



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Empires and the pursuit of Opium Policy:
Revisiting the Reports of the Opium Commissions in
British India (1895) and American Philippines (1905)“

verfasst von / submitted by

Aaron Abel Mallari

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master (MA)

Wien, 2023 / Vienna 2023

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 067 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Mag. Dr. Rolf Bauer



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Empires and the pursuit of Opium Policy:
Revisiting the Reports of the Opium Commissions in
British India (1895) and American Philippines (1905)“

verfasst von / submitted by

Aaron Abel Mallari

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master (MA)

Wien, 2023 / Vienna 2023

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 067 805

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Mag. Dr. Rolf Bauer

Abstract

At the turn of the 20th century, conversations surrounding opium began taking a dramatic shift. From being a prized commodity among colonial enterprises in Asia, it started shifting to being regarded as a drug whose circulation needed to be curbed. This thesis revisits the history of opium policy in India under the British empire and the Philippines under the American empire. By situating the account about opium within the changing colonial landscape in these two sites, the thesis makes a case for the importance of looking into these contexts as important precursors that affected the ways drug policy took shape in the latter 20th and 21st centuries.

The thesis covers the colonial period in India and the Philippines in broad strokes to provide the context within which opium figured in the British and American empires. Then the Royal Opium Commission in India (1893-1895) and the Opium Committee in the Philippines (1903-1905) are revisited to present how the colonial empires navigated the changing conversations about opium and began rethinking opium policy. These two colonial inquiries into the cultivation, consumption, and circulation of opium sought to provide data that could inform colonial policy on opium. While the two have converging goals, their conclusions and recommendations diverged. On the one hand, the British opium commission essentially rejected the idea of prohibition while on the other hand, the American opium committee proposed the eventual adoption of prohibition. Thus, these two colonial reports serve as landmark points signaling a transition and end for strong support for opium cultivation and trade. Since the thesis explores the colonial policies on opium, as much as it is about opium, it is also about empires and the ways we could further reflect on the development of discourses on drugs leading to the prohibitionist stance prevalent in contemporary times.

Keywords: opium; colonial policy on opium; opium commission; British India; American Philippines

Abstract (German)

Um die Wende zum 20. Jahrhundert begann sich die Diskussion über Opium dramatisch zu verändern. Es war nicht mehr nur eine geschätzte Handelsware kolonialer Unternehmen in Asien, sondern wurde auch als Droge betrachtet, deren Verbreitung eingedämmt werden musste. In dieser These wird die Geschichte der Opiumpolitik in Indien unter dem Britischen Imperium und auf den Philippinen unter dem Amerikanischen Imperium aufgearbeitet. Indem die Darstellung des Opiums in die sich verändernde koloniale Landschaft an diesen beiden Orten eingebettet wird, zeigt die Arbeit, wie wichtig es ist, diese Geschehnisse als wichtige Vorläufer zu betrachten, die sich auf die Art und Weise auswirkten, wie sich die Drogenpolitik im späteren 20. und 21. Jahrhundert entwickelte.

Diese Theses behandelt in groben Zügen die Kolonialzeit in Indien und auf den Philippinen, und stellt den Kontext dar, in welcher Opium im Britischen und Amerikanischen Imperium eine Rolle spielte. Anschließend werden jeweils die Königliche Opiumkommission in Indien (1893-1895) und das Opiumkomitee auf den Philippinen (1903-1905) darauf untersucht, wie die beiden Kolonialmächte die sich wandelnden Diskussionen über Opium navigierten und mit der Zeit begannen, ihre Opiumpolitik zu überdenken. Diese beiden kolonialen Untersuchungsgrerien über den Anbau, den Konsum und die Verbreitung von Opium sollten Daten liefern, die die koloniale Opiumpolitik informieren konnte. Obwohl die Ziele der beiden Gremien sich gleichen, gingen ihre Schlussfolgerungen und Empfehlungen teils weit auseinander. Einerseits lehnte die britische Opiumkommission die Idee eines Verbots im Wesentlichen ab, andererseits schlug der amerikanische Opiumausschuss die eventuelle Einführung eines solchen Verbots vor. Diese beiden kolonialen Berichte sind somit wegweisend und signalisieren den Übergang und das Ende der starken Unterstützung für den Opiumanbau und -Handel. Diese Theses über koloniale Opiumpolitik, behandelt nicht nur Opium als Droge, sondern auch Imperien und wie diese den Diskurs über Drogen bis zum heutigen Tag beeinflussen. Insbesondere die historischen Gründe, die zu der gegenwertigen Normalisierung eines grundlegenden Verbots beigetragen haben, als auch die Möglichkeit, über diese Entwicklung zu reflektieren.

Stichwörter: Opium; koloniale Opiumpolitik; Opiumkommission; Britisch-Indien; Amerikanische Philippin

Contents

Abstract	3
Abstract (German)	4
Introduction	7
Opium's complicated history	7
Objectives of the study: exploring colonial empires and opium	10
Method and conceptual tools	12
Organization of the thesis	14
Chapter 1	17
Setting the Context: Colonialism in India and the Philippines, a history in broad strokes	
British colonialism in India	18
The East India Company and the beginnings of the colonial encounter	18
From the EIC to direct Colonial Rule	23
Colonial encounters in the Philippines	25
The Philippines and three centuries of Spanish rule	25
Colonial transition: Enter America	30
Chapter Summary and Conclusions: Empires and colonies in Transitions	34
Chapter 2	37
Opium and Empires in India and the Philippines	
Opium and the British Empire in India	39
Opium as "Keystone" of Empire	39
Opium as Catalyst of Wars	42
Opium and the Spanish and American Empires in the Philippines	44
The Changing times of the 19 th century Philippines	44
Opium in the Philippines during the early American rule	48
Chapter Summary and Conclusions: Diverse and evolving attitudes toward opium	51

Chapter 3	55
Empires Rethinking Opium Policy: The Royal Opium Commission in India and the Opium Committee in the Philippines	
Questioning opium in the colony and the metropole	56
The Royal Opium Commission in India	59
Establishment, Mandate, and Membership	59
Activities of the Commission and the Final Report	60
Conclusions of the Commission	62
Opium Committee in American Philippines	65
Establishment, Mandate, and Membership	65
Activities of the Committee and the Final Report	67
Recommendations of the Committee	69
Chapter summary and conclusions: Opium policy and colonial anxieties	71
 Chapter 4	 73
The Road to Prohibition: Opium and empires after the Opium Commissions	
Opium Policy in the British Empire after the Royal Opium Commission	74
Turning tides: Opium as prohibition drawing closer	74
Opium and the Indian Nationalist Movement	76
Opium Policy in the Philippines after the Opium Committee	79
The march to progressive prohibition	79
American approach to prohibition: Taking a stand, leading the way	80
Empires Coming together(?): The Roots of International Drug Diplomacy	83
Chapter summary and conclusions: Paving the Road to Prohibition	86
 Concluding Thoughts	 88
Bibliography	91
 LIST OF IMAGES	
Image 1: The East India Company Trade Routes and Goods	20
Image 2: The Spanish Empire and the Route of the Galleon Trade	28
Image 3: Opium Poppy	38

Introduction

Opium's complicated history

In 2020, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's World Drug Report estimated that over 7,610 tons of opium were produced globally in some 50 countries. The global area cultivating opium poppy (from where opium is derived, and opioids and opiates are made) is estimated to spread 240,800 hectares. Although declining, this number still pegged higher compared to figures 10 years ago. The global opium trafficking routes are identified to have three major loci: South Asia (primarily Afghanistan), Latin America (most notable is Mexico), and Southeast Asia (Myanmar and to an extent, Lao People's Democratic Republic). The report also mentioned that an estimated 58 million people worldwide use opium or opioids.¹ In spite of the global COVID-19 pandemic disrupting much of our affairs at its height, reports have mentioned that in Asia, for example, drug circulation and consumption persisted.²

The prevailing global discourse surrounding narcotics—within which opium and opioids are categorized—points to the prohibitionist stance. This primarily pertains to the prevalence of international policies that aim to control the illegal production, distribution, and consumption of such substances. The 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs strongly notes in its

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *2020 World Drug Report: Booklet 3 (Drug Supply)*. (Vienna: UNODC, June 2020), pp. 9-13.

² Sebastian Strangio, "Despite Covid-19, Asia's Drug Trade expands, diversifies" *The Diplomat*. 11 June 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/despite-covid-19-asias-drug-trade-expands-diversifies/>

preamble “that addiction to narcotic drugs constitutes a serious evil for the individual and is fraught with social and economic danger to mankind.”³ All over the world, we have seen episodes of wars on drugs resulting to deadly crusades that aim to curb the use of various psychoactive substances.

When we take a moment to reflect, however, we may ask whether it has always been like this. The simple answer is no. Throughout history, human society have had a complicated relationship with psychoactive substances; and opium is no exception.

Some accounts suggest that the first use and cultivation of opium poppy date as far back to the second millennium BCE in the Mediterranean. Research inquiries have noted opium as an article of trade as early as this time appearing in Egypt and Cyprus. Entries about opium in Greek pharmacopoeia date back to the fifth century BCE and in Chinese texts, in the eighth century BCE. The uses for this psychoactive substance have been described to range from medicinal purposes to religious rituals. The substance had also been utilized for recreational purposes and this was noticed to have started in 15th century Persia and India while widespread smoking of opium had seen a steady rise in China beginning in the 18th century.⁴

While there has been consensus that opium use for medicinal purposes was greatly developed in Asia, particularly in the Muslim world during the height of advancements in Islamic science and medicine in the 8th to 9th centuries, recent claims propose that the medicinal use of opium have also been present in Europe during the Middle Ages to the 18th century. There have been a transition in the early modern European history that fostered the eventual process of opium becoming ‘oriental’ and ‘exotic’ due to the way the use of the substance had been documented and sometime lost in translations and other

³ United Nations, 1961 *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs* (New York, United Nations, 1961), p. 1; This prohibitionist stance had largely remained in the succeeding conventions of the United Nations that have been among primary frameworks from which global drug policy had been drawn from. See 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

⁴ Alfred McCoy, “From Free Trade to Prohibition: A Critical History of the Modern Asian Opium Trade” *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 28:1 (2000), pp. 314-315; While there are general similarities, there are several accounts about the general of history of Opium. See for example Martin Booth, *Opium: A History* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

factors that placed opium within the larger history of the movement of objects from the East to Europe.⁵

When the Europeans encountered Asia, opium also became a subject of scrutiny as the establishment of trading companies—and eventually colonial states—also introduced opium to the burgeoning global trade. Opium had shifted to becoming a major trading commodity when colonial powers such as Britain imposed trade monopolies and taxes began to be levied. Soon, demand for opium rose and encouraged widescale cultivation. The psychoactive drug had been circulating in ever larger scales by the late 18th and early 19th centuries even reaching the United States. Opium had found its way at the crossroads and entanglements of colonial spheres and its importance even incited conflicts between colonial powers and between these European powers and, for example, the Chinese.⁶ Such realities speak of the importance ascribed to the substance as well as the scale of its production and circulation. As a commodity, therefore, the global characteristic of opium is undeniable.

By the turn of the 20th century, however, the winds of change began altering the course of opium's place in Asia as strong anti-opium campaigns started lobbying for the control of its spread and prohibition of its use and cultivation. The way it has been perceived has drastically changed as discourses about the harmful and addictive effects of drugs gained considerable understanding owing to medical and scientific research. With this, then, came the widescale regard for opium as a dangerous commodity within the gamut of other drugs that were framed as threats to societies across the modern world.⁷ The movement of opium and its use, therefore, became increasingly prohibited and eventually deemed illegal. As colonial states began imposing legal measures against its use, the effort to curb the production and flow of opium

⁵ Benjamin Breen, *The Age of Intoxication: Origins of the Global Drug Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 384-429. Chapter 6 of this book titled “Three Wats of Looking at Opium” points to this strand of argument even asserting that opium, was in fact, a native European crop.

⁶ McCoy, “From Free Trade to Prohibition: A Critical History of the Modern Asian Opium Trade,” pp. 323-328; Diana Kim, *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition Across Southeast Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), pp. 3-5;

⁷ Ibid

also gained an international character especially when the League of Nations advocated for its prohibition beginning in the 1920s.⁸

Opium and opium use, thus, have a complex history.⁹ The use of opium traces its origins way back in history ranging from medicinal and ritual practice; to recreational and mass-production proportions. The cultivation of poppies, consequently, has also undergone shifts from being legal to illegal, encouraged to banned. The illicit trade of opium, however, remains to be a global phenomenon. The ebbs and flows of the relationship between this opium and human society, therefore, could offer various vantage points to further reflect on its complex history not only in terms of related policies, but to more ambitious projects of further thinking about global history, global capitalism and global governance.

Objectives of the study: Exploring colonial empires and opium

This thesis stands on the foregoing reflections with the goal of exploring histories of opium policy in the context of colonialism in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. In particular, the thesis will look at opium policy within the context of the British Empire in India and the American Empire in the Philippines.

The histories of opium in colonial India and the Philippines have several convergences and divergences. In the case of India, the British colonial regime sought to really benefit from the opium trade. So much so that it has been noted that “throughout the first half of the nineteenth century opium was one of the four principal exports from India. Even after mid-century when Indian exports diversified, opium continued to be one of India’s top export products...By the 1880s, opium was one of the most valuable commodities moving in international trade.”¹⁰ The colonial policies, however, limited and controlled the production

⁸ Ibid

⁹ This complexity have also been demonstrated in the ways even the United States’ CIA had been implicated in actually having a hand in the opium trade in the 20th century in spite of prohibitionist policies already being more prevalent. See here the work of Alfred McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* (New York: Laurence Hill Books, 2003).

¹⁰ John Richards, “Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission on Opium 1895” *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 36 no. 2 (May 2002): p. 377.

and distribution of opium. This monopoly system has been noted as detrimental to many peasant populations and have also figured to be sites of colonial brutality.

The same monopoly system has been seen in the Philippines. During the late Spanish colonial period, when the Spanish colonial government saw the possible lucrative gains from the trade, they have devised a system of granting monopoly contracts to facilitate the production and flow of opium in the Philippines.¹¹ This trade was also largely connected to the British export of opium from India. Here we see an important aspect of opium connecting empires during the 19th century. When the Americans took over from the Spaniards, they also inherited the opium policies from the previous colonizer.¹²

While opium proved to be economically beneficial for the colonial governments in the Philippines and India, the trade was not insulated from the challenges and debates about reform. By the latter half of the 19th century, anti-opium movements both in England and the United States called for the abolition of the trade. It was within these contexts when colonial policies on opium had to square with mounting questions and criticisms. Thus, both the British and American empires, albeit in different periods, both launched opium commissions to investigate the landscape of opium cultivation, consumption, and circulation in order to have grounded information that would inform policy. The reports of these commissions comprise a major theme for this thesis.

Considering British India and American Philippines as case studies, I aim to revisit the reports of opium commissions formed in 1893 for British India and 1903 for American Philippines. The two commissions completed their work and submitted their reports in 1895 and 1905. As mentioned, these opium commissions precipitated from growing concerns in the British and American colonial empires regarding the impact of opium on the colonies. While the two commissions had generally similar goals, the conclusions and recommendations they laid out diverged.

¹¹ Alma Bamero, "Opium: The Evolution of Policies, the Tolerance of the Vice, and the Proliferation of Contraband Trade in the Philippines, 1843–1908." *Social Science Diliman* vol 3 (2006): 49–83.

¹² Ibid.

This thesis also aims to revisit the reports of these opium commissions and consider these sources as ways through which we can further reflect about the British and American empires and the evolution of colonial policies on opium. The reports, on the one hand, could be seen as bridges to unpack the politics of British and American empire building as the history and final output of the commissions could also reveal the tensions within colonial policies in India and the Philippines. On the other hand, the reports could also be seen as gateways to glance at the broader global dimensions of the British and American empires as the report also touched on issues about the flow of opium to India and the Philippines, and subsequently Indian and Philippine connections to other parts of the world. When situated within the nexus of the politics of the metropole and the imperial reach beyond the colonial outposts, the reports could be read as more than an account of the opium situation in India and the Philippines.

Thus, this thesis proceeds from these ideas and explores colonial opium policies up to the finalization of the opium commission reports to investigate how these could reveal the ways the empires sought to think and eventually realign their colonial policies toward opium. In general, the thesis hopes to contribute to further nuancing the discussions about (1) the early history of policies on opium in relation to colonialism and colonial governance; (2) the importance of the colonial precursors in understanding the evolution of global opium policy; and (3) the rich field of comparative colonialisms from a global history perspective.

Method and conceptual tools

This thesis approaches the history of opium in India and the Philippines from various disciplinary perspectives: economic and social history as well as global history. Primarily drawing from archival sources and review of related literature, this thesis will employ a documentary analysis to reveal and unpack discourses related to opium with a focus on how the British and American empires sought to understand its impact on colonial society and governance.

As the thesis aims to discuss two empires, it is inevitable that a comparative frame is adapted. In order to guide this aspect of the research, I

aim to also partly reflect on the discourse of exceptionalism in the context of American and British empires. Scholars such as Julian Go¹³ have rightfully pointed out the historiographic relevance of understanding and critiquing the discourse of exceptionalism wherein the empires pushed the idea of their imperial pursuit as unique and benevolent. While the empire pushes for these ideas, the reality would reveal that empires are contested, and to a degree untenable. These 'epistemic anxieties' are ingrained in archival sources produced at the period of colonialism as these documents also unveil what the colonial government sought to understand, present, and preserve.¹⁴ Thus, by looking at the history of colonial opium policies, I also intend to present how a psychoactive substance such as opium could help us further understand the ambivalence in British and American Empire building.

On another level of analysis, aside from this comparative angle, the thesis seeks to also reflect on the global dimension of these empires in reference to their policies on opium. In this respect, I nuance the analysis by underscoring how a psychoactive substance with a long and complicated history such as opium could also enrich our understanding of the global. As a commodity being consumed and circulated, the history of policies on opium also reveal how this substance could be considered a "portal of globalization"¹⁵ that "have served as entrance points for cultural transfer, and where institutions and practices for dealing with global connectedness have been developed." By considering the relationship between the British and American empires in relation to opium, the thesis intends to join these conversations on the relevance of considering the interconnectedness and the global dimensions in the context of empires and opium policy.

Finally, as the opium commissions also came one after the other, the thesis also contributes to conversations on the history and development of

¹³ See the book Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to present*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Commonsense* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009.

¹⁵ Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann, "Global history and the Spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures in globalization" *Journal of Global History* 5: 149-170.

global drug policy. Highlighting the early colonial discussions on drug policy, the thesis underscores the importance of these colonial contexts as precursors to further understand the twentieth and twenty-first century landscape of drug policy. As the thesis discusses the British and American empires, it also joins the view that much of contemporary drug policy resulted from the Anglo-American relations and competition.¹⁶

Organization of the thesis

The thesis continues in three chapters arranged in a thematic and broad chronological order. A common thread running through these chapters involve the iterative discussion intertwining opium and opium policy with colonialism and empire. As this thesis seeks to show the ways in which opium policy was affected by changing contexts of colonialism, it also endeavors to point how opium invariably affected colonial policies and empire.

Chapter 1, titled “Setting the Context: Colonialism in India and the Philippines, a history in broad strokes” takes a sweeping account of the general contours of the broad and complex colonial history that unfolded in India and the Philippines. This chapter highlights the beginnings of the colonial encounter and present key landmark events across time. A major theme in this chapter pertains to how empires, throughout their long histories, were never static and monolithic, they underwent transitions and adjustments. In the case of India, the colonial transitions mainly happened within the imperial venture as the political and economic exercise of power shifted from the East India Company to a more direct rule through the transformation of India to a viceroyalty of the British empire. The Philippines underwent colonial transitions not only within empires but between the Spanish and American empires. These colonial transitions are important to appreciate in order to provide the necessary context of understanding the changing landscape of colonial opium policy.

¹⁶ The various historical junctures leading to the prohibitionist stance on drug policy in the 20th and 21st centuries have been thoroughly studied in the work by John Collins, *Legalising the Drug Wars: A Regulatory History of UN Drug Control*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

These changing dynamics of opium policy is one of the central themes covered in Chapter 2, titled “Opium and Empires in India and the Philippines.” Here, the ways in which opium figured in the long history of empires are presented. It is highlighted how opium turn out to be considered a ‘keystone’ of the British empire by highlighting how opium became a major driver of the development of British economic and political interests in South Asia. Opium was also instrumental in the transformation of key geographic landscapes in Northern India which serve as major cornerstones of British incursions in the region. Finally, opium is presented not only as a valued commodity that had impacted colonial policies in India, but also how the global reach of its circulation became so important to British interests that it became a major impetus for war. In the case of the Philippines, opium received ambivalent policies from the Spanish colonial regime which only had to contend with opium once the empire experienced significant tremors in the 19th century. When the Americans arrived, they had to build on what the Spaniards left behind and with this came the question of opium policy. The diverse and evolving attitudes toward opium presented in this chapter further serve as transition to the discussion in the next chapter.

The third chapter, “Empires Rethinking Opium Policy” focuses on the period of the late 19th to early 20th centuries when the shift in opium policy from being globally accepted as a valuable commodity to gradually being questioned due to its narcotic properties. Also the core of this thesis, the main subject of inquiry in this chapter involves the Royal Opium Commission in India and the Opium Committee in American Philippines. In revisiting these landmark pursuits of both empires, the chapter forwards the idea of looking at the tumultuous colonial period at the turn of the century as an important precursor that showed the shift in discourses about drugs in general and opium in particular. This chapter also reverts back to the discussion of how opium and opium policy could be used as a lens to further understand the inner workings of the colonial empires.

In the fourth and last chapter, “The Road to Prohibition: Opium and Empires after the Opium Commissions” deals with the changing landscape of

opium policy at the turn of the 20th century. After the Opium Commissions in India and the Philippines, the world increasingly saw the steady emergence of a prohibitionist discourse about opium and other drugs. This period coincided with the numerous changes in the British and American empires. The narrative in this chapter reveals how opium's decline came together not only with the rise of global prohibition, but also coincided with the continuous deterioration of the colonial empires. After these discussions, the thesis then closes with some final summative and concluding notes.

CHAPTER 1

Setting the Context: Colonialism in India and the Philippines, a history in broad strokes

When the Europeans began venturing out of the 'old world' in the Age of Exploration, the encounters they had reached far and wide. Traversing the vast distances, the explorations that eventually led to conquests touched new territories in the Americas, Africa, the Indian subcontinent, east and southeast Asia. As colonialism brought violent disruptions in the lives of the native populations that were subjugated, the emergence of empires heightened the global connectedness that will eventually lead to contemporary notions of globalization. As the regions of the world became more and more intertwined, the movement of people, goods, and ideas also paved the way for cultural encounters that had tremendous impact in the ways the world understood governance and international relations. Inescapably, as much as colonialism changed the colonies, it also changed the colonizers.

In order to set the context of exploring colonial opium policy, it is thus important ground the context within which these policies and the eventual Opium Commissions in India and the Philippines were carried out. In this chapter, the general contours of the colonial experience in India and the Philippines are presented, highlighting the roots of the colonial encounter, the major transitions

across the long history of colonial rule, and within these discussions, the ways in which the colonial rule had to contend with changing contexts.

British colonialism in India

The East India Company and the beginnings of the colonial encounter

The Indian subcontinent is home to civilizations that go back for millennia. Birthplace of old belief systems and home to thousands of languages, the region had seen prosperity across the many civilizations from the ancient to the modern times. When the Europeans began exploring the seas beyond the old world, they were able to reach the Indian subcontinent and sought to partake in the riches of the land. Among the coveted goods of the subcontinent were the precious spices that proved to be of immense economic value in Europe during the 16th century.

It was within this context that the Portuguese were able to reach and establish networks of trade with the peoples of the Mughal empire in the subcontinent. However, the Portuguese would find a formidable challenge not only from local resistance but also from the other European powers competing for access to the spices and other goods of the subcontinent. Eventually, however, the British would prove victorious among the competing European powers.¹⁷

British businessmen wanted to challenge the standing power of the Iberian kingdoms in the spice trade and the sea routes. These European powers sought to gain monopoly of the sale of spices which during this time had been highly valued in Europe. With economic motivations and genuine curiosities to explore the east, merchants and voyagers of Elizabethan London had enough reasons to engage in the venture. Confidence grew even further when in the latter decades of the 16th century, the piratical raids ransacked Spanish fleets in the Atlantic, proving that the once dominant power could be challenged and

¹⁷ See Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 1998).

defeated. Eventually, the innovation provided by venturing into Asia by forming mercantile companies became the key to the success of the British in engaging in trade with Asia. The East India Company (EIC) traces its roots to London in the year 1600. Formed by merchants and explorers, the initial goals of the EIC was fairly simple: fund voyages to Asia, particularly India, Southeast Asia and China. In many ways, the company had been regarded as among the first “modern” companies to come into existence owing to its innovation during its time including the adoption of joint-stocks and limited liabilities to cushion the financial burdens and gain investments.¹⁸ Queen Elizabeth I provided the EIC a royal charter granting monopoly (initially for 15 years) to trade in the lands east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of Cape Horn.¹⁹

The EIC arrived in India in the early 17th century and like the Portuguese before them, navigated the local politics in order to establish trade. After securing permission from the Mughal emperor, the EIC were allowed to trade in India from Jahangir beginning in 1619 with agreements that their military remained limited to coastal areas. The period of partnership between the local merchants and the European, i.e. English, traders allowed the flow of Indian goods such as textiles and spices to Europe while also facilitating the flow of precious metals such as silver into India.²⁰ From its beginnings in the 17th century to the mid-18th century, the EIC grew steadily and began amassing wealth and influence in India. It has even been noted how the growth and expansion of the trade in India and Asia coincided with important events in England and Europe, including the Industrial Revolution.²¹

¹⁸ Tirthankar Roy, *The East India Company: The World's Most Powerful Corporation* (Haryana, Portfolio, 2015), pp. 4-13.

¹⁹ Emily Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: The English East India Company, 1600-1757* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) p. 3.

²⁰ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 34-35.

²¹ Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: The English East India Company, 1600-1757* p. 31-32.

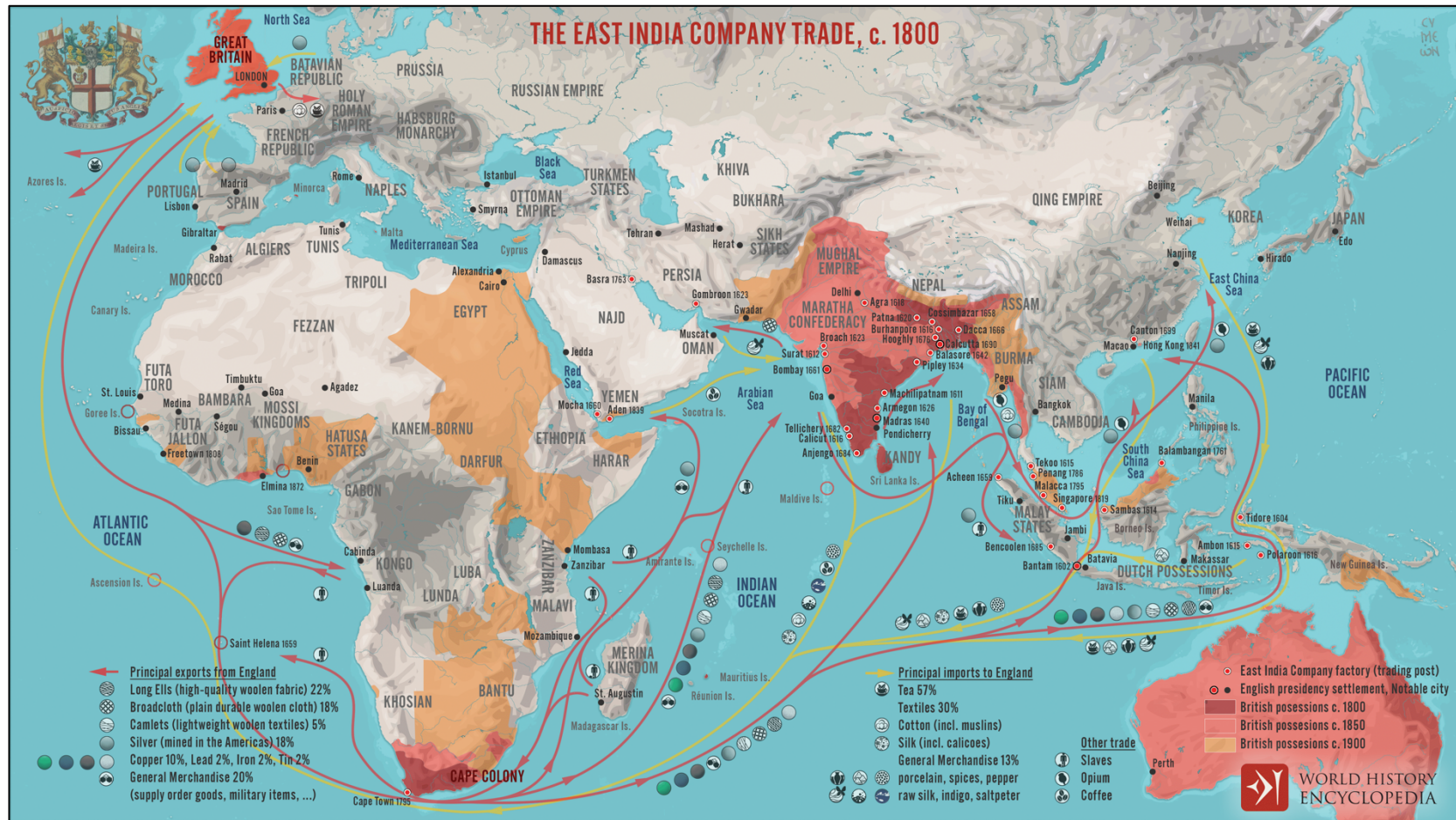


Image 1 The East India Company Trade Routes and Goods²²

²² Netchev, Simeon. "The East India Company trade, c. 1800." World History Encyclopedia. Last modified September 27, 2022. <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/16446/the-east-india-company-trade-c-1800/>.

While the EIC was growing, the Mughal dynasty was collapsing. In the early years of the 18th century, the Mughal saw the death of Aurangzeb, considered the last great emperor of Mughal with later successors had been regarded as lesser Mughals.²³ The fragmentation and continued decentralization of the Mughal empire was a tragedy, but became a major opportunity for the British. Thus, as the EIC initially focused on the trade of spices, silk, and other luxury goods between Britain and the Indian subcontinent, it progressively had the opportunity to expand its reach and became involved in the political and military affairs of the region, gradually acquiring more territory and establishing control over large parts of India. Perhaps the most important event in the transition to more intrusive role of the British in India involved the Battle of Plassey.

The Battle of Plassey took place on June 1757, near the village of Plassey in Bengal. A decisive victory for the EIC over the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daula, this encounter signaled the beginning of British control over Bengal and paved the way for the eventual establishment of British influence and rule in India. The Battle of Plassey resulted from a power struggle between the EIC and the Nawab of Bengal over the control of trade and resources in the region. Siraj-ud-Daula had come to power in Bengal and was suspicious of the growing influence of the EIC. In an attempt to reassert his authority, he attacked and captured the British fort at Calcutta in 1756, known as the Calcutta incident. In response, the British sent a force under the command of Robert Clive to reclaim Calcutta and challenge the Nawab's rule. Clive's forces faced the Nawab's army at Plassey. The British forces, although less in number, had better weapons. The British ultimately won and the Nawab was defeated and killed. The victory gave the EIC control over Bengal, which was one of the richest and most powerful states in India at the time, setting a precursor to further control.²⁴

²³ Bose and Jalal, 38-44.

²⁴ Ibid, 46-48; See also Nick Robins, *The Corporation that Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

After the 1757 event, the EIC began raising its military drawn from upper-caste peasantry that constituted something like a mercenary army. The company also started building a centralized bureaucracy. Both the bureaucracy and the military were primarily established to ensure the security and stability of revenue gained from the land.²⁵

It is important to note that the EIC also faced challenges throughout its operations in terms of its legitimacy, charges of corruption, and questioning the monopoly it enjoys, among others. The criticism reached fever pitch at the turn of the 19th century especially coming from the emergent industrial capitalists in England. The challenges faced by the EIC would eventually lead to the Charter Act of 1813 which ended the EIC's monopoly of trade in India.²⁶ Notwithstanding this end, the EIC was able to lay the ground for colonial rule to thrive. Furthermore:

An analysis of the structure and capacity of the early colonial state, particularly the ways in which it marshalled military force and the extraction of resources from peasants and weavers, suggests that it was qualitatively different from the pre-colonial states it had subdued. Having appropriated all that was vital and buoyant in India's pre-colonial economy, the company state did little to contribute to either economic growth or equity in the early 19th century.²⁷

The company's rule over India could be characterized as a mix of trade, exploitation, and governance. On one hand, the company introduced several reforms to Indian society, such as the development of infrastructure, the creation of a uniform legal system, and the promotion of modern education. On the other hand, it was also responsible for widespread poverty, famine, and oppression, as well as the exploitation of Indian resources and labor.²⁸ Thus, by the mid-19th century, the intensified incursions of the EIC into Indian territories and the "moral

²⁵ Bose and Jalal, pp. 53-56.

²⁶ Roy, pp. 14-20; Bose and Jalal, p. 56.

²⁷ Bose and Jalal, p. 57.

²⁸ Ibid.

degeneration” of the company led to a crescendo of events that culminated in the Indian Rebellion of 1857. This also marked the end of the company and the beginning of direct British rule in India.

From the EIC to Direct Colonial Rule

The Indian Rebellion of 1857 is considered a turning point in the history of colonial rule in India. The First War of Indian Independence, it began in May 1857, when sepoys, Indian soldiers in the service of the British East India Company, rebelled against their British commanders in Meerut. Within a short period of time, the movement against British rule expanded throughout northern and central India. Numerous elements, like as widespread discontent with British policies, cultural difficulties between the British and Indians, and pervasive poverty and hardship among the Indian population served as catalysts for the uprising. The widespread use of Indian soldiers in the British army, which many soldiers thought was abusing their service, also contributed to the unrest. The British eventually put an end to the uprising by regaining control of India through a mix of military power and political scheming. Eventually, the EIC’s power over India was transferred to the British Crown, and new policies were put into place to ensure British dominance.²⁹

After the rebellion, the British crown ultimately decided to also close the EIC owing to the insurmountable challenges and criticisms it had been facing. With the reorientation to direct rule came the shift from a governor general to a viceroy as principal manager of the colony. One of the immediate tasks that the reorganized colonial state had to conduct involved the assessment and reorganization of the bureaucracy and the military left behind by the EIC. It has been noted that the “period from 1858 to 1914, Britain is generally seen to have been able to extract solid strategic and economic advantages from its prize colonial possession.”³⁰

In terms of organizing the military, the new regime began widening the recruitment process to new social groups including the Sikhs, Gurkhas,

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 70-76.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 78.

Punjabis, among others. With this came their justification about the martial castes which had lasting legacies in Indian society. In the case of the bureaucracy, Indians recruited in the system were categorized along racial lines. Along with these managerial imperatives, the colonial state also embarked on scaling up infrastructure construction. With this came the development of railway systems. However, these railways primarily served to transport military personnel and British manufactured goods.³¹ Together with centralizing the government, the colonial administration also took strides in orchestrating shifts in the ideas about sovereignty and legitimacy:

Having imported the notion of unitary sovereignty from post-enlightenment Europe into colonial India to replace pre-colonial India's view of layered and shared sovereignty, the crown raj made certain it stymied any moves towards the acquisition of substantive citizenship rights. In colonial India, there were to be no citizens, only subjects of the empire and of 'traditional' princes.³²

The intensified policies brought by direct colonial rule resulted on the one hand to a tighter grip in Indian society. On the other hand, it also paved the way for growing discontents and the planting of seeds of dissent from the Indian populace. Beginning in the latter half of the 19th century, reform movements, religious and cultural awakenings, and political consciousness planted the roots for the Indian independence movement. These early movements aided in laying the groundwork for India's eventual freedom from British domination. Mohandas Gandhi, who adopted a philosophy of nonviolent resistance and became a representative of the Indian freedom struggle, was one of the most significant figures in the Indian independence movement. Gandhi's leadership was essential in motivating a new generation of Indian leaders and activists as well as in organizing the Indian people. Indian leaders and activists that worked to oppose British rule and advance Indian independence became defining features of the Indian independence movement. Their activities included the expansion

³¹ Ibid, pp. 78-80.

³² Ibid, p. 83.

of political organizations, the ascent of Indian political figures, and the development of a broad-based movement for independence. A prominent tactic point to adhering to non-violent resistance. This included large-scale protests, strikes, and civil disobedience campaigns, and it played a significant role in forming public opinion around the world and igniting interest in the independence movement. After years of struggle, the Indian independence movement was finally successful in 1947 when the British government transferred power to the Indian government, establishing India as a free and independent country.³³

The long history of colonialism in India spans over three centuries, from the beginning of the contact in the 16th century to the Indian independence in 1947. This long period invariably altered the political, cultural, social, economic spheres in the subcontinent.

Across vast Indian Ocean lies Southeast Asia, another important region where competing European powers sought to dominate and established their colonial outposts. Among the contemporary nations in this region is the Philippines, a country that, similar to India, endured over three centuries of colonial rule.

Colonial encounters in the Philippines

The Philippines and three centuries of Spanish rule

At the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, the European game of thrones reached new heights when the Iberian kingdoms of Castille and Aragon succeeded with the Reconquista, ending eight centuries of Islamic rule in the region. The Spanish crowns became well positioned to claim powerful posts in the landscape of European politics. The Reconquista was also a watershed event that ushered what many historians would refer to as the Spanish century owing not only to their power in Europe, but also Spanish supremacy overseas. Once the Spanish explorers breached the barriers of Europe, they were able to reach the “new world” of the Americas, amassing resources. They also reached Asia

³³ Ibid

by way of the new world, proving the possibility of circumnavigating the world. Driven by the goal of claiming more wealth and augmenting prestige and glory, coupled with the support of the powerful Catholic Church, the Spaniards continued sending expeditions to their newfound territories eventually coming with the goal of claiming these lands for the Spanish crown. The conquests became commonly known to have been predicated on the reasons of God, Gold, and Glory.³⁴

The colonial encounter in the islands that would be called the Philippines began in 1521 when the Spanish fleet led by Ferdinand Magellan found themselves in the islands in their search for the spice islands in Indonesia. By the middle of the 16th century, successive campaigns were launched by Spain eventually leading to the establishment of their colony in Asia.

Many historical narratives about the Spanish colonial enterprise in the Philippines note that the process of colonization became a joint venture of the cross and the sword, meaning the process of religious conversion became pivotal in the success of the military campaigns. The main process of colonization centered around what was called the *reducción* which constituted the establishment of *pueblos*, gathering the population to these new centers from the scattered communities that were prevalent before the conquest. The *reducción* had two dimensions: the physical and the spiritual. The former pertains to the relocation to the new pueblos wherein the new natives had to contend with the new spatial and political arrangements set out by the new order. The latter one relates to the colonization of the mind, a more complex and discursive process that sought to alter the worldview of the people. As the colonization process became a joint venture of the cross and the sword, “[t]he Church was the most impressive building and a visible representation of

³⁴ One can find many discussions about this period in European history in available books and articles. One example among many is the general discussion offered in Richard Bulliet, et al. *The Earth and its Peoples: A Global History Volume 2: Since 1500*. Fifth Edition (Boston: Wadsworth, 2011), pp. 374-380; See also Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain became a World Power 1492-1763* (New York: Perennial, 2003), particularly the chapter, “Foundations” pp. 3-48 and for the Spanish empire in the Pacific, “Pearl of the Orient”, pp. 197-238; See also Patricio Abinales and Donna Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), pp. 45-49.

Spanish power. It was the first to be constructed of stone – built with tribute and unpaid labor – and towered above native and civic structures.”³⁵ Along with what Carolyn Brewer called as “holy confrontation,”³⁶ the Spaniards were able to tip the balance of power, altering the belief system which was a critical aspect of the *reducción*. The religious conversion along with physical reordering fostered “[t]he relocation of native bodies – or at least the designation of their areas of residence as part of a larger administrative grid – permitted them to be identified in Spanish political and religious terms.”³⁷

For more than three centuries, the Spanish colonial rule was maintained in the Philippines. During these periods, the Philippines became an important point in the global circulation of goods, people, and ideas between the Spanish colonies in the Americas and Asia. Through Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade, the Philippines became an important site of convergence of Asian goods that were loaded in the massive ships that traversed the Pacific Ocean to be traded for the silver coming from South America.³⁸ However, throughout the centuries, the Philippines became increasingly seen as a liability to the Spanish empire since it was not remitting enough revenue for the Spanish crown. Along with shifts in the power dynamics in the Spanish metropole, this reality became a critical juncture in the history of Spain in the Philippines.

³⁵ Abinales and Amoroso, p. 53; O.D. Corpuz, *Roots of the Filipino People*, vol. 1 (Quezon City, UP Press, 2005), p. 71; See also John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700* (Madison: University of the Wisconsin Press, 1967).

³⁶ See Carolyn Brewer, *Holy Confrontation: Religion, Gender, and Sexuality in the Philippines, 1521-1685* (Institute of Women’s Studies, St. Scholastica’s College, 2001).

³⁷ Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988), p. 90.

³⁸ See the classic work by William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleons* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1939); Katharine Bjork, “The Link that Kept the Philippines Spanish: Mexican Merchant Interests and the Manila Trade.” *Journal of World History* 9 (Spring 1998): 25-50; Benito Legarda. “Two and a Half Centuries of the Galleon Trade.” *Philippine Studies* 3 (December 1955): 345-370.

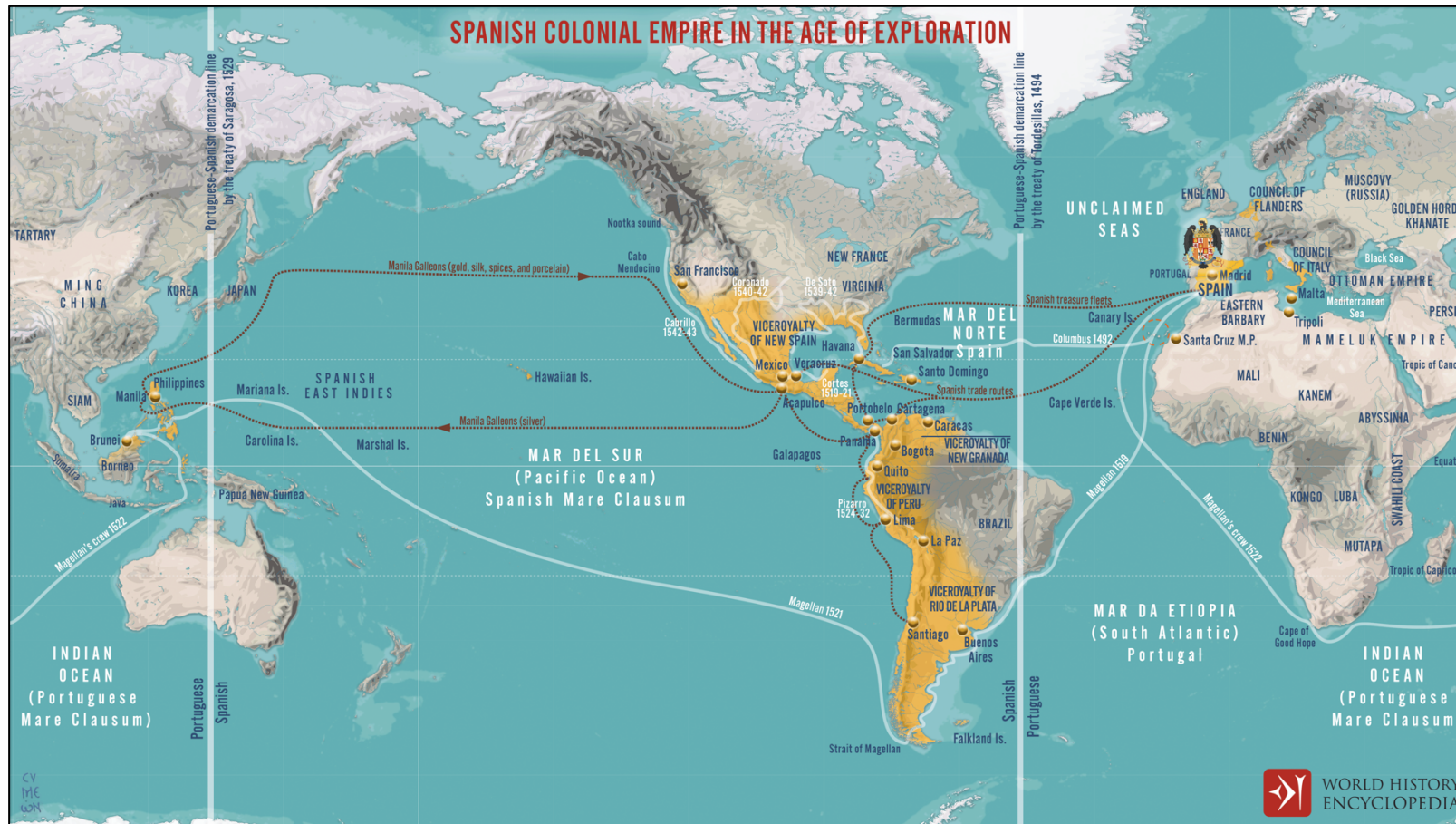


Image 2 The Spanish Empire and the Routes of the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade³⁹

³⁹ Netchev, Simeon. "Spanish Colonial Empire in the Age of Exploration." World History Encyclopedia. Last modified August 04, 2021. <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/14411/spanish-colonial-empire-in-the-age-of-exploration/>.

These profound changes in the Spanish empire would occur beginning in the eighteenth century when then King Charles II, with no successor, named Phillip Duke of Anjou as heir. This period signaled the shift from the Habsburgs to the Bourbons at the helm of the Spanish empire. This then would begin what has been regarded as the Bourbon reforms within the empire, the Philippines included.⁴⁰ The 18th century also ushered in *La Ilustracion* or the Enlightenment in Spain and its empire.⁴¹

By the nineteenth century, Spain found itself at a decline. The Mexican revolution triggered the end of the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade prompting important recalibrations in the ways the Philippines is to be managed. Previously, the Philippines was directly under the viceroyalty of New Spain in Mexico. Even prior to the collapse of the Galleon trade however, the Bourbon reforms had already begun in the Philippines in the late 18th century when new Bourbon sent governors-general began setting up new agricultural and economic policies that sought to make the Philippines more self-sufficient. When the Galleon Trade ended, Manila, the capital, and other urban centers were opened to world trade allowing other countries to enter into business with and in the Philippines. The establishment of foreign merchant houses transformed the colonial economy of the Philippines prompting urbanization of city centers and the influx of other goods, ideas, and people. This had inevitable ramifications in the political landscape as well. There had even been remarks that the Philippines in the 19th century was essentially a British colony with a Spanish flag due to the foreign, primarily British but also German and American, investments fueling the economy. The new economic environment also demanded higher literacy encouraging the establishment of more schools and universities. The Spanish colonial government had to grapple with so much change reaching critical heights in the last decades of the century with the

⁴⁰ See Kamen, *Empire*, pp. 439-485.

⁴¹ Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 37-85.

heightened campaign for reforms launched by the Filipino intelligentsia and later, the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution that demanded independence.⁴²

The momentum of the independence campaign, however, faced tremendous challenges at the turn of the twentieth century. This was seen in the advent of a new adversary, the United States of America.

Colonial Transition: Enter America

While the rest of the world was undergoing profound changes in the 19th century, the United States also underwent important developments that would propel the country to become one of the major players in the global field of empires. After the American Revolution that broke the US away from England, the Americans began building the foundations toward becoming a formidable political and economic force.

By the 19th century, the United States had completed the westward expansion in the North American continent in the name of their supposed manifest destiny. Within this frame, the Americans carved the vast territory that also prompted the development of industrial and political machineries that could support the continuing expansion. While they were doing this, they invoked the Monroe Doctrine that effectively insulated the north American territory from European influence. Thus, the occupation of the native American lands proceeded unhindered and opened the access to these lands' resources. The economic potential of harnessing the resources soon began manifesting. Once the Americans survived the American Civil War, they continued to embark in greater economic expansion. As their confidence grew, they also had "visions of national greatness" and by the 1890s Progressive Era in the US, they started further cultivating the essence of American society. It was within these last decades of the 19th century that the United States sought to further strengthen their political institutions.⁴³

⁴² For more discussion on the nineteenth century Philippines, we can consult Eliodoro Robles, *The Philippines in the Nineteenth Century* (Quezon City, Malaya Books, 1969); Maria Serena Diokno, *Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People volume 4 – Life in the Colony* (Mandaluyong: Asia Publishing Ltd, 1998); among others.

⁴³ Thomas McCormick, "From Old Empire to New: The Changing tactics and Dynamics of American Empire" in Alfred McCoy and Francisco Scarano (eds), *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), pp, 64-65; Paul Kennedy, "The Rise of the United States to Great Power Status" in *Imperial Surge: The United*

The Philippines will eventually get entangled with the United States when the latter began pursuing the desires of empire. It has been noted that American foreign policy during the 19th century period was influenced by three main ideas

The capstone idea defined the American future in terms of an active quest for national greatness closely coupled to the promotion of liberty. A second element in the ideology defined attitudes toward other peoples in terms of social hierarchy. The third defined the limits of acceptable political and social change overseas in keeping with the settled conviction that revolutions, though they might be a force for good, could easily develop in a dangerous direction.⁴⁴

Thus, with their idea of White Man's Burden, the Americans took action to build an empire after waging a war with the waning Spanish empire. With their victory, the US was poised to take the colonies of Spain. This proved disastrous for the Philippine campaign for independence from Spain. As the Spanish-American War came to a conclusion with American victory, the Treaty of Paris was signed between the United States and Spain in 1898. Stipulated in the treaty was the ceding of the remaining Spanish colonies—the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico—to the United States. The Americans did not waste time and at the twilight of the 19th century, began entering the Philippines as a new colonizer.⁴⁵

Denied of independence, the Philippines had to contend with colonial transitions. The United States had to also contend with competing discourses with the vocal Anti-Imperialist League denouncing the government's imperial venture. They also had to pacify the Filipinos that clamored for independence and were prepared to

States Abroad, The 1890s-Early 1900s" ed. Thomas Patterson and Stephen Rabe (Massachusetts: D.D. Heath and Company, 1992) pp. 3-13; Rowena Quinto Bailon, "Battling Destiny: Soldiers' Letters and Anti-colonial Discourse in the Philippine-American War" (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas Dallas, 2014), pp. 16-27.

⁴⁴ Michael Hunt, "American Ideology: Visions of National Greatness and Racism" in *Imperial Surge: The United States Abroad*, p. 15.

⁴⁵ For more details consult for example Milagros Guerrero and John Schumacher *Kasaysayan The Story of the Filipino People, vol 5: Reform and Revolution* and Milagros Guerrero *Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People vol 6: Under Stars and Stripes* (Hong Kong: Asia Publishing Company, 1998).

fight. As the Philippine-American War punctuated this campaign, it was obvious that at the onset, the American empire in the Philippines rested on tenuous ground.⁴⁶ As the Americans sought to legitimize their colonial enterprise, they launched the idea that they were taking over the Philippines through a “benevolent assimilation” emphasizing that the intention of takeover was primarily to provide tutelage to Filipinos in order to prepare the nation for eventual self-rule. The then US president William McKinley released the Benevolent Assimilation Declaration, the “Pandora’s box of Philippine woes”⁴⁷ that stated

it should be the earnest wish and paramount aim of the military administration to win the confidence, respect, and affection of the inhabitants of the Philippines by assuring them in every possible way that full measure of individual rights and liberties which is the heritage of free peoples, and by proving to them that the mission of the United States is one of BENEVOLENT ASSIMILATION substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule. In the fulfillment of this high mission, supporting the temperate administration of affairs for the greatest good of the governed, there must be sedulously maintained the strong arm of authority, to repress disturbance and to overcome all obstacles to the bestowal of the blessings of good and stable government upon the people of the Philippine Islands under the free flag of the United States.⁴⁸

Through the Benevolent Assimilation rhetoric, a “turn-of-the century oxymoron,” the Americans justified their takeover as unique and special, something

⁴⁶ See the engaging discussion in the dissertation of Bailon, “Battling Destiny...” especially in the Chapters 3 “The AIL: The Voice of the People”, pp. 140-196; and Chapter 4 “In the Name of Liberty”, pp. 197-229.

⁴⁷ James Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898-1912* (New York: GP Putnam and Sons, 1913), p. 147. p. 139. Project Gutenberg, <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36542/36542-h/36542-h.htm#ch8>>

⁴⁸ William McKinley, “Benevolent Assimilation Declaration” found in James Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898-1912* (New York: GP Putnam and Sons, 1913), p. 147. Accessed through Project Gutenberg, <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36542/36542-h/36542-h.htm#ch8>>

akin to “colonialism with a heart.”⁴⁹ Of course, on the ground, the establishment of colonial rule proved more violent in actuality both discursively and physically. While violence persisted, the American rhetoric maintained that their actions were out of altruism.⁵⁰

The Americans consistently argued their departure from European brands of colonialism, and they took lengths to criticize the preceding Spanish regime to be backward and archaic.⁵¹ They of course juxtaposed this with the image of American benevolence and the US being the rightful bearer of the civilizing mission. The tutelary nature of their colonial rule provided the rubric for their heroism.⁵² To wit, early American colonial officials in the Philippines espoused that

only through American occupation, therefore, is the idea of a free, self-governing and united Philippine Commonwealth at all conceivable... Thus the welfare of the Filipinos coincides with the dictates of national honor in forbidding our abandonment of the archipelago. We cannot from any point of view escape the responsibilities of government, which our sovereignty entails; and the commission is strongly persuaded that the performance of our national duty will prove the greatest blessing to the people of the Philippine islands.⁵³

Woven into a “a larger teleology that encompassed the history of the rise of the United States from an oppressed colony in its own right to its newly claimed position as a global power”⁵⁴ the Americans maintained the exceptional nature of their take-over to be the revolutionary feature of the American subjugation of the

⁴⁹ Maria Serena Diokno, “‘Benevolent Assimilation’ and Filipino Responses,” in *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics Society in the Philippines*, second edition. Edited by Hazel McFerson (Quezon City: UP Press, 2011), p. 90.

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 90-93.

⁵¹ Henry Cabot Lodge quoted in Michael Hunt, “American Ideology: Visions of National Greatness and Racism” in *Imperial Surge: The United States Abroad*, p. 21.

⁵² Michael Adas, “Improving on the Civilising Mission? Assumptions of United States Exceptionalism in the Colonisation of the Philippines. *Itinerario*, vol. 22, issue 4 (1998), p. 49.

⁵³ J.G. Schurman, George Dewey, Charles Denry, Dean Worcester, “Preliminary Report to the President” Written November 2, 1899 in *ARPC 1900* vol 1, p. 183.

⁵⁴ Michael Adas, “Improving on the Civilising Mission? Assumptions of United States Exceptionalism in the Colonisation of the Philippines. *Itinerario*, vol. 22, issue 4 (1998), p. 49.

Philippines. They even regarded their colonial rule to be something the Filipino elite wanted as it was participatory.⁵⁵

However, the efforts to present themselves as unique and benevolent paled with the stark racism that came with their colonial machinery. They would constantly depict Filipinos to be backward and needing the help of the Americans. For example, depictions of the colonized as children and savage needing guidance were also proliferated by the Americans, same with what the other Europeans did.⁵⁶

As the US built their empire, they had to anchor their reforms and work with already existing structures left by Spain. They had to simultaneously paint the picture of Spanish ineptitude while also taking advantage of what the Spaniards already built. This became visible in the many policies and institutions that the Americans ran in the Philippines throughout their formal occupation of the archipelago which eventually halted with the Second World War that also led to the eventual Philippine Independence.

Chapter Summary and Conclusions: Empires and colonies in Transitions

The historical experience of colonialism in India and the Philippines span over three centuries. Throughout this long history, the colonial conditions in both India and Philippines underwent profound changes and transitions. In many ways, these transitions stands as both points of convergence and divergence in the colonial experience in both countries.

One major difference in the experience of the Philippines and India pertain to the imperial powers that exercised control over the native population. In the case of India, the most prominent and intrusive foreign incursion came from Britain. As for the Philippines, the period of colonialism that lasted from the 16th century to the early 20th century saw the shift from one colonial empire to another—from Spain to the United States. Notwithstanding this difference, both the early encounters

⁵⁵ Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during US Colonialism* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008), pp. 25-39.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 50.

between the Philippines and India with the Europeans happened in the context of the Age of Exploration and the competing kingdoms in Europe's quest for dominance and monopoly in the mercantile economic regime. The British and the Spaniards both sought to gain access and control of important trade networks and trade goods. These motivations led these powers to find new sea routes and establish outposts outside of Europe. However, while Britain's initial venture in the Indian subcontinent was primarily commercial in nature, with the EIC as the primary node of engagement, the Spanish efforts in the Americas and Asia had conquest and acquisition built into the mandate of succeeding explorers. As such, while the EIC had been noted to have navigated the intricacies of local politics and culture in the context of the Mughal empire in India, the Spaniards early on sought to transform native life through the *reduccion*.

These transformations in native Philippine society would continue well into the eventual collapse of the Spanish empire. In the case of the EIC and the British in India, despite the economic motivation that jumpstarted their entrance into Indian society, they eventually began amassing influence and exercising control especially resulting from violent encounters that endangered their economic position in the region.

The period of the long 19th century proved to be critical in the colonial experience of both the Philippines and India. In the case of the Philippines, the slow decay of the Spanish empire allowed the opening of Manila and other cities to global commerce catalyzing rapid urbanization that had ramifications in the social, economic, cultural, and inevitably the political landscape of the colony. This would eventually lead to the Philippine Revolution that sought to cut the colonial ties with Spain. The end of the 19th century, however, saw the major transition in Philippine colonial history with the advent of the Americans.

Similar in some respects, the 19th century also saw the major transition in the Indian colonial experience with the EIC being dissolved as an aftermath of the First Indian Rebellion in the 1850s which also sought to break the colonial chains. The end of the EIC paved the way for the British Crown to exercise direct rule in India as it was transformed to a colony and viceroyalty. In this period of transitions, we see how the Americans, in the case of the Philippines, had to realign and utilize the

institutions built by the Spaniards. In the case of the British, they had to grapple with transitioning to the colonial set up utilizing the institutions left behind by the EIC. By the middle of the 20th century, both colonial enterprises in the Philippines and India would come to an end with Philippine and Indian independence coming to fruition.

It is within these historical contexts—albeit presented in broad strokes—that the policies on opium unfolded in the Philippines and India during the colonial periods. In the next chapter, the ways in which opium figured in these colonial enterprises in India and the Philippines are presented.

CHAPTER 2

Opium and Empires in India and the Philippines

A fairly unassuming plant, opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) could even present a beautiful site when fields laden with the shrubs show flowers in full bloom. From the beautiful flowering plants, opium is produced by cutting the seed capsules of the poppy flower after its petals have fallen off. This causes a milky substance to come out, which then solidifies and darkens in color to become a brown, gum-like material when exposed to air. This raw opium can be processed into a powder form, sold in lumps, cakes, or bricks, or further processed to produce derivatives such as morphine, codeine, and heroin. These substances are collectively referred to as opiates.⁵⁷

As a psychoactive substance, the active components in opium are its alkaloids, with morphine being the most significant, making up around 10% of the raw opium. Other alkaloids, such as papaverine and codeine, are present in lesser amounts. The alkaloids found in opium can be classified into two groups based on their chemical structure and effects. Morphine, codeine, and thebaine, which fall under one group, affect the central nervous system and are used as pain relievers, sedatives, and can be habit-forming. The other opium alkaloids, such as papaverine, noscapine (previously known as narcotine), and most of the others, only relax the involuntary muscles. Opiates, affect the brain and acts as a pain reliever.

⁵⁷ Opium, Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/science/opium>

It has also been cited that they could reduce anxiety and induce relaxation. They also have sedative properties and could sometimes cause a state of euphoria. Moreover, opiates could also affect the pace of breathing and heart rate, slowing them down which could alleviate coughing and relax the digestive track. As a psychoactive substance, opiates are considered addictive and causes withdrawal symptoms after getting used to its effects. Heroin and morphine as derivative opiates are considered to be more addictive than opium or codeine. Opiates are thus classified as narcotics due to their ability to relieve pain, induce unconsciousness, and cause addiction. Long-term use of opium can result in physical and mental decline and shorten lifespan. An overdose of opium can cause respiratory depression and even death.⁵⁸ Given these properties, the use of opium throughout history had presented a complex narrative. On the one hand, they have been considered medicinal. On the other, they have been deemed dangerous to physical health and society.



Image 3 Opium Poppy⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Opium Poppy. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/plant/opium-poppy#/media/1/430151/36332>

This chapter aims to explore the broad history of opium and opium policies in colonial India and the Philippines. Within the context of colonial rule in India and the Philippines, how have the views and policies on opium evolved throughout history? How can we use this narrative of opium's place in the colonial history of India and Philippines to enrich our understanding of the colonial empires themselves and the ways that the global discourses on drugs and drug policy eventually evolved?

Opium and the British Empire in India

Opium and British interests in India

Even though opium would eventually figure to be a very lucrative commodity for the British enterprise in India, it has been noted that European colonization did not bring the crop to the subcontinent. Way before the coming of the Western explorers, the crop had already been cultivated and opium was being consumed already. The Mughal dynasty for example had considerable cultivation of opium and its recreational use even reached the nobility.⁶⁰

It could be said, however, that it was during the period of British engagements and eventual colonization of India when opium production and circulation grew to massive proportions. The profits gained through the trade in opium became so lucrative that it transformed as an indispensable pillar of British colonial architecture. So much so that it has been regarded as the “keystone of empire” noting that the longevity and expanse of the British empire would not have been possible had they not maintained the profitable opium trade.⁶¹

From the time the EIC started engaging in trade with India in the 1600s, opium eventually became one of the most important commodity and the impact of British intervention in opium cultivation, consumption, and circulation had profound effects not only on the British empire, but also to the local contexts as well. To wit:

⁶⁰ Rolf Bauer, *The Peasant Production of Opium in Nineteenth Century India* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 12; See also Kawal Deep Kour, *A History of Intoxication: Opium in Assam, 1800-1959* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

⁶¹ It was in the work by Carl Trocki that the term “keystone of empire” was used to describe opium. Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade* (Oxon: Routledge, 1999).

The opium agriculture in India changed from an informally cultivated cash crop to a centralized, systematized, state-run industry. Before the Battle of Plassey, opium had probably served to provide a small buffer of cash for the peasant or was carried on at the demand of the landlord. Already by 1780, cultivation in Bihar and Benares was regulated and controlled. It was produced under a government monopoly, and it remained as such into the early twentieth century. Opium made the same transition earlier accomplished by sugar and tobacco, from an exotic chemical to a fully "capitalist" drug commodity. At the downstream end, opium trading became, not only the major concern of the empire's businessmen, but also the most closely managed and well-financed enterprise in the European-run parts of Asia. It had, moreover, begun to lay the foundation for a truly mass market of consumers.⁶²

Reaching the point to be considered as 'keystone' of empire did not go without much complexity. When the EIC began operating in India, opium had already been a trade commodity owing to the circulation afforded by the earlier European enterprises especially the Portuguese. Opium was already a profitable commodity as it found demand in other Asian regions such as China and some parts of Southeast Asia. Before the British became the most prominent European trader of opium, the Dutch was paramount in the market. From the 17th to the early 18th centuries, the private British traders grew in number, became more organized, and especially under the ambit of the EIC, the British eventually took over the Dutch. Initially, the cultivation and trade of opium was governed by a contract system wherein contracts were farmed out to bidders who would eventually manage the production. The introduction of the contract system also saw the beginnings of the hardships of peasants who tilled the soil once contractors demanded higher and higher yield. The effect of the pressure pushed the farmers, called *ryots*, to gamble and mix opium with other substances in order to augment the quantities. This, of course, would dilute, if not contaminate, the opium and it would fall below export

⁶² Trocki, *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade*, p. 58.

quality. Thus, the contract system would be replaced by an agency system beginning in the last decade of the 18th century when the EIC sought to further systematize the production and take control of all processes.⁶³

Once the British took control of Bengal, virtually annexing the region for their own, opium production in many ways became centralized. The agency system consolidated the concerns related to opium production. The EIC organized a department dedicated to opium to oversee the affairs. A significant aspect of this transition included the prohibition of private cultivation of opium in the regions under the purview of the EIC, effectively controlling opium production in Northern India. The EIC, through the developed agency system also oversaw the ways opium was processed in the Sudder factories in order to prepare the opium for export. From the last years of the 18th century well into the waning years of British presence in India, the agency system proved efficient in maximizing profits from opium.⁶⁴ At its height, the agency system proved really efficient:

it has been clear that the Opium Department was a well-structured organization with a reach into the remote areas of rural North India and was, therefore, able to produce a large amount of raw opium of high quality season after season.⁶⁵

The EIC opium operations centered in Bengal, in spite of its effective management, did not go without any challenges. One of the most important hurdles that the EIC had to contend with involved a parallel opium cultivation site originally developed by the Portuguese located in Malwa. Malwa opium came in direct competition with the Bengal opium and the EIC had to devise ways to curb the challenge. The system in Malwa has been noted to be a free economy, meaning there was no central body calling the shots like the Opium Department of the EIC. The opium produced in Malwa was also popular in China since it was more potent, and it was cheaper compared to the Bengal variant. To face the competition, the British initially sought to eliminate the Malwa system by suppressing production.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 62; Bauer, *The Peasant Production of Opium in Nineteenth Century India*, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Bauer, *The Peasant Production of Opium in Nineteenth Century India*, p. 39.

This proved ineffective and thus the EIC employed an alternative strategy with levying transit duties on Malwa opium before it could be shipped out for export. This eventually had significant success and when the Malwa region became better integrated into the burgeoning British colonial system, the ecosystem of opium production in Bengal and Malwa became consolidated.⁶⁶

Undoubtedly, revenue is the prime motivation behind the British maintenance and monopolization of the cultivation and export of opium. Throughout the tenure of the EIC and even after the Crown took over direct control of India, opium figured to be an important commodity of the empire. A major element in the massive revenue accumulation from opium involved the strong economic link that Britain was able to foster with China. Dubbed as a trade triangle, many scholars consider opium to be the main driver of the lucrative engagement between Britain, India, and China. In many ways, the opium market in China also facilitated the smooth flow of other goods and commodities within this economic network.⁶⁷ It is thus not surprising that when the Qing empire in China decided to clamp down on opium, Britain had an adverse reaction, ultimately retaliating and engaging in a violent war that would change China forever.

Opium as a catalyst of war

The importance of opium to the colonial interests of the British in India is glaringly demonstrated in the way that the highly valued commodity had become the impetus of a war. As a further ramification of the challenges faced by the EIC and the immense importance of China in the trade networks that kept the opium flow alive, the British pushed the boundaries and escalated conflicts to a full-scale war. The First and the Second Opium Wars essentially stood on two core contentions: (1) the intent of Britain to establish and maintain a trade system beneficial to them; and (2) forcing China to adhere to the European diplomatic practice in the hopes of

⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 17-23.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 40.

alleviating British sensitivity to the strict imperial protocols being imposed by the Qing court in China.⁶⁸

In many ways, the Opium wars forced China to “open” to the world. This opening, however, is not entirely accurate since the Qing dynasty in China had already developed trade networks outside its territory. Accepting the traders, including the Europeans was subjected to the strict protocols of the imperial court including the customary kowtow to the emperor. While they were open to these traders, the Qing maintained a protective stance since the empire was concerned about the potential negative influence that the outsiders could bring. Thus, they maintained a system of trade centered in Guangzhou (Canton) in southern China. This system had come to be known as the Canton system. This system however, became increasingly detested by the British as they wanted, for example, to gain access to the imperial court and exercise diplomacy to negotiate trade relations further. They also wanted to open more ports in China to augment revenue. Their efforts came to no avail. In relation to opium, the influx of the commodity eventually overwhelmed the Qing and resulted to many problems. Included in these were the increasing cases of corruption in the government brought by the illicit activities of opium traders. The Qing also became concerned with the widespread addiction. As the Qing was growing concerned about these matters in the early 19th century, the EIC had come to an end. Thus, the time was ripe for a strong lobby for further campaigns to China given that more government appointed officials and other stakeholders already became involved in the trade.⁶⁹

The First Opium War was soon ignited in 1839 lasting to 1842. The escalation was due to China's efforts to systematically end the opium trade which of course met Britain's resistance. In response to the growing concern about the effects of opium to the Qing society⁷⁰, the empire tried to prohibit the trade and confiscate and

⁶⁸ Richard Horowitz, “The Opium Wars of 1839-1860” in *East Asia in the World: Twelve Events that Shaped the Modern International Order*, ed. Stephen Haggard and David Kang (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 164.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 164-187.

⁷⁰ See related discussions in Joyce Madancy, *The Troublesome Legacy of Commissioner Lin: The Opium Trade and Opium Suppression in Fujian Province, 1820s to 1920s*. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003); Zheng Yangwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge:

destroy the opium stocks owned by the British. The Chinese authorities seized a significant amount of opium from British merchants in 1839 and imposed a blockade on the factories, which prompted the British government to send a military force to China. The British forces were ultimately better equipped and quickly gained the advantage, marching up the Yangtze River and taking control of several key cities, including Shanghai and Nanjing. The Chinese government was unable to repel the British military and as a result, the Treaty of Nanking was signed in 1842. This treaty imposed a significant fine on China and transferred the ownership of Hong Kong to Britain. Additionally, the treaty opened various Chinese ports for British trade and created a series of one-sided agreements between China and Britain. The First Opium War had a significant impact on China, marking the start of its "century of humiliation."⁷¹

The peace after the war was tenuous and only a few decades since the conclusion the First Opium War, the Second Opium War erupted in 1856 to 1860 after the so-called Arrow incident. The British forces were again able to gain an advantage, and in 1860, the Treaty of Tianjin was signed by both sides. The treaty added even more unfavorable conditions for China, such as legalizing the opium trade, opening more Chinese ports for foreign trade, and creating a series of one-sided treaties between China and Britain. The treaty also transferred control of Kowloon to Britain and granted foreign diplomats the right to travel within China. The Second Opium War had a significant impact on China, perpetuating further its "century of shame" and at the same time, it further reinforced Britain's status as a leading colonial power in Asia.⁷²

Opium and the Spanish and American Empires in the Philippines

Opium in the Philippines under the Spanish colonial rule

Cambridge University Press, 2005); Frank Dikötter, Lars Peter Laamann, and Xiun Zhou, *Narcotic Culture: A History of Drugs in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁷¹ Richard Horowitz, "The Opium Wars of 1839-1860," pp. 164-187

⁷² Ibid.

While opium developed to be the keystone of the British empire, similar colonial endeavors were also seen in the various colonial outposts in Southeast Asia. It has been noted that for many of the imperial projects such as those of the French in Indochina, the Dutch in Indonesia, again the British in Malaya and Burma, opium also became a major source of revenue that filled the colonial coffers.⁷³ For most of the 18th and well into the 19th century, opium was deemed legal for many colonial regimes in Southeast Asia including the virtually uncolonized Kingdom of Siam. Cultivation and sale of opium were normally regulated in these sites through the monopolies in opium farms.⁷⁴

The case of Spain in the Philippines, however, presents quite a slight departure from its counterparts in the region at that time. Especially in the early 19th century, the Spanish empire vacillated around their policies on opium. In 1814, a Madrid Royal Decree prohibited the smoking of opium imposing imprisonment as punishment to those caught doing so. However, some wealthier Chinese residing in the Philippines were still able to circumvent the ban by renting spaces owned by Spaniards and using these spaces for smoking opium.⁷⁵ Only a decade after this decree, Spain already allowed the cultivation of opium in 1828.⁷⁶ Several factors could have affected the shifting policy. By 1815, the Galleon Trade had closed, and the Philippines was already beginning to further open to world markets.⁷⁷ This allowed the influx of more goods and ideas within the Philippines and the empire at large. Another one is the significant presence of Chinese migrants in the Philippines that were into opium trade and consumption. In fact, by the time that opium was already allowed to be cultivated, the Chinese in the Philippines petitioned in 1835 to allow them to erect a structure where they could operate an opium factory.⁷⁸

⁷³ See Diana Kim, *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition Across Southeast Asia*.

⁷⁴ Anne Foster, "Prohibition as Superiority: Policing Opium in Southeast Asia, 1898-1925" *The International History Review* Vol 22 No. 2 (June 2000), p. 255.

⁷⁵ Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 114

⁷⁶ Bamero, "Opium: The Evolution of Policies, the Tolerance of the Vice, and the Proliferation of Contraband Trade in the Philippines, 1843–1908," p. 59.

⁷⁷ See Benito Legarda, *After the Galleons: Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999).

⁷⁸ Bamero, "Opium: The Evolution of Policies, the Tolerance of the Vice, and the Proliferation of Contraband Trade in the Philippines, 1843–1908," p. 59-60.

Further to the impact of the opening of Manila to world trade, when the end of the Galleon Trade greatly affected the business pursuits of the Spanish colony, other means and routes of trade were had to be explored and encouraged. It was within this idea that the proximity of China became another important factor in exploring the possibility of engaging in the opium trade. However, the ambivalence toward opium remained as the 1828 decree only permitted the cultivation of opium for the purposes of export and furthermore, the cultivation was only limited to Manila and not allowed in other areas of the Philippines. The native population were also strongly prohibited to use opium.⁷⁹ These ambivalent policies ultimately resulted to opium cultivation not being successful during this period. A 19th century traveler and observer even pointed out that another factor contributing to this dismal success in the opium cultivation also related to the influx of opium coming from the British that unduly overwhelmed the market, disincentivizing the pursuit.⁸⁰

In spite of these, however, Spain still had attempts to participate in the global opium market. Several business ventures from Spanish-Filipino businessmen were noted to have attempted to engage with the British and the Chinese to prosper a trading relationship with the Philippines facilitating further developments of connections between the British and China. However, by the middle of the 1820s to the 1830s, these engagements slowly withered. Several factors are being cited including the challenges faced by the Spanish businessmen in the Philippines primarily the high investment demand of maintaining the opium trade, among others.⁸¹

Within these efforts to experiment with opium production and trade both within and beyond the Philippines, the Spaniards organized an opium commission that was tasked to study opium particularly the advantages and disadvantages of its cultivation and use and to recommend whether pushing for a monopoly would be beneficial. The commission ultimately decided that it would be favorable for the

⁷⁹ Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898*, p.115.

⁸⁰ Richard Mackmicking, *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851). <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/20189/pg20189-images.html>

⁸¹ Ander Permanyer-Ugartemendia, "Opium after the Manila Galleon: The Spanish Involvement in the Opium Economy in East Asia (1815-1830)" *Economic History Research* vol 10 (2014): pp. 155-164.

Philippines to have a policy that would allow opium cultivation as it would have positive effects to the relationship with China and would also be beneficial to the significant Chinese population living in the Philippines.⁸²

Thus, based on the recommendations of the commission, by December 1843, the Spanish colonial government had the monopoly contract for opium take effect. Opium contracts were sold to bidders and their revenues were regulated so the colonial state could get income. The contracts were for three years. While businesses involving opium were allowed, the Spanish colonial government maintained that the Chinese were not allowed to smoke opium in their homes.⁸³

Even though the contracts had already began being awarded, there were still ambivalence among the Spaniards with regard to already allowing opium to be farmed, consumed, and sold in the colony. These conversations prompted the establishment of yet another opium commission in 1849, six years after the first, that was tasked to revisit the recommendations of the first commission. The second commission ultimately reaffirmed the findings of the first commission citing further the economic benefits of allowing opium to be cultivated and traded. Furthermore, the commission took note that banning opium could have negative effects to the Chinese living in the Philippines. The committee feared that the Chinese might decide to leave the Philippines and move to other locations where they could be allowed to trade opium. Also, they warned that banning opium cultivation and trade could hamper the potential revenue which would result to higher financial burdens for the colonial state. With the reaffirmation of the second commission, the contracts to allow opium cultivation, consumption, and circulation were continued. From the 1850s well into the end of the Spanish empire, this has largely been the general policy.⁸⁴

⁸² Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898*, p. 114.

⁸³ See Alma Bamero, "Municipal Franchises on Rest, Leisure and Recreation: The *Intendencia* and its control of social activities in Manila, 1819-1895" (PhD Dissertation [History], University of the Philippines).

⁸⁴ See Rafael Comenge, Rafael, *Los Chinos: Estudio social y politico* (Manila: Tipo- Lit. de Chofre y Comp, 1894); See also Dondy Pepito Ramos, "China's Curse: Racialization of Opium Use in Colonial Philippines" *Philippine Sociological Review* vol 68: 75-97.

As the activities of the opium contratas grew in number even outside of Manila, another decree was passed in 1852 mandating closer monitoring of opium activities in the colony. This decree was brought out due partly as accounts of smuggling had been documented.⁸⁵ Even though the main conduits of the opium trade and consumption in the 19th century Philippines were the Chinese living in the colony, it needs to be noted that many of the contractors of opium were of Spanish descent and even Filipino natives took part in the activities.⁸⁶

When the Philippine Revolution broke out, the hostilities greatly affected the opium trade. Once the Filipino revolutionaries established the revolutionary government, they figured the need for revenue and they reluctantly allowed the continuation of the opium trade.⁸⁷ The burgeoning Philippine republic, however, would face a much bigger challenge at the turn of the 20th century when the United States laid claim to the former Spanish colony.

Opium in the Philippines during the early American colonial rule

When the Americans came to the Philippines, they had to contend with several challenges: the protest posed by the Philippine Revolutionary Government; the need for an assessment of the state of the Philippines; and the planning of how to govern the new colony, ensuring sustainability and profit in the process. Within these challenges also came the question about the institutions built by the Spaniards, one of which was the functioning opium farming and contracting system.

Despite the Philippine-American War raging from 1899-1902, as early as 1899, the United States had taken to act on the provisions of the Treaty of Paris with Spain which ceded the former Spanish colony to the new rising empire. As such, as early as 1899, the question of opium policy had already figured among

⁸⁵ Bamero, "Opium: The Evolution of Policies, the Tolerance of the Vice, and the Proliferation of Contraband Trade in the Philippines, 1843–1908," 60-66.

⁸⁶ Ibid; See Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898*.

⁸⁷ Bamero, "Opium: The Evolution of Policies, the Tolerance of the Vice, and the Proliferation of Contraband Trade in the Philippines, 1843–1908," 60-66; See also Bamero, "Municipal Franchises on Rest, Leisure and Recreation: The *Intendencia* and its control of social activities in Manila, 1819-1895"

American military, and then civilian, officials sent to the Philippines.⁸⁸ One of the key questions they had to address was whether they would continue to allow the opium farming system that the Spaniards left behind. In relation to the contract system, the American military government in the Philippines decided to impose high tariff on opium instead of expanding and continuing the awarding of contracts. This was supposedly out of expediency as the collection would be easier for the newly starting colonial system.⁸⁹

When the Americans sent the first officers to the Philippines to study the conditions in the new colony, their reports mentioned the potential lucrative income that could be gained from opium taxation. However, these early reports also mentioned that the continued smoking of opium could be harmful to the colonized population. Given the enormity of the task of banning opium outright, they had to concede imposing higher taxes to hit both revenue and increasing the price so as to discourage consumption. Aside from the high tariff, the military government also passed ordinances that prohibited the establishment of opium dens in the cities and provinces. They had to settle for the pragmatic approach and found no further contradiction between their initial opium policy and their avowed benevolent assimilation.⁹⁰

Once the American colonial regime slowly began the transition from purely military to a more civilian colonial bureaucracy through the Philippine Commission, the question about opium policy became a topic of discussion again. The Americans found out that in spite of the regulations set in place by the military government, the couple of years since they assumed colonial rule saw an uptick in the number of Filipino natives consuming opium. And since the contracts were no longer being awarded and decreased supply, there was also a significant increase in the illegal

⁸⁸ Ramos, "China's Curse: Racialization of Opium Use in Colonial Philippines" *Philippine Sociological Review* vol 68: 75-97; See also Daniel Wertz, "Idealism, Imperialism, and Internationalism: Opium Politics in Colonial Philippines, 1898-1925" *Modern Asian Studies* 47(2): 467-99.

⁸⁹ Anne Foster, "Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia" in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives*, edited by Julian Go and Anne Foster. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 95.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

imports of opium in spite of the high tariff and taxes.⁹¹ Thus it was posing a major dilemma, and as Foster notes:

The high tariff designed to reduce or at worst maintain levels of opium consumption, seemed to have rather created a situation that required more US intervention. For officials who believed that their true task lay in uplifting the population by building schools and improving public health, opium policies were an irritating distraction.⁹²

Thus began the debates about the appropriate policy on opium. This was simultaneously happening with the strong anti-opium lobby mounting stronger in the United States. As the Americans in the Philippines saw the potential income from opium, there came a proposal in 1903 to revive the Spanish opium farm system. In the bill, they also wished to reinstate the Spanish policy of not allowing Filipinos to consume opium and only the Chinese in the Philippines could contract and sell opium. This proposal was premised on the American's supposed intention of protecting the Filipino people from the evils of opium, but also try to profit from the trade. The proposed bill met fierce opposition primarily from the American protestant clergy in the Philippines.⁹³

Amidst the criticisms leveled against the proposed bill, a substitute bill was proposed. The second bill proposed outright prohibition of opium all over the Philippines. Opposition to this alternative bill came this time from many Chinese businessmen in the Philippines some of whom even hinted that they need opium and regardless of its illegal status should the bill become law, they would find ways to obtain it. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines weirdly expressed opposition to the original bill reestablishing the Spanish opium farm system citing that the new proposals could raise the prices of opium making it inaccessible to poorer Chinese. While the debates on opium policy morphed to conversations about regulation or prohibition, the discourse surrounding opium

⁹¹ Anne Foster, "Prohibition as Superiority: Policing Opium in Southeast Asia, 1898-1925" p. 257.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ramos, "China's Curse: Racialization of Opium Use in Colonial Philippines" pp. 75-97

consumption and trade in the Philippines had been complicated by questions of race and many Americans' opinions on opium considered as "China's curse."⁹⁴

As the discussions on opium heated up with various groups writing petitions and mobilizing lobby groups, the Philippine Commission, then headed by William Howard Taft resolved to postpone further deciding on the proposed legislation. Instead, Taft ordered the commission to form a committee that would conduct research about opium not only in the Philippines but in the immediate region. This committee's findings would then be used to inform the later discussions about the appropriate opium policy in the Philippines.⁹⁵

Chapter Summary and Conclusions:

Diverse and evolving attitudes toward opium

The goal of this chapter is fairly simple: to describe how opium broadly figured in the long history of colonialism in India and the Philippines. More precisely, the discussions endeavored to show opium's place in the changing landscape of empires and in the process illustrate how these changing contexts impacted opium policy and iteratively, how opium policy also impacted larger colonial policies.

Opium as cash crop holding potential for generating revenue was not something that the colonizers instinctively brought to their colonies. As seen in the case of the British empire in India, opium was already being cultivated in the subcontinent long before the arrival of the European explorers. Even the Mughal nobility had been documented to engage in recreational consumption of opium. In spite of this, it was with the advent of colonialism when opium cultivation grew to be more organized and, in the process, more imposing and extractive. With the intervention of the EIC, realizing the potential of harnessing opium's revenue potential, cultivation of opium initially came with a system of contracts.

As the territories in Bengal and wider Northern India became largely integrated into the political and economic control of the EIC, the ways in which opium was cultivated and processed to industrial proportions became increasingly

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

more organized with the refinement of the structure as it transitioned to an agency system. With the higher demand that resulted from the increasing revenue potential of opium came the peasant farmers taking the heaviest burden. As the Opium Department of the EIC took the helm in overseeing the production of opium, the system became so efficient that it was able to hurdle the challenge of a competition in the Malwa region originally developed by other European powers.

The system was also able to increase production and turned the opium trade into an important pillar of the empire. This circulation of opium allowed the trade triangle between Britain, India, and China to also develop generating, again, much revenue for the empire. So important was this trade network that when one vertex of the triangle, China, endangered the ecosystem by having restrictive policies, a war ensued. Here we see how opium not only impacted the ways the colony in India was managed, but also how the British empire related to other powers as well. Opium policy was no longer confined within the empire but had ignited violent ramifications to international relations.

In the case of the Philippines, we see a more tenuous development of policies. During the Spanish colonial period, opium production did not figure as an important economic enterprise, nor did it become a viable option until the turn of the 19th century. When the various changes in the 19th century wracked the Spanish empire to its core, opium became one of the topics that had to be dealt with. When the Trans-Pacific Galleon Trade ended with the independence of Mexico, the opening of the Philippines to world trade was accelerated. As other foreign firms established engagements with the waning Spanish empire and its Asian outpost, the colonial regime dealt with the impact of the opium trade led by the British. Several ventures to engage and participate in the opium trade began to develop. Domestically, the colonial government vacillated between prohibiting and allowing the cultivation of opium. After having opium commissions set up to study and recommend policy, the Spanish colonial government relented and in the same fashion as the other colonial centers in Southeast Asia, opium farms were allowed in the Philippines. With the advent of the Americans came another point of ambivalence in opium policy. Especially stark in the early years of the take-over

during the turn of the 20th century, the US had to grapple with balancing the potential of gaining much revenue from opium and the rhetoric of benevolent assimilation.

Deeper reflections about the foregoing discussions could point to how we could further nuance the history of opium in the context of colonialism. We see here how opium is not simply a cash crop and trade commodity. In many ways, opium could be appreciated as a prism through which we see glimpses of how the empire operates beyond the margins of its physical and discursive realms.

As a commodity of trade, opium—as with any other trade good in circulation—reveals the vast networks of relationships fostered by colonialism both within and beyond the colony. Within the colonial domain, opium and its cultivation shed additional insights on the power relations that operate within the context of colonialism. We see how the demands of revenue resulted in the extractive and exploitative nature of colonialism. Geographic lands were transformed to cash crop yielding areas and the native peasant population experiencing the heavy burden of labor. Opium also figured in the colonial apparatus' organization of the population as it was seen to take racialized understandings related to consumption and dependence.

Furthermore, again as a commodity circulating in the global market, opium traversed territories and linked empires to other regions. The global reach of opium and its high profit yield prompted colonial powers to tap its potential. Generating revenue, the opium trade contributed to the sustenance of empire. The global trade also showed how empires do not exist in silos and instead were in constant observation of one another as policies on opium were mirrored across colonial outposts. Not only were ideas and policies travelled with the goods, people also moved and migrated. The Chinese in the Philippines for example were inextricably linked to the opium trade the same way that China became a critical node in the Britain-India-China trade triangle.

The history of opium and colonial opium policies therefore also provide further illustrative insights to how empires are never a monolithic entity through time. They were constantly in transitions, be it transforming itself or shifting from one power to the other. Thus, it comes to no surprise that opium policies also experienced changes through time.

It was almost within the same period as the Americans were conflicted with the path it will take regarding opium that the British empire also had the same dilemma. In the last years of the 19th century, British colonial policies on opium became a subject of heated debates as strong lobbies to end the opium trade punctuated social circles. Similar to how the Americans in the early 20th century had to deal with opium policy dividing policymakers and citizens alike, the British empire faced the challenge years prior. These push factors eventually led these two empires to organize specialized bodies to conduct research about opium and recommend viable ways forward that the empire would take.

CHAPTER 3

Empires Rethinking Opium Policy: The Royal Opium Commission in India and the Opium Committee in the Philippines

Writing about the nature of colonial archives, the scholar Anne Laura Stoler forwarded a provocative insight regarding the nature of empires and colonialism. Stoler mentioned that the archives and the documents that came to be housed in them constitute “commitments to paper” and holds “grids of intelligibility” as these documents produced by colonial governments have inscribed on them issues of power, choices, affordances of what merits to be remembered, and even deceit.⁹⁶ In inscribing within the pages of these documents the various policies enacted, the colonial regimes also reveal further the tenuous nature of empire—exhibiting forcefulness and fragility simultaneously. Therefore, the colonial archives and the documents therein, in many ways, present the empire akin to a house of glass: posturing strength and stability, but at the same time exposed to the core.⁹⁷

In what Stoler refers to as epistemic anxiety, the fragility of the empire is rendered visible. This epistemic anxiety undergirds the colonial effort to maintain the colonial order as the empire grapples with the context of the colonized peoples.⁹⁸ We can conceivably extend this reflection to nuance the ways that empires

⁹⁶ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Commonsense* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 1-2. This work focused on the archives in the Dutch East Indies.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

navigated transitions and changing contexts. With changes on the horizon, colonial regimes sought to reorient policies in order to better calibrate the appropriate response. All, of course, under the premise of maintaining the colonial hold.

A major aspect where this anxiety unfolds always relate to policies that involve the ways the empires render the colonized body legible, and in the ways the empire exerts its force to control bodies and commodities. Opium presents such a case as it traverses the various aspects of colonial domination: manifesting extractive cultivation and altering physical landscapes; subjugating bodies in labor; altering these same bodies owing to its psychoactive and medicinal efficacy; circulating across distances as economic commodities; and providing colonial revenue.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that policies on opium would also experience transitions due to changing contexts across time. While existing within the context of colonialism, opium lent itself a potent node through which debates unfolded, revealing tensions in the empire. This chapter proceeds from these reflections as the ways the British and American empires began rethinking opium policy during the last decade of the 19th century to the early years of the 20th century is explored. It is inevitable here that we see how the colony and the metropole are inextricably intertwined.

Questioning opium in the colony and the metropole

In spite of the massive revenue being generated by empires through the trade in opium, the policies surrounding the commodity were not immune from criticisms and campaigns for reform. This reality became more pronounced in the case of opium during the latter half of the 19th century through the turn of the 20th. As a dilemma of late imperialism, the colonial scaffolds may have appeared to be well placed, but in reality, as policies dragged on and new ones were being introduced, resistance became more apparent not only in the colonies but also in the metropolises. The

imperial states were revealing its brittleness more and more, making the latent epistemic and political anxieties more visible.⁹⁹

Aside from the exploitative nature of the extractive cultivation involving opium, its effects on the body became a major axis from which major questions about its cultivation revolved. It has been noted that the advancement in science and medicine in the 19th century contributed to growing distrust to the medical value of the plant and people slowly began turning attention to its addictive properties.¹⁰⁰ Quite interesting, along with the advancements in science, the strong voice of religious missionaries, particularly Christian and Protestant missionaries, also contributed much impact on the ways the debates on opium began taking shape. Taken together with the impending collapse of colonial enterprises owing to revolutions and wars of independence being waged in the 19th century, the colonial metropole began to again reflect about the impact of their regimes to the native populations. It is thus within these changing currents of the late 19th century that a more sustained campaign against opium began to develop.

In the case of the British empire, the strong anti-opium sentiment began to develop in the latter part of the 19th century propelled by evangelicals that voiced out concerns about the moral implications of opium. As another impact of the Opium Wars, many in London did not welcome the way the British forced concessions from Qing China. Relatedly, they see this interference and the continued impact of opium to China as a major hindrance to the missionary activities there. They also expressed their lack of confidence with the way the colonial regime in India were managing the affairs. Thus in 1874, many evangelicals, particularly Quakers, established the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade. Based in London, this society actively campaigned for reforms in the colonial regime in India. They did these by lodging petitions after petitions to the Parliament in order to pressure the body into acting on the matter. After years of campaigning, the Anti-Opium Society gained more traction in 1891 when an anti-opium measure gained momentum in the

⁹⁹ Anne Foster, "Medicine to Drug: Opium's Transimperial Journey" in *Crossing Empires: Taking US History into Transimperial Terrain* edited by Kristin Hoganson and Jay Sexton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), pp. 112-135.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Parliament. Although facing much challenge from pro-opium camps, the widescale debates about opium prompted the Crown to act and constitute the Royal Commission on Opium.¹⁰¹

In the United States, similar discourses about the threat of opium also began to surface in the late 19th century and became especially acute when the American imperial venture took off after the Spanish-American War. The development of the prohibitionist campaign in the United States also became stronger when the consumers of opium (and its derivative heroin) in the United States expanded. It has been noted that previously, mostly middle- and upper-class Americans were consuming opium for recreation. By the latter part of the 19th century, however, the consumer base of opium and heroin began to expand to African-Americans, migrant populations and lower class citizens. With this came the anxiety among the elite population that these sectors of society would be more susceptible to committing crimes because of their addiction. Here we see the strong roots of the securitized view about drug policy wherein it is being tied to occurrences of crime and the threat it posed to the safety in society.¹⁰²

Similar to some of the arguments raised by British anti-opium activists in London, many Americans also expressed concern about the effect of opium on the native populations once the colonial enterprise set foot in the colonies such as the Philippines. Invoking the benevolent assimilation and civilizing mission discourse, the American colonial officials found themselves trapped in the enigma of opium policy and reform.¹⁰³ Thus, when proposed legislations on opium met fierce criticisms in the Philippines, the colonial government saw it best to conduct an inquiry through an organized body.

Taking on similar strands of push factors, the Royal Opium Commission in India and the Opium Committee in the Philippines were therefore responses to the

¹⁰¹ Richards, "Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission on Opium 1895" pp. 382-386; See also Paul Winther, *Anglo-European Science and the Rhetoric of Empire: Malaria, Opium, and British Rule in India, 1756-1895* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003).

¹⁰² Anne Foster, "Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia," pp. 93-94; More extensive discussion about the shift in opium users is provided in David Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹⁰³ Anne Foster, "Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia," p. 94

pressures posed by strong disagreements in regard to opium policy. It is also therefore within the critical decades between the 1890s and early 1900s that the radical shift in discourse about opium in particular, and narcotic drugs in general, began to brew. It is also due to these reasons why the research pursuits of the British and American empires to further understand the situation of opium consumption, cultivation, and circulation served as important bedrocks from which future discussions on drug policy would stand.

The Royal Opium Commission in British India

Establishment, Mandate, and Membership

Responding to the growing parliamentary lobby in London, the British crown constituted the Royal Opium Commission in 1893. Noted to be “one of the great Victorian inquiries devoted to the Indian Empire,”¹⁰⁴ the Commission produced a six volume report of over 2,000 pages which became “one of the most valuable sources we possess for studying all aspects of opium in India in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.”¹⁰⁵

The Commission was tasked to investigate two interrelated subjects: (1) extent of opium consumption in India; and (2) the way the Government of India regulates consumption, production, and export. The findings of the study were then expected to be important in the future conversations about opium policies in the British empire.

Appointed by Queen Victoria, the Commission had nine key members drawn from a range of backgrounds. Seven of the members were British and two native Indians. The Commission was headed by Baron Thomas Brassey, a member of the Parliament identified to be a liberal. Another member that came from the Parliament was Robert Mowbray, a conservative. Two members were drawn from the colonial service in India: Arthur Fanshaw who was director-general of the Indian Post Office and James Lyall who was a retired Lieutenant Governor of Punjab. These two were known to be supportive of the continuation of the opium trade in India. Perhaps to

¹⁰⁴ Richards, “Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission on Opium 1895,” p. 375

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 382

counterbalance, two members of the Commission were known to be anti-opium: Henry Wilson, a member of the Parliament and Arthur Pease, also a member of Parliament but previously part of the governing council of the Anti-Opium Society. To provide medical expertise, Sir William Roberts was also appointed. He was a known physician from Manchester. Upon the nomination of the Viceroy of India, two Indians became part of the Commission: Laksmishwar Singh, Maharajah of Darbhanga and Haridas Veharidas, former chief minister of Junagarh.¹⁰⁶

Activities of the Commission and the Final Report

After convening, the Commission set out on an 83-day sojourn to complete their task. They went around both India and Burma and interviewed 723 witnesses (466 natives of India or China, 257 Europeans). It was thus not farfetched to regard the Commission as a hardworking body.¹⁰⁷

The inquiry began in London in September of 1893. They publicized the goals of the Commission and invited those who would like to sit for the interview. In the same vein, they have organized and reached out to members of the colonial bureaucracy in India to prepare statements. They likewise called for participants from the residents in India and Burma. After the preliminary activities and the initial data gathering in London, the members went to India, convening in Calcutta in November. Richards note that The RCO followed a well-established British procedure for publicly sitting and examining witnesses.¹⁰⁸ Aside from the interviews, the Commission also sent out the survey questionnaire to key British personnel and civilians living overseas, particularly China and Hong Kong in order to get information from their end. They also collected petitions and letters coming from concerned parties and included these materials in their final assessment. The data gathering was concluded in February 1894. The Commission then went on with the gargantuan task of processing the data they have collected which ultimately led to the submission of the final report by April 1895.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 388-393

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 394

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 394-399.

An important aspect of the Commission's tasks involved an inquiry into the general picture of opium consumption in India. Here some key insights that had important impacts to the final recommendation included the Commission's findings that it appears that opium was not a considerable harm to the health of those consuming it. The report noted that those using opium were in control of their consumption and they were mostly adults. Another insight in relation to this drew some reflections with regard to the cultural context in India. They noted how it had religious and social contexts. Aside from this, the witnesses mentioned that opium smoking was actually not the primary way of opium consumption among Indians and that this practice was actually looked down upon. The answers from the participants point to how the cultural and social context on the ground may have not been fully grasped by the anti-opium lobbyists in London.¹¹⁰

In terms of the question of regulation and control, the report highlighted the importance of the Opium Act of 1878 which made the Government of India the sole authority in regulating opium cultivation, manufacturing, trade and even having related policies on consumption. It was noted that the goal of the colonial government was to maximize revenue from minimum consumption. Furthermore, the report concluded that the Indian Government officials had considerable moves to control production but were also aware of the cultural sensibilities of the local communities. There were also several laws and regulations in place to check cultivation, avoiding smuggling, and restricting areas where poppies could be grown.¹¹¹ The case of Burma also presented an interesting case as it was an example about the Government of India exerting new levels of social control—in the context of imperial expansion—in relation to opium policies. Thus, it can be inferred that the Commission surmised that the opium situation in India and Burma were under control.¹¹²

An interesting vignette involving a Chinese merchant in Burma might be illustrative of one of the views of the Chinese population residing in the British colonial territory. In the interview with a certain Mr. Ah Chew in the session on 12

¹¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 400-408

¹¹¹ Ibid, pp. 409-415

¹¹² Ibid, pp. 415-418

December 1893, we see how the shopkeeper answered questions about his own consumption and his enterprise involving opium. Through an interpreter, Ah Chew, 38 years of age who from China fifteen years prior, mentioned that he started smoking opium when he came to Rangoon. Attributing the alleviation of his chest pains to his use of opium, Ah notes that it would be very difficult for him to stop consuming opium. Asked about the possible reaction of opium smokers should the government stop selling opium, Ah remarked that “the opium smokers would not like it to be stopped, those who do not smoke opium have nothing to say.” As to what he would do should prohibition be instituted, he responded, quite strikingly, with: “How can I get the opium from anywhere if Government stops the opium? If Government stopped the opium I would run away to China.”¹¹³

These foregoing points ultimately led to the Commission having reported that prohibition was not necessary, nor was it demanded by the colonized population. Prohibition could be seen as interference to internal affairs of Indians. Consumption of opium was also concluded to not cause extensive moral or physical degradation. An added report of the Physician Sir William Roberts refuted many assumptions of anti-opium groups that the use of opium is so widespread in India. He noted that Indians used opium in a controlled manner. The medical journal, *The Lancet*, even published an editorial in 1895 which commended the report of Roberts.¹¹⁴ The report’s assessment therefore marshalled medical, cultural, and administrative reasons to support their conclusion.

Conclusions of the Commission

The Royal Opium Commission was conceived out of the strong anti-opium lobby in the British parliament. Within its mandate, it sought to gather data and present a picture regarding the levels of consumption of opium in the British colony as well to analyze the ways in which the colonial government was managing the opium cultivation, consumption, and circulation.

¹¹³ *Royal Commission on Opium, Vol II: Minutes of Evidence and Appendices* (London: HMSO, 1895), p. 202.

¹¹⁴ Richards, p. 407.

In the sixth volume of the final report submitted to the Queen, the Commission surmised overall that while opium consumption was indeed widespread in India and Burma particularly in the areas where the farms were located, the ways in which opium was consumed did not pose great danger to the health of the people as repeatedly pointed out by the anti-opium lobbyists. It was also important to note how the native Indians cite the cultural and religious dimensions of using opium. The witnesses interviewed mentioned they were in control of their consumption, and they know when they are having enough.¹¹⁵ Paragraph 261 of the report further states:

In connexion with the medical aspect of the case, it is important to mention that prohibition of the use of opium, except for medical purposes, even if desirable, could not practically be enforced. The medical and quasi-medical uses of the drug are so intermixed that it is impossible to draw a definite line between them. Among large masses of the people there is a strong prejudice against the European system of medicine. Not 10 per cent, ever consult a practitioner on the European system, and a large proportion of the native population never in their lives see a medical man of any school.¹¹⁶

The note on the tension between Western medicine and Indian local knowledge systems presents an important argument raised by Richards in his appraisal of the Commission's activities and final recommendations. Richards noted that the sentiments of anti-opium advocates in London presented a form of cultural imperialism which was largely rejected by the Indians on the ground. The anti-opium lobbyists were so keen on imposing their worldview that the conditions of the ground did not match their assumptions.¹¹⁷

In relation to the second important goal of the Commission about studying the ways the colonial government was managing the opium situation, it was revealed from the interviews that there was a general satisfaction with the ways the colonial

¹¹⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on Opium, Vol VI: Final Report of the Royal Commission, The Report with Annexures* (London: HMSO, 1895), pp. 93-96

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 93.

¹¹⁷ Richards, p. 420.

government were managing the affairs. It was also noted that the revenue drawn from opium could not be ignored and remained to be an integral consideration for any future policy. In this regard, the report was quite straightforward:

It is not necessary to repeat the figures and the arguments given elsewhere on the financial aspect of the case, for in the present circumstances the revenue derived from opium is indispensable for carrying on with efficiency the Government of India. Every native witness who advocated the suppression of the opium traffic admitted that if, as a consequence of such a step, taxation in some new form must be imposed, popular opinion would be opposed to any change.¹¹⁸

Considering once again the interplay of local contexts and the proposed prohibition, the report further noted that:

Upon every consideration of prudence and statesmanship, it seems clear that in the position of the British Government in India, we cannot deal experimentally with 290 millions of people, in a matter involving interference with the innermost concerns of personal life, without a clear pronouncement of Native opinion in favour of such a step.¹¹⁹

Ultimately, therefore, the report of the Commission proved disastrous to the anti-opium activists in London. The final conclusions of the commission did not lend support for the strong campaign against opium.

While this was the case in the last decade of the 19th century, across the Indian Ocean and only within a decade after this landmark report was submitted, the American colonial government in the Philippines would also find itself at the throes of debates about opium. The result of their own inquiry, however, departed dramatically, setting the stage for the future directions of conversations not just about opium but of psychoactive substances in general.

¹¹⁸ *Report of the Royal Commission on Opium, Vol VI: Final Report of the Royal Commission, The Report with Annexures* (London: HMSO, 1895), p. 95

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Opium Committee in American Philippines

Establishment, Mandate, and Membership

When the incidents of 1903 made the American colonial government aware of the impact of recommending opium policies had to the public—igniting strong opinions and dissatisfaction—the need for a thorough understanding of the opium situation in the colony and beyond became more apparent. It is with this realization that the Philippine commission decided it needed an organized body to conduct research and recommend policies accordingly.

Thus by August 1903, Act Number 812 or the “Act Authorizing the Appointment a Committee of Three to investigate the use of Opium and traffic therein” was promulgated to address the pressing need for a systematic way of understanding the situation regarding opium in the colony and beyond. Through the act, the committee was constituted with primary members being Major Edward C. Carter, Right Reverend Charles H. Brent, and Dr. Jose Albert.¹²⁰ The Act also provided for the inclusion of two more American members and one Filipino. Ample provisions for compensation were also detailed. While the membership of the committee was diverse, it was a missed opportunity that no member was appointed coming from the Chinese community.

Not only was the committee mandated to conduct research in the Philippines, but it was also specifically instructed to scope the other neighboring areas including Japan, Burma, and Indonesia. Immediately after being convened, the committee started planning the conduct of their duties:

The Opium Committee met on 13 August 1903, five days after their appointment, in order to plan how their voyage must proceed...They resolved to leave Manila aboard the steamer “City of Peking” for Japan. On 17 August 1903, the

¹²⁰ Edward Carter, Jose Albert, and Charles Brent, *Report of the Committee Appointed by Philippine Commission to Investigate the Opium and the Traffic Therein and the Rules, Ordinances, and Laws Regulating such use and Traffic in Japan, Formosa, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore, Burmah, Java, and the Philippine Islands* (Washington: War Department, 1905), p. 51

steamship “City of Peking” sailed for Japan; it arrived in Hongkong [sic] at around noon¹²¹”

Much similar to the Royal Opium Commission in India, the main objectives of the Opium Committee in the Philippines involved the scoping of the nature of and related policies regarding opium cultivation, consumption, and circulation in the aforementioned sites. From the data they would be able to gather, they would then make a report from where they would then ground their recommendations about what they deem to be appropriate measures about opium policy that could be considered by the American colonial government.

The triumvirate of the main members of the committee represented different sectors of society. A member, Edward Carter hailed from the military and could thus offer insights on the aspects of security and policy implementation especially in the context of on-going colonization. Not only was he in the military but together with the other member, Jose Albert, Carter was trained in medicine and served as the Public Health Commissioner in the Philippines. Albert and Carter were thus also well placed to assess medical and scientific dimensions of opium. The last member, Charles Brent was the First Missionary Bishop of the Episcopalian Church in the Philippines. Brent was also a well-known campaigner against prostitution, vices, and poverty in South Boston.¹²² Among the three, Brent had undeniably represented an anti-opium sentiment. Early on his arrival in the Philippines, Brent had already surmised opium to be “the most personality destroying-factor in the Philippines”¹²³ and he maintained this position well into his stay in the Philippines. In fact, in 1906—well beyond the submission of the committee report—he penned a letter to the Education Commission saying:

The opium traffic stands in the category of crime except so far as it is imported for purely medicinal purposes. It cannot be ranked with the liquor trade, for, as every temperate man acknowledges, in his latter there is a legitimate consumption as

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ Alexander Zabriskie, *Charles Henry Brent: Crusader for Christian Unity* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Westminster Press, 1948), p. 98.

a beverage, however much the liberty may be abused, whereas there is no unvicious [sic] use of opium or its immediate products as a foodstuff or beverage. The consumption of opium is not merely a personal weakness; it is a social vice, i.e., a crime.¹²⁴

After assembling the membership of the committee and clearing the objectives of their project, they set out to conduct the investigation. They first ventured outside of the Philippines.¹²⁵

Activities of the Committee and the Final Report

In order to carry out the task at the hand, the committee prepared a set of questions to be sent out to research informants. They devised a questionnaire with about 20 questions. Among the notable questions that they sent out, more notably when they were conducting research in the Philippines, involved the survey of not only the statistical estimate of opium users, but also in particular the number of Chinese users. They also delineated the Filipino users. Within the scope of the data they collected, they also wanted to survey the number of imports and the economic activities surrounding opium. They also intended to know the socio-economic background of users. Further to the details of opium use, they had inquired about the ways opium is consumed and how the respondents understood the effects of opium to the body and the attendant impact of opium to the social relations of the people. In terms of policy, they also surveyed opinions about the views of the people with regard to existing policies on opium. In their ventures outside the Philippines, they sought to see policies and extent of opium consumption to have comparative data.¹²⁶

The committee conducted their research for a total of five months, first going to the overseas sites before embarking on the Philippine leg of the data gathering. They initially established links to relevant offices and gathered people for interviews. In their sojourns to the foreign countries, they surmised that the situation in the

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Edward Carter, Jose Albert, and Charles Brent, *Report of the Committee*.

¹²⁶ Ibid, pp. 130-133

Philippines resembled closest to the situation in Java, Indonesia where the roles of the Chinese were also prominent in the industries related to opium.¹²⁷

The most extensive field research conducted by the committee involved the Philippines. After the activities were concluded in five months, the committee prepared the report and submitted the final version with over 300 pages in 1905. The report was structured opening with the general overview of the opium situation in the Philippines and the neighboring countries. This was then immediately followed by their recommendations.

Insights gathered from the committee's activities revealed that indeed, the Chinese were a significant population to consider in relation to the opium situation in the Philippines. They also found that many informants' opinion about the sector of society that consumes opium the most differed: there were some that mention that it was among the lower socio-economic status where opium consumption is most prevalent, while others emphasize that the middle and upper classes were using opium to the most. Within these discussions, however, it was revealed that smoking was the most common way consumption.¹²⁸

Important answers for the committee of course related to the effects of opium. In one interview, a respondent described how opium affects the person:

One needs only to observe the physical condition of the smoker to appreciate the pernicious influence that it has upon his health; his weakness, characterized by a sickly and stupid appearance, becomes greater and greater as the vice increases its hold upon him. In regard to his social life, suffice it to say that the use of opium results in a complete forgetfulness and neglect of his work as well as of his most sacred duties, causing him to fall with the greatest indifference to ruin, shame, and dishonor, and to sacrifice the dearest affections of his family. If he is deprived of the drug at certain hours of the day or night, a depressing sensation is produced, called "*guian*," the effects of which

¹²⁷ Ibid; Still perhaps the most comprehensive work on opium in Indonesia is by James Rush, *Opium to Java: revenue farming and Chinese enterprise in colonial Indonesia, 1860-1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

¹²⁸ Edward Carter, Jose Albert, and Charles Brent, *Report of the Committee*.

are so terrible that they may lead the person to such a point of despair that he will commit robbery or other crimes¹²⁹

This physical impact was also further explored and how it affected society, where one respondent noted:

Opium's effects on the health are emaciation, general debility, dyspepsia, costiveness, stupor or mental apathy, loss of memory, and dullness. As far as the social life is concerned, the users of opium are not lovers of progress and are repugnant to society. It produces aphrodisia [sic], and leads to theft in cases of necessity. It also leads to other forms of crime, there having come under my observation cases of fathers who have prostituted their daughters and even husbands who have prostituted their wives for this reason.¹³⁰

As regards the respondent's views on policies, it was noted that they were of the opinion that the institution of the Spanish contract system in the 19th century significantly contributed to the proliferation of opium in the Philippines. In relation to the arrival of the Americans, the committee noted that it appears that there was indeed a concern among the respondents about the absence of effective legislation about opium. In this aspect, they asked whether prohibition would be an option and there were some respondents that answered in the affirmative and some even mentioned that absolute prohibition must be instituted. There were even Chinese respondents that affirmed the idea of prohibition.¹³¹

Recommendations of the Committee

After the committee processed the data they have gathered, they proceeded with providing the set recommendations regarding the ways the American colonial government ought to implement policies related to opium. We see here a marked

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 134.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

difference from the ways the Royal Commission on Opium in India saw the future of opium policy.

The most important summative recommendation of the Committee points to the suggestion of absolute prohibition in the Philippines. Citing moral and medical reasons owing to the erosion of physical health and negative impact on social relations, the committee also analyzed the policies that have been in force. They considered five policies.

The committee first saw the relevance of imposing high tariff and having stricter policies on licensing in order to gradually disincentivize the importation of opium and eventually diminish consumption. They however recognized that this has been done before and it did not produce the intended effect. They also saw the potential of rising smuggling as traders would try to find ways to skirt the policy. Related to this, they noted the localized systems, perhaps related to taxation, but they also noted that this would be difficult to implement. The third policy they looked at involved the regulation of opium farming, which they expressed opposition to citing that opening the floodgates would only encourage expansion. The Fourth policy explored pointed to proposals of absolute prohibition as expressed in the earlier bills submitted to the Philippine Commission. The committee resolved that this kind of approach would only be effective in preventing areas from engaging in opium consumption and trade and would not be effective in ending these activities in areas already doing them. While they expressed their lack of confidence in absolute prohibition, they nonetheless see the potential of progressive prohibition. The fifth policy they reviewed involved the implementation of government monopolies. The committee saw this means as a measure to control the opium situation better.¹³²

In the end, it appeared that the committee surmised that the fifth policy—government monopoly—coupled with progressive prohibition would be the best option for the Philippines. The committee noted that the process to prohibition be carried out in the next three years. They briefly outlined the steps as follows:

- (1) Immediate government monopoly, to become

¹³² Ibid.

- (2) Prohibition, except for medical purposes, after three (3) years.
- (3) Only licensees, who shall be males and over twenty-one (21) years of age, shall be allowed to use opium until prohibition goes into effect.
- (4) All vendors or dispensers of opium, except for medical purposes, shall be salaried officials of the government.
- (5) Every effort shall be made (a) to deter the young from contracting the habit by pointing out its evil effects and by legislation;
- (6) to aid in caring for and curing those who manifest a desire to give up the habit, and (c) to punish, and if necessary, to remove from the islands, incorrigible offenders.¹³³

The stage was thus set for the prohibition of opium in the Philippines to take place. This particular move from the American colonial government would have profound impacts and reflect the shifting discourse about psychoactive substances that would be seen throughout the 20th well into the 21st century.

Chapter summary and conclusions: Opium policy and colonial anxieties

This chapter mainly dealt with the ways in which the colonial enterprises in India and the Philippines became fertile grounds for debates about opium policy. These heated conversations were borne out of the changing landscape of appreciation of opium and other narcotic substances both in Britain and the US.

Both in Britain and the US, the strong religious lobby and scientific advancements contributed to the growing questions about the ways the empires handled the opium situation in the colonies. Together with criticisms about the ways opium was affecting and endangering the native population, the anti-opium sentiments leveled campaigns advocating for prohibition.

With the mounting pressures from various groups, both the British and American empires yielded, and organized commissions mandated to research about the conditions surrounding opium consumption, cultivation, and circulation.

¹³³ Ibid, p. 46

Reflecting in many ways the colonial anxieties of dealing with changing contexts and recalibrating policies, the empires sought to craft policies grounded on evidence.

Even though colonial policies were ultimately decided at the metropole, the opium commissions present an important avenue through which the colonial bureaucrats and colonial officers provided crucial input shape policy. Diana Kim, discussing the ways opium policy evolved in Southeast Asia calls this the “bureaucratic construction of official problems.” This pertains to the process by which government organizations and officials characterize and frame societal problems as administrative concerns that must be solved through bureaucratic means. According to Kim, this problem-construction process is influenced by the interests and values of the bureaucratic organizations themselves and frequently results in a limited grasp of complicated social issues. Kim specifically highlights how a problem's bureaucratic structure can constrict the spectrum of potential solutions. She also points out that the bureaucratic approach frequently puts social justice and equity second to efficiency and cost-effectiveness, which can worsen already-existing inequities and sustain systemic problems.¹³⁴ This was more prevalent in the Opium commission in India as the viewpoints of the colonial administrators in India played a big role in the conclusion and recommendation. Even though the interviews involved other people outside of the colonial bureaucracy, the design of the questions and the conduct of the interviews were still decided by the members of the commissions.

In many ways, the question of reorienting opium policy brought by strong anti-opium sentiments ultimately boiled down to the question of instituting prohibition or not. Thus, the gamut of data—with social, cultural, medical, economic and political dimensions—were analyzed to answer an administrative question. Nonetheless, this further affirms the idea of epistemic anxieties experienced by colonial empires as they try to navigate complex situations on the ground and build a policy and image that would project stability and control.

¹³⁴ Diana Kim, *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition Across Southeast Asia*, pp. 14-15.

CHAPTER 4

The Road to Prohibition: Opium and Empires after the Opium Commissions

Although the Royal Opium Commission in India and the Opium Committee in the Philippines practically came to diverging conclusions in regard to the direction of opium policy in the British and American empires, the twentieth century would eventually see the triumph of opium prohibition. If anything, these two inquiries into opium consumption, cultivation, and circulation serve as concrete illustrations of the discursive shift about opium at the close of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The strong anti-opium lobby and advocacy both in Britain and the United States gained more ground after the reports of the inquiries were completed. In many ways, the confluence of the further developments in science and medicine, stronger religious lobby, campaigns in the colonies, and changing dynamics of the international order came together to hammer the nail of prohibition.

This chapter explores the various events in the aftermath of the conclusion of the Royal Opium Commission and the Opium Committee. Many scholars have noted that the 20th century signaled the beginning of the prohibitionist global drug policy that persist until contemporary times. Owing to factors internal within the empires and their colonies and the product of what has been referred to as international drug diplomacy, the end of opium's licit circulation would be cemented alongside the continuous collapse of empires.

Opium Policy in the British Empire after the Royal Opium Commission

Turning tides: Opium as prohibition drawing closer

The conclusions and recommendations of the Royal Opium Commission proved to cause a major setback for the anti-opium lobby in Britain. Despite this drawback, the campaigns of anti-opium lobbyists continued and at the turn of the 20th century, the winds of prohibition grew ever stronger after international diplomacy and local conditions prompted the British empire to further rethink its engagement with opium.

Throughout the history of opium in India and its circulation as a trade commodity facilitated by the British empire, it has been noted that the major success hinged on the absorptive capacity of foreign markets ready to buy the product. Here, China became the most important destination and partner of the British empire. The trade triangle of Britain-India-China had contributed to the increased valence of opium as a revenue generating product. It was thus, expected, that when China held attempts at halting its import of opium, reactions were received from Britain even reaching a high with the Opium Wars. The turn of the century, however, saw other major developments in China and the global opium trade contributing to the eventual decline of revenue and hence production of opium in India also waned.

After the Opium Wars, the legalization of the importation of opium to China became one of the victories achieved by the British. However, this policy soon had tremendous impact to the overall opium trade. With legalization, Chinese domestic cultivation of opium also became possible when the Qing emperor passed policies that allowed cultivation and taxes were imposed particularly in the Chinese regions of Yunnan. Eventually other provinces in China began cultivating opium. Due to the increase in local production, by 1905, it was estimated that China was already producing eight times more than what was being imported.¹³⁵

Meanwhile in India, the late 19th to early 20th century also saw the decline of opium production. Within these periods, owing to colonial projects that built infrastructure such as roads that linked farmlands to centers of commerce, there

¹³⁵ James Windle, "Insights for Contemporary Drug Policy: A Historical Account of Opium Control in India and Pakistan" *Asian Criminology* (2012) 7: pp. 59-60.

became greater motivation to diversify agricultural products. With this also came the further diversification of export goods coming from the British colony. With this, there also became the steady decline in the reliance on opium as a major source of revenue.¹³⁶ Aside from the diversification of local produce, Indian opium also came under competition when Persian and Turkish opium also became imported to China.¹³⁷

As opium production and export waned in India, in the colonial metropole, the growing campaigns against opium remained to be a major political issue. Aside from this, the turn of the 20th century also marked the beginning of sustained campaigns against opium reaching international efforts. Led by the United States, the growing international pressure to rethink opium policy became a more apparent issue that Britain could no longer set aside. With the opium trade already seeing a decline, the empire would eventually relent and participate in such international cooperation efforts.¹³⁸ More on this would be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Returning to China, by the 20th century, although local opium cultivation was virtually legalized owing to the taxes levied on opium farms and the legalization of importation, the Qing empire once again began being worried about the social effects of the widespread consumption. Seeing opium as a growing concern over its effects on the productivity of the Chinese, the Qing would eventually start passing policies that would once again turn the tide toward prohibition. Thus in 1906, an imperial decree was passed by the Qing seeking to gradually suppress the production and consumption of opium.¹³⁹

The new edict in China prompted further reconsideration on the side of the British. This would eventually lead to the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Agreement that was negotiated in 1906 and eventually signed in 1907. In the agreement it was stated that China and Britain would reduce the import of opium by 10% every year.¹⁴⁰ After the agreement, domestic Chinese policies against opium were also

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 61.

¹³⁷ R.K. Newman, "India and the Anglo-Chinese Opium Agreements, 1907-1914" *Modern Asian Studies* 23, 3 (1989): p. 530

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Windle, p. 60; see also Joyce Madancy, *The Troublesome Legacy of Commissioner Lin: The Opium Trade and Opium Suppression in Fujian Province, 1820s to 1920s*.

¹⁴⁰ Windle 60; Newman, 530

implemented and eradication campaigns were steadily launched. In spite of initial disagreements from Chinese provinces where opium cultivation was present causing tensions with the capital, the Qing remained adamant in pursuing the prohibitionist policy. Although the smooth implementation of the agreement was halted by the First World War, eventually, by 1917, it was declared that all Chinese provinces were cleared of opium and importation of Indian opium had been effectively ended.¹⁴¹

While the international scenario presented growing sentiments leaning toward ending the opium trade, the push to prohibit was also largely hinged on the reality that opium had seized to be the major revenue generating trade commodity it once was. The impact brought by the confluence of the developments in China, the international pressures, and the Anglo-Chinese agreements further cleared the path for prohibition. However, another factor that also contributed to the steady development of the prohibitionist stance also revolved around the development of domestic policies and discourses within India as the campaigns for independence also grew louder. Within the Indian Independence Movement that gained much traction in the 20th century, opium also became a topic of conversation among the leaders and champions of Indian independence.

Opium and the Indian Nationalist Movement

It has been documented by numerous accounts, including this thesis, how opium figured to be immensely intertwined to the colonial scaffold that held the British empire in India. As a keystone of empire, opium funneled revenue that helped sustain colonialism. It was thus not surprising that when the growing discontent among the native Indian population developed into what would become the Indian Independence movement, opium also became part of the conversations alongside the call for independence and end to colonial rule.

Since the last decades of the 1800s, the seeds of the Indian independence movement had been planted. Among the many hallmarks of the Indian Independence movement was the establishment of the Indian National Congress in

¹⁴¹ Newman, 540; Windle, 60; See also Madancy.

1885. The Indian National Congress became a major avenue for many Indian, particularly Indian elite, to discuss issues related to life in British India. Although there were still a significant portion of the Congress that remained pro-British, the seeds of independence began to bloom with more advocates of self-rule and freedom from colonial rule, especially at the turn of the 20th century. As the Indian National Congress was dominated primarily by Hindu Indians, the Muslim population also began organizing and in 1906 they formed the Muslim League. The Muslim League, although had significant calls for independence, geared toward demanding the creation of a separate nation-state for the Muslim Indians. When the First World War broke out, the British recruited many Indians to fight for Britain with a brittle promise of granting more Indian participation in the British Raj, which of course was not fulfilled once the war concluded. With this, came other major events such as the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 where many protesters were killed by the British army. This event was a flashpoint in the campaign for independence since many of the protesters were practicing what has been referred to as non-violent protests. By the 1930s, the Salt March, a protest against rising taxes on salt, happened and civil disobedience campaigns carried on. After surviving another World War, India finally gained independence in 1947, but with a heavy price, a highly politicized outcome known as the Partition when Pakistan was carved as a separate nation state.¹⁴²

Within this long struggle for independence, a key figure rose to prominence, Mahatma Gandhi. Born in 1869, Gandhi was a lawyer who eventually became a human rights activist. He was instrumental in popularizing the non-violent movement that opposed British colonial rule, not through force but peaceful protests. After years in South Africa where he also became a prominent human rights activist, Gandhi return to India in 1915 in the midst of the First World War. After the war, Gandhi became a prominent independence advocate and also became the leader of the Indian National Congress. In his campaigns for Indian sovereignty, he led many non-violent protests including the Salt March. Upon seeing the success of the

¹⁴² More detailed discussion in Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*. Particularly Chapter 11 “A Nation in Making? Rational Reform, religious revival and swadeshi nationalism, 1858-1914”; Chapter 12 “Colonialism Under Siege: state and political economy after World War I”; and Chapter 13 “Gandhian nationalism and mass politics in the 1920s.”

Independence movement in 1947—not without much disappointment that India was divided—Gandhi was assassinated in 1948.¹⁴³

In Gandhi's expositions and campaigns for independence, opium became a topic of concern. Opium figured in Gandhi's discourse on independence owing to his view that self-rule also embodied and permeated the everyday and it is not just a political condition. Here, Gandhi had discussions about the everyday life of the people. For example was diet which to him, "provided the means by which to effect moral change on a large scale. Inevitable, then, he was concerned with the effect of intoxicants and stimulants on the possibilities of self-rule."¹⁴⁴ In extending his reflections about the connectedness of the everyday to the political, Gandhi wrote in one of his seminal works, *Hind Swaraj*, that British colonialism of India was also a function of the Indians allowing the British to take India. In this vein, Gandhi likens colonialism to drug dependence and thus, working toward independence is also akin to working to end dependence to a drug. In one of his other works, *Guide to Health*, Gandhi further talks about opium as a major catalyst to losing self-rule. He talked about China and how opium ravaged the country.¹⁴⁵

Aside from Gandhi, another Indian political leader, Jawaharlal Nehru also had discourses on opium in relation to the campaign for independence. Nehru talked about opium in his work *The Discovery of India* where he underscored how opium not only supported the British empire, but also created the divide between India and the rest of Asia, particularly China. Here, Nehru notes that "the opium trade and wars were a good example of the disruptive geopolitical effects of colonialism, which hindered the development of mutually beneficial relationships between China and India [and] decolonization would lead to the renewal of contacts between the two countries."¹⁴⁶

Further on Gandhi and opium, discussions about the use of opium also became salient in Gandhi's thoughts when he discussed its effects to Indian

¹⁴³ Mahatma Gandhi. Britannica.com <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mahatma-Gandhi/Emergence-as-nationalist-leader>

¹⁴⁴ Javed Majeed, "Gandhi, De Quincey and Hali: The pleasures and pains of opium" *Literature and History* 29, 1 (2020): p. 98.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 100

nationalist thought. Noting how drugs, such as opium, was used by the British to propel their empire, the Indian National Congress with Gandhi's prominent voice, pointed to how drugs and opium's place in colonial policy was ultimately harmful to India. Thus, even a decade before independence, the National Congress had already worked toward prohibitionist policies.¹⁴⁷ Thus, with the foregoing notes, it is interesting to observe how opium also became a major discursive device on which the Indian Independence Movement argued for self-rule. In particular,

Gandhi's engagement with opium was distinctive in that he made it and other psychoactive substances signifiers of the addictive nature of colonial modernity itself and of Indians' relationship with colonialism as its supposed passive victims. Opium remains one of the sites on which postcolonial agency is both imagined and compromised in India.¹⁴⁸

While opium figured to be a major vehicle to launch discourses on Independence in India during the early 20th century, quite interesting that in the Philippines at around the same time, the discourse of prohibition also became a major point of discussion for the Americans. The contention, however, did not revolve around self-rule, it revolved around the US' leadership role and supposed benevolence in protecting Filipinos.

Opium Policy in the Philippines after the Opium Committee

The march to progressive prohibition

After the report of the Opium Committee was submitted in 1905, it was apparent that the American colonial state in the Philippines was well on its way to heeding the recommendation of progressively working towards the eventual prohibition of opium consumption and circulation. Amongst the many noteworthy impacts of the Opium Committee involved how the Americans actively sought to "learn" from other colonizers in the immediate region. The recommendations of the Committee were

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 108.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

also heavily influenced by what they have seen in the other parts of the region where they conducted research.

For example, the Committee noted how the situation in Burma was something that the American colonial government ought to avoid. It particularly anchored this to the view that allowing the retail trade of opium also gave way to widescale use. They also noted how ineffective the policy of allowing the Chinese in Burma to smoke but prohibiting the natives.¹⁴⁹ The Committee also had high praise for the system in Java which they saw resembled much closer to the situation in the Philippines. They saw that the Dutch colonial government's level of control or monopoly in the traffic of opium could be mirrored in the Philippines.¹⁵⁰ The idea of progressive prohibition was primarily picked up from what the Committee observed in the Japan occupied Formosa (Taiwan).¹⁵¹

While the Opium Committee report heavily drew on the insights gained after observing and learning from the other colonizers in the neighboring sites, once the American Colonial Government, and in extension the United States, began adopting the prohibitionist stance, they also began positioning themselves as the leaders of and innovators in opium policy. They began to be transformed as the champion of prohibition among the empires in Asia.¹⁵²

American approach to prohibition: Taking a stand, leading the way

While the American colonial government was poised to work toward progressive prohibition, they faced some bureaucratic hurdles with regard to managing the traffic of opium. In particular, in terms of controlling the tariff being imposed on products being traded in the Philippines, the challenge came from the fact that tariff for the Philippines was under direct control of the US Congress and not under the purview

¹⁴⁹ *Report of the Committee Appointed by Philippine Commission to Investigate the Opium and the Traffic Therein and the Rules, Ordinances, and Laws Regulating such use and Traffic in Japan, Formosa, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore, Burmah, Java, and the Philippine Islands*, pp. 30-37; See also Foster, "Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia, 1989-1910."

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 37-42.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 17-20.

¹⁵² Foster, "Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia, 1989-1910," p. 109.

of the Philippine Commission. Since opium traders were paying the set dues, the Philippine Commission faced the dilemma of imposing new policies related to tariff which they did not have the legal authority to do so.¹⁵³

This major problem was eventually remedied by some legislations passed in the US Congress. In 1905, the US Congress passed the *Philippine Tariff Revision Law of 1905: An Act to Revise and Amend the Tariff Laws of the Philippine Islands, and for other Purposes*, which alongside providing some revisions to the tariff policies imposed by the Philippine Commission, also categorized opium within “simple drugs” which also elaborated on giving the Philippine Commission the authority to enact policies regarding opium. The US Congress also echoed in the legislation the progressive prohibition noting that opium imports to the Philippines ought to be prohibited by 1908. From 1905 to 1908, the Philippine Commission was given the leeway to decide on the ways to regulate opium.¹⁵⁴

The authority given to the Philippine Commission provided the impetus for the colonial government to institute a law in 1906 related to opium. This was Act No. 1461: “An Act for the purpose of restricting the sale and suppressing the evil resulting from the sale and use of opium until March first nineteen hundred and eight, when its importation or use for any but medicinal purposes is forbidden by Act of Congress.”¹⁵⁵ With regard to the law’s prescriptions about opium use, it required the licensing of all opium smokers and limiting these licenses to the Chinese. They also imposed a retail tax on opium with revenue being allocated for the medical expenses of opium users who would go to rehabilitation.¹⁵⁶

The 1906 Act eventually underwent assessment and in within only a year, it was supplanted by the 1907 Act No 1761 otherwise known as “An Act to gradually restrict and regulate the sale and use of opium pending the ultimate prohibition of the importation of opium into the Philippine Islands in whatever form except for medicinal purposes as provided by the Act of Congress approved March third, nineteen hundred and five, and prohibiting any person from having the possession

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 110.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ *Annual Report of the War Department*, 1906, p.98.

¹⁵⁶ Foster, “Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia, 1889-1910,” p. 110.

of opium, cocaine, or alpha or beta eucaine in any of their several forms, or any derivative or preparation of any such drugs or substances, except for medicinal purposes, and to repeal act numbered fourteen hundred and sixty-one, and for other purposes.” This legislation had specific provisions on total prohibition beginning 1908.¹⁵⁷ By 1908, the prohibition became fully effective only allowing the import of opium for medicinal purposes. The Philippine Commission also had a policy that had opium users to quit completely.¹⁵⁸

In spite of the strong conviction of the American Colonial Government in the Philippines to impose the restrictive policies and succeed at prohibiting the use and traffic of opium, it became apparent that it would not be an easy task. The immediate year before the full implementation of prohibition, the Americans found themselves grappling with the rise in opium imports as traders anticipated the new policies to take effect the following year. Even after the strict prohibition was already imposed, a major problem faced by the authorities involved the smuggling and illicit traffic of opium. With this also came the clandestine operations of opium traders within the colony.¹⁵⁹

Thus, since the submission of the Opium Committee Report, Reverend Brent, a member, already had misgivings about the challenges that the colonial government would face. In 1906, he sent a letter addressed to US President Roosevelt urging the US government to take more decisive action and take the lead in the march toward prohibition. Brent suggested that the US lead an international effort to not only collectively investigate the opium situation across the world but also take the initiative to sway other colonial powers to adopt the prohibitionist ideal. Brent further argued for the benefit of building the common aim among nations to prohibit opium in order to augment the success of prohibition. The then Secretary of War, William Howard Taft supported the idea and counseled Roosevelt to consider the suggestion.¹⁶⁰ An international gathering geared to discussing and eventually finding solutions to common problems is not entirely a novel idea. As

¹⁵⁷ See details in the *Report of the Philippine Commission 1908*.

¹⁵⁸ Foster, “Prohibition as Superiority: Policing Opium in Southeast Asia, 1898-1925,” p. 259.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

early as 1892, there had already been an International Sanitary Convention that sought to discuss matters related to public health owing to the cholera pandemics that have been ravaging nations.¹⁶¹ The suggestion of Brent and the prodding of Taft eventually led to the US spearheading the organization of the 1909 Shanghai Opium Commission, in many ways the precursor that gave birth to the to the prohibitionist global drug policy that we still experience today.¹⁶²

Empires Coming together(?): The Roots of International Drug Diplomacy

At its height in the 18th and 19th century, the entanglement of opium and empires—particularly in the case of the British empire—reached its zenith when “all the lovers of power that Europeans exercised in Asia began to turn on the fulcrum of opium.”¹⁶³ While it was the doing of empires, the large markets of Asia, particularly China, also provided the necessary impetus for the opium trade—and larger global trade—to emerge during the height of colonialism. To wit:

It was the European empires that brought capitalism and stitched the [Asian] economies into the global economic system. Opium, at least in part, enabled this. However, it was not solely a European creation. Instead, it was the Chinese who largely created the local capitalist institutions capable of interfacing with the global economy. Under these conditions, opium farming served as a key impetus and mechanism, serving also as likely the largest financial generator for emerging Chinese businesses.¹⁶⁴

It was thus quite an interesting turn of events when the interfacing of the Asian—Chinese—policies on opium and the changing landscape of trade also became important requisites to changes in policies on opium. Furthermore, it is also

¹⁶¹ Foster, “Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia, 1989-1910,” pp. 110-111.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Trocki, *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade*, p. 60

¹⁶⁴ John Collins, “Imperial Drug Economies, Development, and the Search for Alternatives in Asia, from Colonialism to Decolonisation” *International Development Policy* 12 (2020), p. 14.

noteworthy that as much as empires fostered the opium trade, they also became among the main drivers of prohibition. This was particularly true in the case of the United States.¹⁶⁵

As a new colonial power that emerged from the ashes of the Spanish-American War, the US was considerably late in the imperial ventures and had to distance itself from older colonial powers. Along with growing concerns about domestic consumption of opium in the US, the strong intent to bolster the image of American exceptionalism perhaps served as a major explanation to the logic behind the US impulse to lead the prohibitionist campaign in the global field of empires. Collins sums up the main anchors of the US anti-opium campaigns as follows:

In the economic sphere, the US sought to build relations with a Chinese population and state apparatus that saw opium as embodying all they detested about the European colonial powers. China remained the epicentre of the world opium problem, and the drug had come to represent a potent symbol of national disgrace inflicted during and after the Opium Wars. The US sought to utilise these sentiments to ameliorate their own, largely immigration-related, tensions with the Chinese business community and help open the market to American commercial interests. The interaction between these idiosyncratic strands of American foreign and domestic relations drove US efforts to export drug control.¹⁶⁶

Thus, as discussed in the previous section, after the conclusion of the research activities of the Opium Committee established by the Americans in the Philippines, the US soon took the lead in urging the other colonial powers to convene and discuss opium policy. It also became apparent for the US that its crusade to eradicate opium would not be successful if they would do it alone. They needed the cooperation of other countries. Therefore, the decision to “export drug policy” became more viable and it first came to fruition with the US successfully helping convene the 1909 International Opium Commission of Shanghai.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ John Collins, *Legalising the Drug Wars: A Regulatory History of UN Drug Control*, 19

The meeting in Shanghai happened two and half years after the first suggestion of Reverend Brent reached US President Roosevelt in 1906. Although initially reluctant especially whether other powers would agree to convene—particularly the British—and whether a consensus could be reached, Roosevelt relented and the US began in 1906 to send invitations to several countries including Britain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, China, and Japan. In February 1909, the meeting finally happened in Shanghai with Reverend Brent taking charge as co-chair.¹⁶⁷

Scholars have noted how the Shanghai Commission could be considered as the first international effort to discuss drug policy and control. The meeting was attended by 38 delegates that represented 13 countries: China, Britain, US, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Japan, Austria-Hungary, Portugal, Italy, Russia, Siam (Thailand), and Persia. Considered key players in the commission were China, Britain, and the US.¹⁶⁸

During the meetings, the delegates were divided to committees where they discussed the opium situation in their respective countries. They also began here discussing, and debating, possible futures of opium policy. Coming with various motivations, the delegates engaged in many discussions, but it was obvious at the onset how China held the strong position supporting prohibition. This of course was shared by the US. Both China and the US used the moral argument lamenting the impact of opium to society. Britain, meanwhile, showed ambivalence in the sense that the delegates expressed their opinion sharing the sentiment about the ill effects of opium, but remained cautious about committing the position that spoke about ending the opium trade. Thus, they argued further for a transition phase like the provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Agreement. This was precisely one of the thorny issues that had to be dealt with: whether this agreement would be accelerated and prohibition be enacted sooner.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Foster, "Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia, 1889-1910," pp. 110-111.

¹⁶⁸ Helena Barop, "Building the 'Opium Evil' Consensus: The International Opium Commission of Shanghai" *Journal of Modern European History* 13, 1 (2015): pp. 115-117.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 131-132

Even with the combined efforts of China and the US, the debates remained divisive which resulted to a resolution favoring the argument that the India-China opium networks could not be closed immediately. The US however was able to push for the passing of resolutions that would have an impact to future discussions and policies. The first major resolution called the signatories to exert all effort to prevent opium smuggling. The second resolution called on signatories to pass policies, immediately or in the future, that would restrict opium use to medical purposes.¹⁷⁰

True enough, the Shanghai meeting was followed by other similar meetings. The significant success of the prohibitionists came in the 1912 International Opium Convention held in the Hague. Here, the participating countries signed binding agreements pointing to develop international cooperation to control the circulation of drugs including opium.¹⁷¹ Succeeding conferences related to global drug policy would continue to build on the resolutions and agreements in the Shanghai and Hague conferences, leading the way to the future directions of global prohibitionist drug policy.

Chapter summary and conclusions: Paving the Road to Prohibition

The discursive shift in the ways empires viewed the place of opium within their domains was illustrated in the diverging conclusions and recommendations that stemmed from the Royal Opium Commission in British India and the Opium Committee in American Philippines. The US and Britain figured to be key players, along with China, in shaping the future direction of global drug policy at the turn of the 20th century and beyond.

In the case of the British empire, the importance acquired by opium in generating revenue for the colonial regime in India proved to be a major factor that persisted to impact the ways in which the British crafted policies toward opium. Developing from centuries worth of trade with Asia, particularly China, Britain

¹⁷⁰ Foster, "Models for Governing: Opium and Colonial Policies in Southeast Asia, 1889-1910," pp. 110-112

¹⁷¹ Benjamin Siegel, "Beneficent destinations: Global Pharmaceuticals and the consolidation of the modern Indian opium regime, 1907-2002" *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 57, 3 (2020): p. 334.

remained to be a reluctant power in terms of supporting the growing tide of prohibition. It was, however, due to changing contexts both domestic within the empire and metropole along with the shifting policies in China that prompted the British empire to rethink its opium policy. With growing campaigns against opium and the strong position of China against the continued importation of opium, Britain eventually relented and signed the Anglo-Chinese agreement. The trade triangle of Britain-India-China underwent further changes with the diversification of exports of India and the growing Indian Nationalist Movement. In the first decade of the 20th century, Britain found itself in the throes of change amidst the developing international drug diplomacy that was beginning to be dominated by prohibitionist campaigns led by the United States.

This leadership position assumed by the United States was prompted by the domestic fears regarding opium consumption and fueled by the American exceptionalist rhetoric that sought to present the American empire as different from the European powers. Beginning with moves to prohibit opium in the Philippines, the US eventually went on to export this drug policy and call on other imperial powers to come together and discuss the future of opium. This American drug diplomacy soon gained success with the 1909 Shanghai Opium Commission and the 1912 Hague International Opium Convention. The first decade of the 20th century proved to be critical in shaping the future of international drug policy with the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Agreement almost coinciding with the Shanghai Opium Commission.

The global drug policy would completely morph into a prohibitionist policy by the middle of the 20th century. Coincidentally, this was also the period when many colonial regimes—the US and British empires included—were eventually dismantled. In many ways, as much as opium was present during the building of the scaffolds that supported the erection of imperial architecture, the crop was still very much present at the twilight of empire.

Concluding thoughts

At the turn of the 20th century, conversations surrounding opium began taking a dramatic shift. From being a prized commodity among colonial enterprises in Asia, it started changing to becoming regarded as a drug whose circulation needed to be controlled. This discursive and policy shifts, this thesis maintains, are illustrated in the ways in which the British and American empires reckoned their colonial opium policies in the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

In exploring the entangled histories of opium and empire, this thesis revisited the colonial history of India and the Philippines. Looking at the broad history of the British empire building in India and the transition from Spanish to American empire in the Philippines, the discussion on opium is framed within the understanding that colonial empires underwent transitions throughout their long histories. It is within these transitions that the attitudes and policies on opium unfolded. Instinctively, while opium was shaped by the colonial context, we cannot deny how opium also had considerable impact to the empire.

With India, we see the importance of the East India Company in opening the gateway to British colonial domination. Primarily an economic pursuit, the ways in which India became increasingly under the influence of the British lent the bedrock for colonialism to become more direct. After experiencing challenges and transitions, the EIC was eventually supplanted by a direct rule from the Crown after the defeat of the first Indian rebellion in the middle of the 19th century. Throughout this shift, however, opium remained to be an indispensable source of revenue and

thus an important pillar of the empire. So much so that in order to protect British interests in the burgeoning global commerce, opium became a major spark for a military engagement that the British launched against China.

As regards the Philippines, the colonial encounter began with the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century. With the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in the late 19th century, the United States replaced the Spaniards. As the Spaniards maintained the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade for centuries, opium cultivation did not figure to be major policy and source of revenue for the colonial regime. It was only when the Galleon Trade ended in the beginning of the 19th century and the cities in the Philippines were thoroughly opened to world trade when cash crops became more important. As the Spaniards began engaging more with the trade networks of Asia, they also had attempts at participating in the opium trade also owing to the proximity of China. The Spaniards, however, had ambivalent policies about opium especially in the first half of the 19th century. It was only in the latter half of that century when they adopted the similar contract system being practiced by the other colonial powers in Southeast Asia. When the Americans took over, they had to contend with the challenge of proving themselves to be the rightful bearer of the civilizing mission along with building from the institutions left by the previous colonizer. It was here that the questions about the appropriate opium policy became a thorny issue.

As the Americans were waging their war with Spain in the last years of the 19th century and preparing their ascent to becoming a key player in the global field of empires, India and the colonial opium policy also faced tremendous campaigns that advocated the prohibition. Mounting pressures made the Crown constitute an Opium Commission that was tasked to inquire about the situation of opium consumption and colonial management of opium in India. After convening in 1893, the final report of the commission, submitted in 1895, proved disastrous to the anti-opium lobby in London. The Commission did not support the idea of prohibition after taking into account the situation on the ground when interviews with Indian colonial officials and other sectors of colonial society pointed to the steady management of the system and the supposed physical and moral degradation brought by opium discredited.

In the Philippines, the Americans faced the similar debates about opium policy with strong anti-opium groups in the US lobbying for prohibition. Same as the British Crown, the American colonial government also conceded that there was a need for more information and thus the Opium Committee was formed in 1903. Contrary to the conclusions and policy recommendations of the Opium Commission in India, however, the Opium Committee in the Philippines came to the conclusion that gradual prohibition should be the route that the Americans ought to take.

In both the British and American empires, the conversations and debates that were happening in the metropole inevitably impacted the ways opium was seen in the colonies. This led to the commissions being convened. Revealing the epistemic anxieties of the empires, opium and opium policy became an important conduit through which larger conversations about the treatment of natives and the role of the colonial government were put into question.

Not only could we locate the shift in views about opium through the reports of the two opium commissions, we can also consider these landmark documents as important artefacts in understanding the landscape of conversations about drugs well into the 21st century. The questions raised in these commissions, ranging from the ways opium was consumed, cultivated, manufactured, and how it moved across the world, still reflect the same ways drugs are discussed today.

In the aftermath of the opium commissions, global drug policy steadily turned toward prohibition. Several factors, domestic and international, led to the adoption of the prohibitionist discourse. While opium's future hung in the balance, the fate of global drug policy was steered by the United States, paving the way toward prohibition. Although reluctant at first, the many pressures coming from the changing context of the times brought Britain to a change in policy as well. In the middle of the 20th century, opium prohibition was being realized, along with steady collapse of the empires.

As such, we could consider opium as an important prism through which we can reflect about colonialism and global order. Its complicated and intertwined history with empire provided the impetus for larger discussions about global drug policy that still permeate our contemporary world, proving the indispensable relevance of looking back to history and the interconnectedness of our times.

Bibliography

- Abinales, Patricio and Donna Amoroso. 2005. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Adas, Michael. "Improving on the Civilising Mission? Assumptions of United States Exceptionalism in the Colonisation of the Philippines. *Itinerario*, vol. 22, issue 4 (1998): 44-66.
- Bailon, Rowena Quinto. 2014. "Battling Destiny: Soldiers' Letters and Anti-colonial Discourse in the Philippine-American War." PhD Dissertation. University of Texas Dallas.
- Bamero, Alma. 2006. "Opium: The Evolution of Policies, the Tolerance of the Vice, and the Proliferation of Contraband Trade in the Philippines, 1843–1908." *Social Science Diliman* vol 3 no. 2: 49-83.
- Bamero, Alma. 2011. "Municipal Franchises on Rest, Leisure and Recreation: The *Intendencia* and its control of social activities in Manila, 1819-1895" (PhD Dissertation [History], University of the Philippines.
- Barop, Helena. 2015. "Building the 'Opium Evil' Consensus: The International Opium Commission of Shanghai" *Journal of Modern European History* 13, 1: 115-137.
- Bauer, Rolf. 2019. *The Peasant Production of Opium in Nineteenth Century India* Leiden: Brill.

- Bjork, Katharine. 1998. "The Link that Kept the Philippines Spanish: Mexican Merchant Interests and the Manila Trade." *Journal of World History* 9 (Spring): 25-50.
- Blount, James. 1913. *The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898-1912*. New York: GP Putnam and Sons.
- Booth, Martin. 1999. *Opium: A History*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal. 1998. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge.
- Breen, Benjamin. 2019. *The Age of Intoxication: Origins of the Global Drug Trade*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Brewer, Carolyn. 2001. *Holy Confrontation: Religion, Gender, and Sexuality in the Philippines, 1521-1685*. Manila: Institute of Women's Studies, St. Scholastica's College.
- Bulliet, Richard et al. *The Earth and its Peoples: A Global History Volume 2: Since 1500*. Fifth Edition. Boston: Wadsworth, 2011.
- Carter, Edward, Jose Albert, and Charles Brent. 1905. *Report of the Committee Appointed by Philippine Commission to Investigate the Opium and the Traffic Therein and the Rules, Ordinances, and Laws Regulating such use and Traffic in Japan, Formosa, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore, Burmah, Java, and the Philippine Islands*. Washington: War Department.
- Collins, John. 2020. "Imperial Drug Economies, Development, and the Search for Alternatives in Asia, from Colonialism to Decolonisation" *International Development Policy* 12.
- Collins, John. 2021. *Legalising the Drug Wars: A Regulatory History of UN Drug Control*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comenge, Rafael. 1894. *Los Chinos: Estudio social y politico*. Manila: Tipo- Lit. de Chofre y Comp.
- Corpuz, Onofre. 2005. *Roots of the Filipino People*, vol. 1. Quezon City, UP Press.

- Courtwright, David. 2001. *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Dikötter, Frank, Lars Peter Laamann, and Xiun Zhou. 2004. *Narcotic Culture: A History of Drugs in China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Diokno, Maria Serena. 1998. *Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People volume 4 – Life in the Colony*. Mandaluyong: Asia Publishing Ltd.
- Erikson, Emily. 2014. *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: The English East India Company, 1600-1757*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Foster, Anne. 2000. "Prohibition as Superiority: Policing Opium in Southeast Asia, 1898-1925" *The International History Review* Vol 22 No. 2: 253-273,
- Go, Julian. 2008. *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during US Colonialism* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Go, Julian. 2011. *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Go, Julian and Anne Foster. Eds. 2003. *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Guerrero, Milagros. 1998. *Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People vol 6: Under Stars and Stripes* (Hong Kong: Asia Publishing Company.
- Guerrero, Mlagros and John Schumacher. 1998. *Kasaysayan The Story of the Filipino People, vol 5: Reform and Revolution*. Hong Kong: Asia Publishing Company.
- Haggard, Stephen and David Kang. Eds. 2020. *East Asia in the World: Twelve Events that Shaped the Modern International Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herr, Richard. 1958. *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Hoganson, Kristin and Jay Sexton. Eds. 2020. *Crossing Empires: Taking US History into Transimperial Terrain*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Kamen, Henry. 2003. *Empire: How Spain became a World Power 1492-1763*. New York: Perennial.
- Kim, Diana. 2020. *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition Across Southeast Asia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kour, Kawal Deep. 2019. *A History of Intoxication: Opium in Assam, 1800-1959*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Legarda, Benito. 1955. "Two and a Half Centuries of the Galleon Trade." *Philippine Studies* 3 (December): 345-370.
- Legarda, Benito. 1999. *After the Galleons: Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Mackmicking, Richard. 1851. *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines*. London: Richard Bentley. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/20189/pg20189-images.html>
- Madancy, Joyce 2003. *The Troublesome Legacy of Commissioner Lin: The Opium Trade and Opium Suppression in Fujian Province, 1820s to 1920s*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Majeed, Javed. 2020. "Gandhi, De Quincey and Hali: The pleasures and pains of opium" *Literature and History* 29, 1: 97-112.
- McCoy, Alfred. 2000. "From Free Trade to Prohibition: A Critical History of the Modern Asian Opium Trade" *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 28:1, 307-349.
- McCoy, Alfred. 2003. *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*. New York: Laurence Hill Books.
- McCoy, Alfred and Francisco Scarano (eds). 2009. *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- McFerson, Hazel. 2011. *The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics Society in the Philippines*, second edition. Quezon City: UP Press.

- Middle, Matthias and Katja Naumann. 2010. "Global history and the Spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures in globalization" *Journal of Global History* 5: 149-170.
- Newman, R.K. 1989. "India and the Anglo-Chinese Opium Agreements, 1907-1914" *Modern Asian Studies* 23, 3: 525-560.
- Patterson, Thomas and Stephen Rabe. Editors. 1992. *Imperial Surge: The United States Abroad, The 1890s-Early 1900s* Massachusetts: D.D. Heath and Company.
- Permanyer-Ugartemendia, Ander. 2014. "Opium after the Manila Galleon: The Spanish Involvement in the Opium Economy in East Asia (1815-1830)" *Economic History Research* vol 10: pp. 155-164.
- Phelan, John Leddy. 1967. *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700*. Madison: University of the Wisconsin Press, 1967.
- Philippine Commission. 1900. *Report of the Philippine Commission to the President 1900*. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- Philippines Commission. 1908. *Report of the Philippine Commission to the Secretary of War 1907 Part 3*. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- Rafael, Vicente. 1988. *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Ramos, Dondy. 2020. "China's Curse: Racialization of Opium Use in Colonial Philippines" *Philippine Sociological Review* vol 68: 75-97.
- Richards, John. 2002 May. "Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission on Opium 1895" *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 36 no. 2: 375-420.
- Robins, Nick. 2006. *The Corporation that Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational*. London: Pluto Press.
- Robles, Eliodoro. 1969. *The Philippines in the Nineteenth Century*. Quezon City, Malaya Books.

- Roy, Tirthankar. 2015. *The East India Company: The World's Most Powerful Corporation*. Haryana, Portfolio.
- Royal Opium Commission. 1895. *Report of the Royal Commission on Opium, Vol II: Minutes of Evidence and Appendices*. London: HMSO.
- Royal Opium Commission. 1895. *Report of the Royal Commission on Opium, Vol VI: Final Report of the Royal Commission, The Report with Annexures*. London: HMSO.
- Rush, James. 1990. *Opium to Java: revenue farming and Chinese enterprise in colonial Indonesia, 1860-1910*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schurz, William Lytle. 1939. *The Manila Galleons*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc.
- Siegel, Benhamin. 2020. "Beneficent destinations: Global Pharmaceuticals and the consolidation of the modern Indian opium regime, 1907-2002" *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 57, 3: 327-362.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. 2009. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Commonsense*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Strangio, S. 2021 June 11. "Despite Covid-19, Asia's Drug Trade expands, diversifies" *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/despite-covid-19-asias-drug-trade-expands-diversifies/> Accessed 5 January 2023.
- Trocki, Carl. 1999. *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade*. Oxon: Routledge.
- United Nations. 1961. Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. New York, United Nations.
- United Nations. 1976. 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations. 1990. 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. New York, United Nations.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2020. *World Drug Report 2020: Booklet 3 (Drug Supply)*. Vienna: UNODC.

- US War Department. 1907. *Annual Report of the War Department for 1906*. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- Wertz, Daniel. 2013. "Idealism, Imperialism, and Internationalism: Opium Politics in Colonial Philippines, 1898–1925." *Modern Asian Studies* 47(2):467–99.
- Wickberg, Edgar. 1985. *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898* (New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Windle, James. 2012. "Insights for Contemporary Drug Policy: A Historical Account of Opium Control in India and Pakistan" *Asian Criminology* (2012) 7: 55-74.
- Winther, Paul. 2003. *Anglo-European Science and the Rhetoric of Empire: Malaria, Opium, and British Rule in India, 1756-1895*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Zabriskie, Alexander. 1948. *Charles Henry Brent: Crusader for Christian Unity*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Westminster Press.
- Zheng Yangwen. 2005. *The Social Life of Opium in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Abstract

At the turn of the 20th century, conversations surrounding opium began taking a dramatic shift. From being a prized commodity among colonial enterprises in Asia, it started shifting to being regarded as a drug whose circulation needed to be curbed. This thesis revisits the history of opium policy in India under the British empire and the Philippines under the American empire. By situating the account about opium within the changing colonial landscape in these two sites, the thesis makes a case for the importance of looking into these contexts as important precursors that affected the ways drug policy took shape in the latter 20th and 21st centuries.

The thesis covers the colonial period in India and the Philippines in broad strokes to provide the context within which opium figured in the British and American empires. Then the Royal Opium Commission in India (1893-1895) and the Opium Committee in the Philippines (1903-1905) are revisited to present how the colonial empires navigated the changing conversations about opium and began rethinking opium policy. These two colonial inquiries into the cultivation, consumption, and circulation of opium sought to provide data that could inform colonial policy on opium. While the two have converging goals, their conclusions and recommendations diverged. On the one hand, the British opium commission essentially rejected the idea of prohibition while on the other hand, the American opium committee proposed the eventual adoption of prohibition. Thus, these two colonial reports serve as landmark points signaling a transition and end for strong support for opium cultivation and trade. Since the thesis explores the colonial policies on opium, as much as it is about opium, it is also about empires and the ways we could further reflect on the development of discourses on drugs leading to the prohibitionist stance prevalent in contemporary times.

Keywords: opium; colonial policy on opium; opium commission; British India; American Philippines

Abstract (German)

Um die Wende zum 20. Jahrhundert begann sich die Diskussion über Opium dramatisch zu verändern. Es war nicht mehr nur eine geschätzte Handelsware kolonialer Unternehmen in Asien, sondern wurde auch als Droge betrachtet, deren Verbreitung eingedämmt werden musste. In dieser These wird die Geschichte der Opiumpolitik in Indien unter dem Britischen Imperium und auf den Philippinen unter dem Amerikanischen Imperium aufgearbeitet. Indem die Darstellung des Opiums in die sich verändernde koloniale Landschaft an diesen beiden Orten eingebettet wird, zeigt die Arbeit, wie wichtig es ist, diese Geschehnisse als wichtige Vorläufer zu betrachten, die sich auf die Art und Weise auswirkten, wie sich die Drogenpolitik im späteren 20. und 21. Jahrhundert entwickelte.

Diese Theses behandelt in groben Zügen die Kolonialzeit in Indien und auf den Philippinen, und stellt den Kontext dar, in welcher Opium im Britischen und Amerikanischen Imperium eine Rolle spielte. Anschließend werden jeweils die Königliche Opiumkommission in Indien (1893-1895) und das Opiumkomitee auf den Philippinen (1903-1905) darauf untersucht, wie die beiden Kolonialmächte die sich wandelnden Diskussionen über Opium navigierten und mit der Zeit begannen, ihre Opiumpolitik zu überdenken. Diese beiden kolonialen Untersuchungsgremien über den Anbau, den Konsum und die Verbreitung von Opium sollten Daten liefern, die die koloniale Opiumpolitik informieren konnte. Obwohl die Ziele der beiden Gremien sich gleichen, gingen ihre Schlussfolgerungen und Empfehlungen teils weit auseinander. Einerseits lehnte die britische Opiumkommission die Idee eines Verbots im Wesentlichen ab, andererseits schlug der amerikanische Opiumausschuss die eventuelle Einführung eines solchen Verbots vor. Diese beiden kolonialen Berichte sind somit wegweisend und signalisieren den Übergang und das Ende der starken Unterstützung für den Opiumanbau und -Handel. Diese Theses über koloniale Opiumpolitik, behandelt nicht nur Opium als Droge, sondern auch Imperien und wie diese den Diskurs über Drogen bis zum heutigen Tag beeinflussen. Insbesondere die historischen Gründe, die zu der gegenwertigen Normalisierung eines grundlegenden Verbots beigetragen haben, als auch die Möglichkeit, über diese Entwicklung zu reflektieren.

Stichwörter: Opium; koloniale Opiumpolitik; Opiumkommission; Britisch-Indien; Amerikanische Philippin