same ones who so vehemently objected to the drug – reported that the wealthy suffered few ill effects. Furthermore, Dr. E. Blanc explored the relationship of the drug not only to the relative wealth and health of the individual, but also to the English vices of gambling and alcohol. As he put it,

I would therefore consider separately the rich opium smokers and the poor ones, because the first suffer from opium alone, while the second class suffers not only from opium smoking but also from poverty and want of food – since all money goes to the opium den. This is to a certain extent like gambling. Holding a few cards in the hand is not injurious in itself; but it has killed many people indirectly, because a gambler becomes sooner or later destitute, and then may die of destitution . . . The less opium smoked in China, the better of course for that country – provided alcohol does not come in and take the place of opium, because it might be still worse.²¹²

When examined closely, the essays and letters included in Park's *Opinions* shed additional light on the survey questions already discussed. In many cases, the letters offered support for the responses, echoing the tone of several, but had the additional value of providing much better examples and testimony than did the simple questionnaire responses. They were voluntarily given, and were not "led" to a certain answer by the wording of the questions. Moreover, a close reading of these letters disclosed additional facts regarding the use and trade that have been largely ignored by historians. In fact, these letters open up new approaches to research and inquiry.

²¹² Park, *Opinions*, 78.

Dr. J. G. Kerr, who had been in China for forty-four years at the time of his response, penned the first letter. Having lived most of his life in China, Dr. Kerr was an “Old China Hand,” and was certainly in a position to speak with some authority on the subject. Dr. Kerr described the physical effects of opium use by explaining that the “natural yellow or olive complexion of the Chinese skin assumes a dull sallow shade . . . [showing] the poison has permeated the ultimate fibers of the skin . . . [and] the poison has permeated every tissue of the internal organs of the body.”²¹³ Dr. Kerr also attributed the lack of response to the curative powers of Western medicine to opium, proclaiming that prolonged use “deadened the sensibilities of the tissues” and that this was the leading cause of shortened life expectancy rates. He then asserted, “all opium smokers are conscious of the injury the habit does to them physically and financially, and are anxious to get rid of it.”²¹⁴ For evidence of this claim, he offered the existence of “cures” for the opium habit available throughout the country, as well as the refusal of opium smokers to “write an essay in defence of the habit.”²¹⁵

Perhaps most damning of all in Kerr’s eyes was the difficulty the habit imposed on the conversion to Christianity. He, like many of his contemporaries, believed that

Among the Chinese, the ruin wrought in the physical nature of man and the damage to his worldly prospects are the only things considered in their condemnation of the opium habit. But we, who possess the wisdom revealed by God’s Word, know that the spiritual nature of man is infinitely more important,

²¹³ Park, *Opinions*, 70.

²¹⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 70.

²¹⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 70. These cures, according to several doctors in Park’s compilation, are often alternative forms of opium – either in pill form or as an injection that is made under the skin. Additionally, it is worth noting that the refusal to write an essay detailing a defense of a habit already condemned by the anticipated audience would be a futile exercise, and it is not surprising that an individual would decline the offer. This is further complicated by the lack of explanation as to the language expectancies of such an essay, the literacy rates among those he asked, etc.

inasmuch as it is immortal, and the consequences of evil habits contracted in this life are eternal.²¹⁶

As a result, there was a concerted effort to exclude opium smokers from membership in the Church. According to Dr. Kerr, the missionaries gave two major reasons for this exclusion. First, that “purity, truthfulness and uprightness” were not characteristics found in the opium user, and they were therefore unworthy of membership, and second, that the “degradation of the moral nature renders it impossible for the spiritual nature of man to rise above the corruptions inherent in human nature and he cannot therefore rise in the scale of being as everyone must who sincerely takes upon himself the vows of a holy God.”²¹⁷ Dr. Kerr then charged the Royal Commission of 1895 with failure to consider the immortal souls of men in regards to the opium question, and he asserted that the British government should reconsider the question in light of this aspect. Following his line of reasoning, the British government was responsible not only for the governing of man during his mortal life, but also for their eternal salvation, in accordance with the Christian beliefs embraced by the missionary societies of Britain.

Though most of his essay supported the comments and responses of his fellow missionaries, Dr. Kerr also provided an entree into further inquiry of the effects of the opium trade on China. Most of the historiography to date has focused either on the eradication of the trade or on the economic effects of the trade on India, China or Britain.

²¹⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 71. Again, he is demonstrating Said’s ideas as portrayed in *Orientalism*.

²¹⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 71. At first glance, this seems to be a direct refutation of the Methodist belief that “nothing is impossible for God,” but, in actuality, it is in keeping with the Methodist tradition, as explained by Reverend Wheeler, of requiring Church members to sign pledges to abstain from distilled spirits.

Dr. Kerr began his essay with a brief discussion of the preparation of the opium extract.

In these brief comments a new direction of research is suggested, when he avowed:

Among the sights of interest to a visitor in Macao will be the establishment for preparing opium for smoking. *This is farmed to a Chinese company*, which pays them [the government] the sum of \$130,000 per annum for the monopoly. About one hundred hands are employed, and 100 balls (=300 pounds) of opium are converted daily into the smoking extract. This is done by boiling, filtering, mixing and evaporating, all of which requires the constant attention of skilled workmen during two days . . . There is a similar establishment in Hong Kong, which pays this British Colony a large sum for the monopoly.²¹⁸

Two issues are immediately clear from this entry. First, that this opium enterprise provided a considerable profit to at least one Chinese company, as its owners were clearly willing to pay significant sums for the privilege of taking part in the trade.

Second, Kerr wrote that the enterprise employed about 100 people in Macao, (and similar numbers in Hong Kong) and that those laborers had particular skills and knowledge regarding the preparation process. Despite the relatively small number of individuals employed by these two enterprises, these observations suggest that the effect on the Chinese economy was not always deleterious, and that a microeconomic examination of the trade may produce some surprising results. Indeed, it is quite possible that the opium trade not only lined the pockets of bribed government officials, but also provided at least a small number of average Chinese workers with the means to support themselves and their families, and, by extension, provided a market for all those products and services consumed by them. In addition, the supply of the copper pans and boxes necessary to the preparation, as well as the furnaces, warehouses, and distribution networks imply an

²¹⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 69. Emphasis is mine.

economic impact on China that deserves study.²¹⁹ Furthermore, J. F. Richards, as discussed in Chapter One, provided a model that could be used to study Chinese cultivation of the opium crop. This study could provide clarity regarding Park's queries and the subsequent responses regarding the amount of Chinese land engaged in opium production.

The next letter in the compilation came from Dr. R. H. Graves, resident physician in China for forty-two years. As the second-longest serving respondent, and also an "Old China Hand", Dr. Graves's opinions offered important insight, both to the missionaries themselves and to the Chinese they purported to serve. Like Dr. Kerr, Dr. Graves asserted that there were noticeable physical effects that resulted from the long-term use of opium. While Dr. Kerr had focused mostly on the skin appearance and the efficacy of Western medicines, Dr. Graves focused his comments mostly on the bowels and the constipation that accompanied the use of opiates. Specifically, he commented, "I had a patient who acknowledged that his bowels were moved but once a month and then he had to give up everything and lie by for two or three days."²²⁰ Unlike the ill effects of the

²¹⁹ In their work, "Contracts, Hold-Up, and Exports: Textiles and Opium in Colonial India," Kranton and Swamy provide a model for the type of study that could be done in relation to the opium trade and its effects within China. Their work, published in the *American Economic Review*, (Vol. 98, No. 3 in June, 2008) set up an economic model that took into account the intricacies the EIC faced in India regarding textile and opium production. Their models accounted for several variables, including payments, contracts, oversight, and development of resources. This same type of microeconomic model, using appropriate variables and data could further enhance our understanding of the trade on the Chinese front. Indeed, while it may seem that one or two small opium processors in China may not have much of an impact on the overall economic well-being of a nation, procuring an understanding of how that dynamic affected the larger whole is fundamental to the larger study. Just as Ginzburg's work *The Cheese and the Worms* helped historians gain greater insight into the Inquisition of the sixteenth century and the political, social, and economic considerations of the time, an analysis of this small economic area could lead to much greater understanding of the opium trade and the people who participated in it.

²²⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 73. Echoing Dr. Graves's concerns about constipation and its effects on the body and spirit were Dr. Beebe and Dr. Park in their statements on pages 74-76 and 81-88, respectively.

drug described or alluded to elsewhere in *Opinions*, this phenomenon was clearly described and definitively attributed to opium. In most other accounts of deleterious effects, it would be a simple matter to substitute “alcohol” for “opium” and make the same statement. Constipation is the sole symptom that is unique to opium use, and it is gratifying to see it discussed several times by different doctors. This discussion provides a degree of specificity and familiarity with the actual drug that had been lacking up to this point.

Dr. Graves then turned his attention to the question of suicide accomplished through the abuse of opium. As others stated earlier, opium was a fashionable choice for “shuffling off this mortal coil” and both Dr. Kerr and Dr. Graves confirmed this in their statements.²²¹ Both doctors referred to the easy availability of the drug, and noted that this made it an attractive option. Dr. Graves added that suicide was especially attractive to those “easily offended or too weak to bear up under suffering or reproach [and that] the temptation to end life’s fitful fever in painless sleep and in a stealthy and speedy manner appeals frequently to Chinese women.”²²² What is missing from these comments, as well as the responses discussed in the previous chapter, is the reason these individuals would choose suicide. The method was negotiable, and it was often dictated by fashion or by availability. The underlying cause or desire to end one’s life is what is important, and the doctors were either unwilling or unable to discuss what factors had led to the suicide.

The historiography could be enhanced by examining this disturbing trend and

²²¹ Park, *Opinions*, 71 and 73. Dr. Park also discussed the use of opium as a means to suicide in his comments on pages 83 and 84, pointing out that a mother in law and her daughter in law both used the drug to end their lives after an argument over a broken teacup.

²²² Park, *Opinions*, 73.

ascertaining what factors contributed to it. Although it is possible that opium - either the victim's use or that of a friend or family member – could have been a contributing factor, that is not a foregone conclusion and it is an avenue worth pursuing.²²³

Dr. Graves concluded his essay by comparing alcohol use with opium use. First, he noted that the

Time lost to active production in the community is a greater loss [through opium] than that lost through drink. The drunkard pours his glass down his throat in a minute and, unless he goes on a debauch, he is able to go to his work, while the opium sot must have much time over his pipe and the succeeding sleep. Loss of employment, poverty, suffering, and disgrace follow the pipe as surely as they do the drunkard's cup.²²⁴

Despite his original contrast between the alcoholic and the opium sot, he finished his thought by stating that the effects were essentially the same. His next comparison examined the moral results of the two drugs. In terms of morality, Dr. Graves decided that just as “whiskey excites a man to anger, so opium excites him to lying.”²²⁵ It is difficult to determine which vice he believed to be the greater evil, given his comparisons, but he did concede, “Nothing but the Grace of God can save [either of them].”²²⁶

The next letter, submitted by Dr. Robert C. Beebe, maintained that the effects of opium were widely agreed upon throughout the world, and “It [had] been found that with

²²³ It is true that a third party can never truly know what drove an individual to suicide, attempting to understand contributing factors in these particular cases could provide additional information regarding Chinese society at this juncture in history. Careful consideration of diaries, letters, and oral histories could be added to economic reports, religious works, family histories, and so on in order to get a better grasp of this disturbing trend.

²²⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 73. Emphasis is from the original text.

²²⁵ Park, *Opinions*, 74. Dr. Graves also writes that the Chinese report that once they use opium the drug helps them to “plot and scheme and devise lies.”

²²⁶ Park, *Opinions*, 74.

those addicted to the habit of taking opium the nervous system suffers, the mental powers become enfeebled, the moral faculties perverted, and there is inability to distinguish between right and wrong.”²²⁷ Here, it is difficult to ignore the similarity to this description of the effects of opium and the descriptions offered by various temperance societies regarding alcohol over the course of the past century. Instead of supplying the reader with tangible effects solely attributed to the use of opium, Dr. Beebe supplied a description that could apply to any number of substances, life style choices, or vices from around the world. There is little to suggest that opium was the genuine cause of any of the above, yet it was automatically blamed for any indication of the same in an individual. It would be interesting and useful to undertake a comparative study of the temperance movement’s efforts and descriptions regarding the eradication of alcohol in Britain and America and the corresponding efforts of the Anti-Opium League in China in order to better ascertain the differences in the effects of each drug, at least as understood by the members of those societies.

Dr. Beebe finished his short essay with an interesting point. He stated that the methods relating to business and government in China allowed office holders and businessmen to “indulge the habit,” with little detriment and that “many such people live to old age, but the nervous system suffers, the mental powers become enfeebled.”²²⁸ In this case, it is difficult to tell whether Dr. Beebe is describing the pernicious effects of the drug or simply describing the natural result of aging.

²²⁷ Park, *Opinions*, 74.

²²⁸ Park, *Opinions*, 75.

A similar problem of differentiating between the effects of one drug from another arose in Dr. C.R. Hager's comments. Dr. Hager affirmed that opium "weakened the whole man," but failed to provide any distinguishing characteristics of that weakening.²²⁹ Interestingly, in the same paragraph, Dr. Hager also stated that it was possible for a man to avoid ill effects if he had access to good food and used the drug in moderation. This contradiction repeated earlier suggestions by respondents that the detrimental effects of the drug depended not only on the frequency and amount of opium consumed, but also on the economic status of the user. Dr. Hager then went on to point out that the intellectual and moral capabilities of opium users were seriously depleted. He reiterated Dr. Kerr's assertions that the moral disintegration was the most serious effect because opium addicts were not easily converted to Christianity. He also declared "all lofty intellectual ambitions can not thrive in a mind constantly beclouded with the fumes of opium."²³⁰ This is a rather serious charge to make, and it is difficult to prove. In fact, the successful careers of several well-known purported opium users, including Edgar Allen Poe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, are common knowledge in the Western world. It would be an interesting research option to do the same for native Chinese intellectuals who both consumed the drug and managed to enjoy considerable intellectual success.

The next three letters came from army surgeons and officials stationed at the Yangtze Forts. All three stated that opium use was discouraged in camp and that soldiers incapacitated by the drug received very little sympathy from their comrades. Further,

²²⁹ Park, *Opinions*, 75.

²³⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 76. Clearly, he was either unaware of, or chose to ignore, the purported opium use of the likes of Edgar Allan Poe, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and several others.

they noted that those who did not partake were promoted in greater numbers than those who did, and that their overall performance was better.²³¹ However, none of the three described any symptoms or behaviors that could be attributed solely to opium, to the exclusion of all other vices, and they all admitted that opium users did serve in the military and that their service did not create any serious military deficiencies.²³²

In contrast to the testimony of most of his contemporaries, Dr. E. Blanc, who resided in Shanghai, chose to focus almost exclusively on the economic issues related to opium use. He began his letter by declaring:

I am sorry to say that I consider myself unable to give a definite opinion on the effects of opium smoking in China. I mean a distinctly medical and scientific opinion, because I think, in an unprofessional way, that the Chinese would be far better without opium than when they use that drug. Now, like most Shanghai doctors, I have not enough experience of native opium smokers to know exactly the direct effects of the drug taken in small, medium, or excessive quantities. It seems to me that in many cases opium is harmful, less by itself, but through being a cause of expense. At the same time it makes the smoker lazy and unfit for work, and therefore prevents him indirectly, through scarcity of cash, to take daily a sufficient amount of food.²³³

Dr. Blanc's refreshingly honest opening statement about his lack of empirical data and his admission that what followed was only his opinion was in stark contrast to the other respondents, who opined on any number of matters, without admitting that it could be based on anything less than clinical observations. Given his honesty on these points, it is particularly telling that Dr. Blanc chose to focus on the effects of poor nutrition that were a by-product of the drug use, rather than the drug use itself. That was something that he

²³¹ Park, *Opinions*, 78-80.

²³² Interestingly, the act of supplying soldiers with drugs before battle is an ancient tradition, and while the hashish consumed by the *assassins* of Middle Eastern forces was a decidedly different drug than opium, it certainly had its supporters for the purported increase in military prowess.

²³³ Park, *Opinions*, 77-78.

could document and use to prove a cause-effect relationship. In this, his statement was a welcome change, and his closing was equally as intriguing as his opening. He finishes his letter with an apology of sorts:

Excuse this rather long letter from a professional who has no definite answer to give to your inquiry. I wanted simply to point out one of the many difficulties of the subject. In any case, I wish the best success to the Anti-Opium League. The less opium smoked in China, the better of course for that country – provided alcohol does not come in and take the place of opium, because it might still be worse.²³⁴

In direct contrast to his contemporaries, Dr. Blanc not only admitted to limited knowledge on the subject, he also made it clear that his opinion was simply one of many. Even though he believed the eradication of opium would be a positive step, he took pains to caution against replacing that drug with another, which could have worse consequences.

An important avenue of research suggested by Dr. Blanc's statement regards the economic status of opium users and its impact not only on their health, but also, on the way they used and perceived the drug. To that end, the historian has a number of tools available to further the scope of study. Significantly, the opium pipe and lamp offer a rich resource for this line of inquiry. By using the methods commonly employed by material culturists, the historian can glean a significant amount of information from the paraphernalia used in the habit.

With the advent of smoking opium, a new type of smoking pipe also gained popularity. Though tobacco had a long history of use, smoking opium was new and required a special set of tools. As Dr. Allen pointed out, "the ordinary kind of tobacco

²³⁴ Park, *Opinions*, 78.

pipe [was] never used for opium.”²³⁵ The authentic opium pipe, or Yen Tsiang,²³⁶ consisted of three parts: a stem, a saddle, and a bowl.²³⁷ The specialized pipe and lamp commonly used by opium smokers around the world originated in Formosa in the beginning of the eighteenth century.²³⁸ Whereas Westerners chewed, ate, or drank the drug, the Chinese alone began to smoke it.

New ways to examine the artifacts of the trade promise to shed greater light on this highly contentious subject. In his brief work *The Art of Opium Antiques*, Steven Martin traced the evolution of the opium pipe from its earliest simple design through the height of its popularity and into highly specialized, finely crafted piece of functional art in the mid nineteenth century.²³⁹ By portraying the pipe as functional art, Martin encouraged a different approach to the opium question.

The opium pipe, once considered merely an artifact employed by wretched Chinese addicts, provides fresh perspectives from which to study opium, the suppliers, and the users. By examining the physical properties of the pipe, we can determine trading networks, cultural exchange, social roles and customs, as well as the economic impact of the traffic in opium, ivory, tea, silver, and a wide variety of other materials that made exchange possible. A comparison between the opium pipe of the latter part of the nineteenth century and its predecessors illustrates changing socio-economic dynamics in

²³⁵ Allen, *The Opium Trade*, 5.

²³⁶H. H. Kane H, *Opium-Smoking in America and China: A study of its prevalence, and effects, immediate and remote, on the individual and the nation* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1882), 35. This work, while focusing mostly on America, does provide a relevant look at some aspects of the Chinese issues.

²³⁷ Kane, *Opium-Smoking*, 33.

²³⁸ Berthold Laufer, “Tobacco In New Guinea: An Epilogue,” *American Anthropologist* New Series, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1931), 139.

²³⁹ Steven Martin, *The Art of Opium Antiques*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2007) and his *Opium Museum* website at <http://www.opiummuseum.com> (accessed 4/10/09).

the region, and despite the great strides made by the historiography of the opium trade, increased study of the associated artifacts will promote a better understanding of the trade and the people affected by it.

The opium pipe had become, at least for some Chinese, as common as the brandy decanter found in British homes. Dr. Park was not a proponent of either alcohol or opium consumption, and he finished his compilation with a comparison between the familiar and the foreign. In a short essay titled “Alcohol and Opium Compared,” Dr. Park made a point-by-point appraisal of the two; purportedly to demonstrate that opium was as great of a threat to the Chinese as alcohol was deemed to be to the Western world. His comparison showed the remarkable similarities in the properties, effects, and ideas regarding the two drugs. For instance, he argued that attempts to prove that alcohol could replace food had been disproven, and he then made the same statement about opium. He then wrote that “clinical experience has amply proved that toppers do not bear chloroform well, that they succumb more quickly to injuries, and that they possess much less power of resistance than the temperate to the inroads of acute disease.”²⁴⁰ In the next paragraph, he made the identical declaration regarding opium. His comparison made it clear that he placed as much significance on the eradication of the opium trade in China as temperance societies in Britain and America placed on the suppression of alcohol.

This is not to say that he never differentiated between the effects of the two, but rather that he phrased those differences in wording that revealed Western opinions and

²⁴⁰ Park, *Opinions*, 82.

prejudices, rather than any medical fact. For instance, he made the following comparison of opium and alcohol:

Alcohol: A sailor once told me how he alone of a whole ship's company escaped yellow fever in a certain South American city by lying ashore dead drunk the whole time the ship was in port.

Opium: How would one's parents and friends at home feel if he should write that he had rendered himself proof against all the deadly diseases of the East by becoming an opium smoker!²⁴¹

In this comparison, Park judged that being “dead drunk” was more socially acceptable, indicated by his lack of commentary regarding how others would view the condition. Indeed, in this statement he implied that alcohol had a legitimate medical value. On the other hand, he failed to acknowledge any medical benefit from using opium, and he chose to focus on the perceived dishonor that would accompany such an admission if the substance had been opium rather than alcohol. Expounding on this same premise, Park related an anecdote about a classmate, asserting, “his father told him he might take a little whiskey whenever he felt ill, and he had not experienced a well day since.”²⁴² Park's recognition, if not approval, of his classmate's use of alcohol as a medicinal aid is implied, and in the next breath, he condemned opium used in the same way, declaring, “that opium will relieve pain and may be prophylactic against certain diseases is no argument in favor of allowing its unrestricted sale among any people.” His decisions to downplay the availability and effects of alcohol and openly condemn opium is emblematic of the recurring theme of the toleration of a familiar drug, alcohol, in society, no matter how grudgingly, while the foreign drug, opium, was condemned.

²⁴¹ Park, *Opinions*, 82.

²⁴² Park, *Opinions*, 81.

There can be no question of the sincerity of effort on the part of Dr. Park and his contemporaries in eradicating what they viewed as an incredibly pernicious substance.

However, in his work, *Missions and Empire*, Etherington reminded us that

As voluntary societies, mission organizations faced constant pressures to raise money . . . Pressures of fund-raising and accountability generated streams of written reports aimed at pricking the consciences of contributors celebrating conversions and explaining failures . . . Descriptions of the “hard-hearted, sinful, slothful heathen” helped European missionaries account for their slow progress in winning converts.²⁴³

Coupled with the fact that the conversion rate reported by these doctors was extremely low in China and facing the pressing need to maintain their funding, it is not surprising that the missionaries felt the need to focus their attention on the eradication of an acknowledged problem, such as opium use.

Andrew Porter’s contribution to *Missions and Empire* emphasized that the missionary reports had the capacity to “arouse public feeling that gave humanitarians political weight and compelled the imperial government to take action.”²⁴⁴ In this case, nearly all the missionary doctors agreed that the obliteration of the drug trade would lead to benefits for all involved, both Chinese and British. It is important to note, however, that they also agreed that the greatest danger that opium presented was not in the form of physical or moral decay, but rather in the harm done to the immortal soul. Their refusal to allow opium users to become full members of the Protestant Church meant that the Chinese addict could not achieve eternal salvation. This was the real danger for the Chinese, and the missionaries worked tirelessly to convince them of that fact. It must

²⁴³ Etherington, *Missions*, 7.

²⁴⁴ Etherington, *Missions*, 61.

have been frustrating to work so hard for the salvation of people who had no interest in or need of their God, and when confronted with the truth that the British supplied the very drug that kept the missionaries from fully converting the Chinese, they understandably targeted the opium trade and use. Perhaps it would have been more helpful had the missionaries met the Chinese on their own terms, deny church membership to none, and work to understand and embrace the culture around them.

The *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China* was intended to describe to the Western world the pernicious qualities of the drug and the deeply debilitating effects it had on local Chinese populations and to underscore the desire of the Chinese to rid themselves of the drug so that they might embrace the Christian faith. Instead, this chapter demonstrated that the resulting assemblage was filled with leading questions designed to invoke a particular response, vague answers, and opinions presented as empirical facts. This self-selected group was comprised of members who chose to ignore the knowledge of native practitioners, deciding instead to rely on their Westernized view of the “other” in an attempt to spread their version of evangelical Christianity, cultural ideas, and practices. Further, the ambiguous replies, coupled with the blatant contradictions, manipulation of facts, and closed logic circuits revealed much more about the Anti-Opium League in China, its members and respondents, than about any native drug use, attitudes, or opinions. The struggle against opium in China was less about opium use by the Chinese and more about the vices and immoral practices attributed to that use.

None of this reduces the value of *Opinions*. The efforts and ideals of the missionary movements were instrumental in bringing about international change and radically altered views regarding drug use, trade relationships, and even human rights. However, it is necessary to move beyond the traditional interpretations of this work in order to shed more light on these complicated issues. By reconsidering the work of Dr. Park, it is possible to enhance our comprehension of the movements to eradicate the drug trades as well as to increase our knowledge of those missionaries and societies that worked to that end. More importantly, it allows us to consider alternative methods to evaluate the real impact of opium on China.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

For the better part of the last three centuries, Britain and China sought to establish trading relationships that were favorable to their own interests. Beginning in the eighteenth century, Britain found that supplying the Chinese with opium in exchange for silk and tea provided an easy remedy for their uneven balance of trade. The Chinese government was less enthusiastic about the shifting trade balance because it resulted in a loss of silver from the Middle Kingdom, while simultaneously giving Britain and other foreign powers greater influence in Chinese affairs.

The eighteenth century also saw the rapid rise of Evangelical Christianity in Britain. This movement was designed on the premise that God was capable of all things, and quickly came to believe that intemperance led to any number of vices, including but not limited to prostitution, adultery, thievery, murder, and lying. The Methodists, in particular, believed that, with God's help, they could convince both the poor and the nobility that temperance must replace intemperance and that alcohol was a grave evil. In addition to working for the eradication of alcohol, the Methodists also worked to provide education to a wider population, reform criminal codes, and spread the Word of God to all people, including those of the Middle Kingdom.

The Protestant Missionary movement that arrived in China had its foundation in those beliefs, and its work to eliminate the opium trade was a parallel effort to other struggles to eliminate alcohol around the world. The similarity in methodology and reasoning in the work to abolish both drugs was apparent in the writings of the evangelicals in Britain and America as well as the writings of the missionaries stationed and working in China.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, missionary writers in China, Britain, and America began working in earnest to convince their contemporaries, both private citizens and government officials, that the opium trade was a serious problem. It made an impact on not only on the health and well-being of the Chinese, but also on the immortal souls of the same, not to mention that opium was a major contributing factor to the failure of the stated mission of those groups to convert the Chinese to Christianity. As foot soldiers of Christ, it was their sacred duty to convert nonbelievers. In failing to do so, they were failing in their commitment to God. This could not be allowed.

These early writings became the foundation for a long historiography. As historians outside the missionary movement read those works, they often framed their own ideas and works about the opium trade in ways that reflected the attitudes and opinions of the missionaries. In many cases, this was helpful, as the missionary in China was in a unique position to interact with the Chinese population in a way that government officials and traders were not. However, the dependence on these same accounts resulted in few attempts to determine their accuracy from a Chinese point of view. Instead, it was assumed that the missionaries, by virtue of being part of the colonizing and “civilizing”

force that had been sent to China, were not only correct in their descriptions, but were also in a better position to speak for the Chinese than the Chinese were to speak for themselves. It was a rare occurrence to find any native Chinese sources used in the early historiography, and translations or Western views that were imposed on the interview or testimony nearly always compromised those that were used.

Early historiographical works followed the trend established by the missionary writers and reported on the moral effects of the Chinese trade. In the early twentieth century, however, that trend was beginning to shift and scholars began focusing on economic effects. These were nearly always about the effects on the British economy, and it was not until the middle of the century that historians paid attention to the effects on the Indian economy – the source of the opium. Mention was occasionally made of the detrimental effect on the Chinese economy, but it was framed in the larger context of the British or Indian issues and as such was largely ignored.

By the end of the twentieth century, historians began examining more cultural issues related to the trade. New investigations examined how the drug served as a catalyst for developing a western-styled trading network in China, as well as questioning how drugs-as-commodities often had the effect of modernizing the economies of the involved nations. Amid the American war on drugs in the late twentieth century, Newman introduced a radical new idea into the study. He suggested that the opium problem in China was less of a problem than originally reported by the missionaries who served there. His suggestion that we misunderstood the drug use met with considerable resistance, given the long-standing belief that drugs were pernicious when used in any

amount. In fact, very little was made of Newman's work. It was largely ignored by other historians who chose to focus, once again, on the moral implications of the trade and used those original missionary testimonies as their major sources.

The major undertaking of this thesis has been to revisit Newman's premise that we need to reconsider the work of the missionary reports, as well as to reevaluate what we know about Chinese attitudes regarding the drug and its use. Although a number of pieces were referenced, Newman highlighted William H. Park's *Opinions of Over 100 Physicians on the Use of Opium in China*, a primary source that had been used to support the missionary discourse regarding opium use. Rather than a narrative of his ideas and views on the trade, Dr. Park worked with the Anti-Opium League in China to create and send a survey to their doctors throughout China, asking them to comment on various aspects of opium use throughout the Middle Kingdom. Dr. Park then compiled the replies and published the work. This crucial work became a major tool used to convince the British people, and subsequently the British Parliament, that the opium trade was an evil that required eradication.

In the close examination conducted in researching this thesis, it became clear that the nature of the responses were more in accordance with the prejudices and the goals of the missionaries themselves rather than the Chinese they professed to represent. Furthermore, the poorly worded questions, the self-selected group of respondents, and the ambiguous replies do not meet the requirements for a statistically valid survey. However, historians have ignored this, choosing instead to repeat the interpretations declaring that the Chinese were desperate to end the trade because the drug eroded their physical health

and well-being. This is not to say that the effects of the drug were not harmful or that the Chinese did not wish to end the trade. It is simply pointing out that it is problematic to ask an interested party to comment on the thoughts and actions of another group. Among the issues highlighted in this work, the most important may be the tendency to consider the Chinese as the “other,” a near perfect illustration of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* at work.

Still, despite its inherent problems, Park’s compilation is valuable, not only because it provides a primary source with which to study the missionaries, but also because the responses provide suggestions for new paths of research for building the historiography. Various passages and commentaries in this document suggest that further research regarding the effects on the Chinese economy – both harmful and helpful – could provide a veritable mine of information better illustrating the effects of the opium trade and its use among the people. Moreover, the current trend towards using material culture in writing history has potential in this particular area. This thesis briefly examined the opium pipe, at once a utilitarian piece of drug paraphernalia and a piece of functional art, as a way to shed light on the socio-economic status and extensive trade relationships. This thesis contributes to the debate by challenging a specific document that helped establish the discourse surrounding Chinese opium use - a discourse started by missionaries and continued by historians. There can be little doubt that the missionaries were instrumental in ending the legal opium trade, but further inquiries into additional facets of the traffic and use of opium in China are necessary. This thesis is a step in that direction.

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