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**What attitudes about opium were driving the Government of India's  
policies between 1857-1906?**

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This thesis will examine British Attitudes towards opium between 1857 to 1906 to analyse how they impacted policies of the Government of India. The research is presented thematically and draws upon numerous sources both from archives in Britain and the National Archives of India. The dominance of anti-opium and pro-opium positions have been the current focus of the literature rather than the complex middle ground where attitudes struggled to both condone or condemn the use of opium.

Overall this will examine five main areas from high level state decisions, opium production, smuggling activities, the role of the Princely States, religious and missionary attitudes and finally medical attitudes. What this analysis will show is that there was no single objective or agenda that was driving British opium policy or ideas about the drug. Policies on opium operated at different levels and similarly they did not always relate to one another. They were affected by multiple ideas, local politics and subject to shifts and contradictions.

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Signed: Andrew Glen

Date: 5/6/2018

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## Introduction

The thesis will examine what attitudes about opium were driving the Government of India's policies from 1857-1906. The changing positions of the Government of India were not the homogenised view that Trocki has previously argued. His thesis proposed that the Government of India's opium trade was an evil cartel that enslaved millions and destroyed countless lives adding a moral dimension to the analysis which has remained a feature of the historiography ever since.<sup>1</sup> This has simplified the narrative arguing it was purely a function of the Government of India's revenue objectives which ignored other factors and drivers of policy. Furthermore, the introduction below will show by comparison that within the literature attitudes towards opium were multifaceted which produced variation in policies across time and region. In terms of methodology there will also feature a discussion of the subaltern school of historians which should help bring balance to the current narrative heavily focused on British high politics. While the subaltern school of historians has suffered from epistemological criticism, the adjustments made by anthropology and language studies have allowed it to reconstruct the relationships and actions of actors hidden within South Asian Society.

The thesis will examine how subjugated populations also partly drove policies through their actions and resistance to colonial officials. Below in three sections is a survey of attitudes concerning opium within different contexts currently covered by the literature. The first is focused on attitudes towards the Opium Wars and China, the second is focused on attitudes within Britain, and the final section is on India.

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<sup>1</sup> C. A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950, Asia's Transformations*. (London: Routledge, 1999)



Following this will be an explanation of where the thesis will continue the historiographical narrative and an outline of the structure of the thesis.

### **Attitudes about the Opium Wars and China**

In the early nineteenth century, British mercantilism was as much a political force as it was economic. The first neglected battle for dominance that occurred was for control of the opium trade itself. This commenced in the late eighteenth century and became stabilised by the mid nineteenth century. The classic narrative looks first to the ambitious British traders: William Jardine and James Matheson who would jointly go on to make significant returns in the opium trade. In 1838 they were well established and would depart from Bengal ready to meet Chinese smugglers seeking to evade the price restrictions of Canton.<sup>2</sup> To explain this gain of the British traders, among others, there was a decline of dominant trading groups who lost out in the mid- nineteenth century boom. For instance, Tipu Sultan's Mysore Kingdom and the Mahratta Confederacy had previously exercised military influence over the opium trade and textile industries.<sup>3</sup> However Tipu, who had also challenged the pepper monopoly of the British finally fell in 1799 and the Mahratta Empire was similarly overpowered by the British in 1818. The acquisition of land rights over Bengal in the 1760s allowed Warren Hastings to create the opium monopoly.<sup>4</sup> It had a displacing economic effect scattering Bohra opium traders as far as Ujjain in Burhanpur's

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<sup>2</sup> R. Bickers, *The Scramble for China, Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (Penguin Books: London, 2011)

<sup>3</sup> A. Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand, 1868-1910 a comparison with British India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008)

<sup>4</sup> S. Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders, and state formation in Eighteenth-Century India* (New Delhi Oxford University Press, 1998)

Malwa hinterland. The Muslim conglomerate of family traders now sought to establish their own quality product to challenge this monopoly.<sup>5</sup> The political-military solution espoused by the East India Company was already an established trend before the Opium Wars of the early nineteenth century. The British opium monopoly and subsequent European traders in this instance gained at the expense of Indian traders who lost their military and economic supremacy within their respective kingdoms and markets.

This set the stage for the Opium Wars which followed a similar pattern of establishing mercantile and territorial expansion in Asia. Gunboat diplomacy, had allowed Britain's naval superiority to dictate the annexation of Hong Kong and five ports on the Qing Empire's coast.<sup>6</sup> The spark to the tinderbox was the burning of opium in 1839 at Humen ordered by Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu. This was to uphold or symbolise the 1729 imperial edict against the domestic sale of opium. The burning of narcotics has been re-enacted several times in Chinese political history to commemorate this event.<sup>7</sup> Eventually the opium trades' legalisation was achieved following the Second Opium War in 1857/8.<sup>8</sup> The continuation of the opium trade represented a significant political blow to imperial authority. Additionally, this also entailed the economic decline of previous trading routes. However, these traders did not lose their independence as the Maratha and Mysore kingdoms had done. The opium traders of the Burma Road to the south-west and the Old Silk Road in the

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<sup>5</sup> S. Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders, and state formation in Eighteenth-Century India* (New Delhi Oxford University Press, 1998)

<sup>6</sup> D. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1981)

<sup>7</sup> Z. Yongming, *Anti-drug crusades in twentieth-century China : nationalism, history, and state building* (Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield, 1999)

<sup>8</sup> X. Li, *Poppies and Politics in China: Sichuan Province, 1840s to 1940s* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009)

north-west continued to flourish and geography provided security for extensive smuggling further north.<sup>9</sup> However these routes now gave way to a larger triangular trade consisting of tea, opium and silver between Britain, India and China.<sup>10</sup> This trade was faster given consolidation of traffic in Bengal and the direct sea routes and ports established through the Opium Wars.<sup>11</sup> Similarly locations along the South West Silk Road were being utilised by the British following the Third Anglo Burmese War 1885.<sup>12</sup> Additionally they had acquired a silver mine in Mong-Mao that encroached on territory near South Yunnan.<sup>13</sup> In spite of British gains the previous routes provided security to minority groups including Muslim and Inner Asian subjects far removed from the Qing imperial court.<sup>14</sup> Those that had the most to lose from the continuance of old and new opium trade routes remained the imperial court as the British began to acquire more silver and territory.

The outflow of silver that resulted from the increased market for opium in China had a dramatic effect on the existing political order. What was evident between the reign of Emperor Jiaqing and Daoguang was the increase in foreign imported opium. Over ten years 4,186 imported chests of opium increased to a high of 40,200 chests in 1838-39.<sup>15</sup> This was argued to threaten the economic stability of the Qing dynasty as silver reserves began to dwindle. It additionally produced higher costs for peasants

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<sup>9</sup> Z. Yangwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> J. Richards, 'The Opium Industry in British India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 39:2/3: (2002) pp. 149–80.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> G. Cederlöf, *Founding an empire on India's north-eastern frontiers, 1790-1840 climate, commerce, polity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Z. Yangwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). P.109

<sup>15</sup> Z. Yongming, *Anti-drug crusades in twentieth-century China : nationalism, history, and state building* (Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) P.14

who were compelled to pay taxes with the same currency.<sup>16</sup> The court also hoarded silver and used up its Spanish dollar reserves which aided the re-emergence of bartering markets.<sup>17</sup> The revenue gained from this trade flowed into British Hong Kong with an economy that revolved around the trade. The drug itself became a currency used by those Chinese living on the island.<sup>18</sup> The Hong Kong opium monopoly was later purchased by an influential pirate and gangster Lo-aqui.<sup>19</sup> His large gains undermined both British and Chinese security.<sup>20</sup> As the opium trade expanded the traditional hierarchy imposed by the Qing court began to lose meaning. The smugglers and pirates' operations began to overrule their authority and posed a physical threat to stability. For instance, secret societies of Sichuan and Yunnan proper had formed armed smuggling gangs, in some cases over one hundred men strong.<sup>21</sup> Their gains were weakening imperial decree and coffers. Posed with this problem Commissioner Lin Zexu and his successors sought to crack down on illicit networks, while adopting a taxation model following the trades' forced legalisation in 1857/8.<sup>22</sup> Taxes were also set lower for domestic opium production, in an attempt to rebalance the financial impact of foreign imports.<sup>23</sup> Overall its rapid expansion throughout Chinese society had allowed the smugglers to increase their revenue and

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<sup>16</sup> Z. Yongming, *Anti-drug crusades in twentieth-century China* 15

<sup>17</sup> Gelber, H., *Opium soldiers and Evangelicals Britain's 1840-42 war with China and its aftermath*. (Palgrave Macmillian: London, 2004)

<sup>18</sup> Munn, C., 'The Hong Kong Opium Revenue, 1845-1885' in Brook, T., and Wakabayashi, B.T., *Opium Regimes China Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000)

<sup>19</sup> Bickers, R., *The Scramble for China, Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (Penguin Books: London, 2011)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Li, X., *Poppies and Politics in China: Sichuan Province, 1840s to 1940s* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009) P.27

<sup>22</sup> J.A. Madancy, *The Troublesome Legacy of Commissioner Lin: The Opium Trade and Opium Suppression in Fujian Province, 1820s to 1920s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid P.75

physical power. This was a contributory factor in the silver currency crisis that left Qing officials existing social order with a loss of both prestige and capital.

It was clear that there was a similar group of literary scholars and court officials consuming opium in the Celestial Empire that, 'were the "message-sending" and "production-moulding" force of culture and consumption.'<sup>24</sup> Alexander Des Forges argued that consumption amongst the upper classes in Shanghai was regarded as an elegant artistic pursuit, which was reflected in the finely crafted material culture and paraphernalia.<sup>25</sup> However the Qing court believed opium consumption was irresponsible when extended to the lower classes.<sup>26</sup> They shared the xenophobic and classicalist views of the British literati. Thomas De Quincey, the English opium eater had argued that the decline of the English people would be instigated by the consumption of barbarian riches.<sup>27</sup> Numerous administrators of the Indian civil service were also well versed classical scholars in their own right who shared this perspective.<sup>28</sup> The London metropole that had supported the growth of the opium trade would often debate in print and parliament the dangers of "Oriental traffic."<sup>29</sup> Similar to the Chinese they feared a cultural decay of the Empire from within. Overall the cultural elitism that had defined opium consumption among the Mughal and Qing royal courts lost meaning as the trade expanded. The East India Company had conquered and undermined the social ceremony of opium. As a corporate base of

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<sup>24</sup> Z. Yangwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). P.205

<sup>25</sup> A. Forges, 'Opium/ Leisure/ Shanghai: Urban Economies of Consumption' in T. Brook and B.T. Wakabayashi (Eds), *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000)

<sup>26</sup> Z. Yangwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> J. Marriott, *The other empire: Metropolis, India and progress in the colonial imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003) P.129

<sup>28</sup> P. Mason, *The men who ruled India* (Rupa & Co: Calcutta, 1985)

<sup>29</sup> C. Hagerman, *Britain's imperial muse, The Classics, Imperialism, and the Indian Empire, 1784-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2013) P.129

power it expanded trade patterns in China that challenged the status quo of sovereign or elite consumption.

The flow of information surrounding the opium trade was also important to maintaining its expansion. Who gained and lost from the trade was predicated on knowledge of reliable networks and routes. For instance, Zalim Singh, regent of Kotah in Rajasthan, had managed to create a successful intelligence network that aided his economic interests in opium. Bayly argued that, ‘the specific concern of the Kotah rulers was to keep track of the opium trade through their territories which was facing heavy British competition and subversion.’<sup>30</sup> At the turn of the nineteenth century the princely states of Rajasthan were able to preserve their semiautonomous sovereignty and interests in the opium trade. However, excise fees that were placed on opium passing through British territory resulted in a loss of revenue for these rulers.<sup>31</sup> The costly routes opium traffic followed were necessary in order to reach Bombay and the expanding sea trade to China.<sup>32</sup> Likewise the internal opium trade also known as excise opium was re-distributed from these commercial centres. Nevertheless, skilled administrators of the declining Mughal Empire and remaining princely states were sought after for their knowledge of the opium trade. Ramchandra Pandit was such an individual employed by colonial officials to oversee opium contracts in the late 18th century.<sup>33</sup> His position was legitimised by being able

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<sup>30</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Empire and information, Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1999)

<sup>31</sup> A. Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion: Colonialism, Indian Merchants, and the Politics of Opium* (New Delhi: New Age International, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> A. Farooqui, *Opium City: The Making of Early Victorian Bombay, Readings*. (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Bayly, C.A., *Empire and information*

to detail previous opium traffic under both the Dutch and Mughal empires.<sup>34</sup> For instance, near the start of the reign of the Aurangzeb 1658- 1707 he instigated a rule against the consumption wine and drugs on puritanical grounds. In response, his empress Begam Sahib invited the wives of learned doctors to the *pardah* (secluded area) to engage in eating bhang, opium and other drugs.<sup>35</sup> She argued that the rule only applied to men. Nevertheless, by the early nineteenth century the use of walking surveys in Bihar and Bengal also contributed and controlled information about the opium trade.<sup>36</sup> For instance a statistical survey of the Shahabad district chose to separate opium and intoxicant consumption from all other economic activity. Peter Gottschalk argued that this could either be a result of officials own business interests or associated moral concerns.<sup>37</sup> These two explanations are interrelated. For example, corrupt colonial officials and Indian elites could use their knowledge to profit from illicit smuggling. Instated by Russian colonialists in 1883 Nizamuddin Khoja, the Qazi of Samarkand managed to build up his own opium smuggling ring.<sup>38</sup> His group was found to be bribing their way through customs and financing local prostitution.<sup>39</sup> Their knowledge of the colonial framework and their blind spots allowed smugglers and associated illicit businesses to profit. Losses could be recorded clearly in state revenues alongside the growing moral concerns of colonial officials.

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<sup>34</sup> Bayly, C.A., *Empire and information*

<sup>35</sup> Lal. R, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005) P.46

<sup>36</sup> Gottschalk, P., *Religion, science, and empire classifying Hinduism and Islam in British India* (New York: Oxford University Press 2013)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Morrison A., *Russian rule in Samarkand, 1868-1910 a comparison with British India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008)

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

The Government of India however followed in the footsteps of other nations who sought to regulate the drug following the Opium wars. This authority could be gained or reinforced by state produced legislation or regulation. The Japanese Meiji government choose to control opium within a pharmaceutical framework for medical distribution.<sup>40</sup> While this mimicked the British system, the Pharmacy Act 1868 that classified opium as a poison was to an extent the product of a public health movement.<sup>41</sup> By comparison, Japan like China had adopted use of capital punishment, including death by strangulation to combat illicit distributors.<sup>42</sup> The contrast between these distributors experiences were defined by their perceived control over the trade. The Japanese distribution model was framed by the new Meiji government's fear of domestic stability and colonisation. Following the visits of Commodore Perry in 1853 the destructive capability of the ships arriving at Edo hastened regulation of the opium trade.<sup>43</sup> Hanes argued that in China the opium trade itself can be regarded as a form of "chemical warfare."<sup>44</sup> Particularly as economic controls had been relaxed for distributors within extraterritorial ports. Similarly, in India Gunnel Cederlöf has argued that the spread of narcotics had "brutalized" warfare.<sup>45</sup> He argued that Assamese prisoners in an act of attrition had introduced opium amongst the village of Tsinlon in the Hukawng valley.<sup>46</sup> It was clear that unregulated distributors in times of war and peace became interrelated with the fear

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<sup>40</sup> J. M. Jennings, *The Opium Empire: Japanese Imperialism and Drug Trafficking in Asia, 1895-1945* (Westport, Conn.; London: Praeger, 1997).

<sup>41</sup> G. Harding, *Opiate Addiction, Morality and Medicine From Moral Illness to Pathological Disease* (London: Macmillian Press, 1988)

<sup>42</sup> John M. Jennings, *The Opium Empire: Japanese Imperialism*

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> W.T. Hanes III, F. Sanello, *The Opium Wars the Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Sourcebooks Inc.: Naperville, 2002) P.xi

<sup>45</sup> G. Cederlöf, *Founding an empire on India's north-eastern frontiers, 1790-1840 climate, commerce, polity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014) P.101

<sup>46</sup> Ibid



of military and economic domination. The press to regulate the opium trades' growth with repressive state mechanisms was often proportional to the initial aggression of its distributors.

The pharmacological approach in Britain was also botanically and financially driven by surveys of India. In 1872 the curator of the Calcutta Botanic Garden, John Scott, produced two reports on opium one for the revenue board and another on the scientific properties of the poppy.<sup>47</sup> However not all distributors gained their position through scientific or legislated authority. In Java opium farms used for storage and distribution were purchased by village chiefs.<sup>48</sup> Their ownership entailed a host of ceremonies and public leisure activities to demonstrate their wealth and importance.<sup>49</sup> Within China the volume of opium shops reached their peak at the midpoint of the century stretching along trade routes on the Yangtze River.<sup>50</sup> The diversity of sellers could embody different cultural meanings from elitism in courts to physical pleasure in brothels.<sup>51</sup> Overall, as the nineteenth century ended opium consumers had increasingly lost control of their bodies to medicinal and legal experts. In British India, these doctors looked to use established medicinal products and exclude "indigenous" remedies which served religious and cultural purposes.<sup>52</sup> However this influence was minimal and failed to introduce a level of control to

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<sup>47</sup> D. Kumar, *Science and the Raj a study of British India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> J.R. Rush, *Opium to Java, Revenue Farming and Chinese enterprise in Colonial Indonesia 1860-1910* (Jakarta : Equinox Pub. 2007)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> X. Li, *Poppies and Politics in China: Sichuan Province, 1840s to 1940s* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009)

<sup>51</sup> Z. Yangwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> D. Arnold, *The New Cambridge History of India III.5 Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008). P.181

users beyond prisons which will be explored in chapter five on medical attitudes. Similarly, the internal smuggling of opium continued which questions, how much this was a loss for consumers compared with the political gains of doctors. In China where capital punishment was used the opium trade also continued to grow further diminishing the attitudes and actions of medical officials.

Opposition to the opium trade had allowed religious movements to make similar political gains that gradually impacted on consumption. Missionaries had adopted the anti-opium banner as their own by the late nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Previously the opium trade enjoyed large political support from the EIC and Parliament in the early nineteenth century. However, the political temper of the latter half century was not without precedent. For instance, the opium trade was adopted among various other moral crusades following the success of the British anti-slavery movement in 1833.<sup>54</sup> More specifically in British India the abolition of *Sati* had already begun in British territories by 1829 culminating in a Royal ban by 1861.<sup>55</sup> Opium production was also tenuously linked to economic ills such as famine.<sup>56</sup> These political accomplishments were viewed by Christian missionaries' as part of their larger civilising mission in India. Within this movement opium was viewed as an evil agent that encouraged or accompanied barbaric activities. For example, male wrestling to

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<sup>53</sup> K. L. Lodwick, *Crusaders against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874-1917* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> Gelber, H., *Opium soldiers and Evangelicals Britain's 1840-42 war with China and its aftermath*. (Palgrave Macmillian: London, 2004)

<sup>55</sup> G. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988) pp. 271-313. \*The meaning of *Sati* has been misappropriated from its original Hindu meaning of "good wife" to refer to female self-immolation.

<sup>56</sup> J. B. Brown, 'Politics of the Poppy: The Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, 1874-1916' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 8:3 (1973), pp. 97-111

the death was commonly aided by use of bhang or opium in India during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>57</sup> As a result, Indian men and their consumption were now increasingly framed as barbarous and morally inferior. Following the violent events of the Indian Rebellion 1857/58 the British officers of the Indian military adopted this moral divide. This was as much about preserving English or racial qualities of consumption as it was about religion.<sup>58</sup> For instance the use of opium in the hookah pipe widely adopted in the early nineteenth century was increasingly stigmatised by officers.<sup>59</sup> Another case shows how the addiction of an officer was a contributory factor to the removal of his command.<sup>60</sup> To allow the body to be subsumed by Indian consumption practises could now be viewed as dangerous.<sup>61</sup> Overall those that made political gains had smeared the opium trade at the expense of its users. This was not difficult for politicians considering the violent legacy of the Opium Wars and territorial expansion explored above. Whether they were saving victims of the opium trade is doubtful, given their professed religious and racial justifications. Ultimately the revenue and territory gained from the trade were not returned. Unless individuals had sought a saviour or ruler this movement entailed a loss of social control for opium consumers.

Within China chaotic nationalist movements began to physically challenge the Qing court and later western expeditionary forces under the same banner. Hong Xiuquan leader of the Taping Rebellion had been more heavily influenced by Christianity

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<sup>57</sup> J. Mickelson-Gaughan, *The 'incumberances': British women in India, 1615-1856* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press 2014)

<sup>58</sup> E.M. Collingham, *Imperial bodies the Physical experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001)

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> D. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj, the Indian army, 1860-1940* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994)

<sup>61</sup> E.M. Collingham, *Imperial bodies the Physical experience of the Raj*

than Dadurum.<sup>62</sup> Ritual violence underpinned his political fight against social ills. Rather than extend moral salvation to opium smokers he would publicly execute them as an example to others.<sup>63</sup> Previously in 1796 Emperor Jiaqing attempted to exert his control over consumer's bodies by public pillorying and lashing, failure ultimately led to introducing execution.<sup>64</sup> Actions like these were echoed in the Kunming city stadium of Yunnan used for public executions of smugglers in the People's Republic of China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup> Court judges will still commit both smugglers and narcotics to physical destruction in the present 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>66</sup> Overall as the pace of opposition to the opium trade increased so too did nationalism and its varied forms of state repression. Again, consumers lost in this dynamic as religion and the state converged to condemn the equally violent legacy of the opium trade.

Overall the early nineteenth century and export trade are well covered by the existing historiography. However, when the historian starts to examine the internal opium trade of British India in the late nineteenth century it becomes apparent that the literature is lacking. The evidence given above is testament to this fact stretching the narrative to China and from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century to remain coherent. The question of what attitudes were influencing policy can be interpreted in numerous ways. For the purposes of this literature review it has sought to feed into the political conflict. Examining who would have lost in relation to changes in geo-political sphere and colonial struggles. This traditional perspective is a product of the existing literature. In order to reconstruct or explore the intricacies of the opium trade it must

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<sup>62</sup> Z. Yongming, *Anti-drug crusades in twentieth-century China*

<sup>63</sup> Ibid P.19

<sup>64</sup> G. Harding, *Opiate Addiction, Morality and Medicine From Moral Illness to Pathological Disease* (London: Macmillian Press, 1988).

<sup>65</sup> Z. Yongming, *Anti-drug crusades in twentieth-century China*

<sup>66</sup> J. Lovell, *The Opium War* (Picador: London, 2011).

move beyond the political winners and losers. Before any social or cultural examination can begin the British political landscape must be surveyed within the literature. The British Raj could reflect the irrational domestic politics of the metropole as much as colonial administrator's testimony. Indeed, the largest political commission and survey of opium use within British India has been argued to be the product of domestic anxieties and motives. This is partly due to the lack of research on South Asia and existing literature on Britain to conclude otherwise.

## **Attitudes in Britain**

The opium question was a significant political issue within British domestic politics and equally took on an international character before the end of the century. Some of the ideological underpinnings of the related arguments were long set to collide before opium occupied such a contentious place within British politics. The first of these forces inherent within capitalism was, consumption, which found a moral limit when confronted with opiates. Another limit placed upon opium by society was rooted in religious influence, where belief rather than rhetoric instigated the former political anxieties. Whether these relationships were reflected within society and subsequently exaggerated in parliament is hard to determine. Nevertheless, the impact of the decisions that followed had far reaching implications for both British society and colonial possessions. South Asian society served as an observation and testing site for these political questions which ultimately distorted the material reality. The literature of British politics on this subject is as important as understanding the competing attitudes on the opium trade.

The medical arguments that surrounded opium use were politically defined in terms of personal responsibility, but when a legislative solution was proposed it was encapsulated as a public health concern. Terry M. Parssinen argued that the 1868 Poisons and Pharmacy Bill was a product of growing information on health and mortality which is best situated amongst the Public Health Acts of 1866, 1871 and 1875. His conclusion states,

The poisons agitation of 1860s, then, was not a response to a specific increase in poisonings, but rather an outgrowth of a more general public health concern of which mortality statistics were both cause and effect.<sup>67</sup>

However, this does not mean the issue of opium poisonings was exaggerated. Simply that it was now visible where previously control was based on operation of the free market. The permanence of the existing market structure continued when legislation did not regulate opiate based patent medicines. This legislation prevailed to the disappointment of monopoly based plans forwarded by pharmaceutical interests and public health campaigners.<sup>68</sup> Whether this should be considered a political victory for the patent medicine industry or public health campaigners is unclear. News stories that emphasised criminal poisonings and child doping continued in the press, which while selective and un-representative contributed more to public perceptions of opium than statistics.<sup>69</sup> Equally the deaths resulting from opium poisoning could not be described as a public health threat but instead affecting a minority group associated with intentional or accidental overdoses of opiate based medicine. This conclusion does not mean the issue was exaggerated. Popular opinion and the press informed this legislation which sought to re-categorise opium as a poison. Nevertheless, public access to opiates remained relatively free which turned a small issue into one open to increasing scrutiny and political manipulation.

A developing health dimension to the opium question in the late nineteenth century was addiction. It was also an issue that was interpreted more vigorously by the

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<sup>67</sup> T.M Parssinen, *Secret Passions Secret Remedies Narcotic Drugs in British Society 1870-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983) P.74

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> V. Berridge, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use and Drug Control Policy in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England* (London: Free Association Books, 1999).

public imagination. Opiate addiction was increasingly categorised as a disease which fitted the mould of a public health concern. Virginia Berridge's research argued the disease model of addiction became the dominant paradigm for discussing habitual opiate use in the late nineteenth century.<sup>70</sup> Stacey Margolis argued that the moral underpinnings of the disease model were a product of religion.<sup>71</sup> This concept reflected religious abstinence and especially the Christian virtue found in the ability to resist temptation. While a familiar narrative for both temperance and Christian organisations it was now categorised as a disease of the will, or an inability to resist.<sup>72</sup> As such this perceived public and societal threat bolstered by religion received comparatively more attention than the minority of suicides, poisonings and accidental overdose cases of the late nineteenth century. As Padwa has argued the British medical and literary community viewed opiates as isolating and cutting the user largely off from society and their responsibilities to work and family.<sup>73</sup> This was not like alcohol which solidified male leisure pursuits and helped distinguish the public house from the home. A misconception about conservatism in the late-nineteenth century is that industriousness and thrift were at the centre of populist politics implying that opium was a natural enemy. Instead male dominated public houses and the development of large scale gambling industries encouraged social intoxication.<sup>74</sup> The image of isolated opiate users while unsettling was again

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<sup>70</sup> V. Berridge, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use and Drug Control Policy in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England* (London: Free Association Books, 1999).

<sup>71</sup> S. Margolis, 'Addiction and the Ends of Desire' in J. F. Brodie, and M. Redfield (Eds.), *High Anxieties: Cultural Studies in Addiction* (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> H. Padwa, *Social Poison: The culture and Politics of Opiate control in Britain and France 1821-1926* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012)

<sup>74</sup> M. Pugh, *State and Society: A Social and Political History of Britain since 1870* (Hodder Education, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.: London, 2008)



unrepresentative of the place opium occupied in relation to typical social settings. The popular opiate based medicine Godfrey's Cordial was being used by working-class families despite doping scandals and provided a rationalised medicinal product for household use.<sup>75</sup> Instead it was addiction to opiates that challenged the populist Toryism conception of leisure and work. As such the addiction model perceived a larger moral disease within British society that weakened the user physically and the nation's social cohesion. This was despite the reality that opium was still acting as a medicine within society which helped strengthen the public health and their overall productivity.

The addiction model was interpreted more imaginatively in the public sphere admittedly with the encouragement of the cultural and news presses of British bourgeoisie society. Cannon Schmitt has argued that Thomas Dequincey preferred to frame England as the victim of opium for political reasons which gave a sense of purpose to her imperial mission.<sup>76</sup> As a result opium consumption within literature was a reflection of the colonised and otherness. In contrast Britain was portrayed as susceptible and pure delineating its methods of opiate consumption along national lines. Furthermore, it also provided a self-affirming and patriotic basis for colonialism. However, the impact on public opinion was not translated into tangible political change or impact on colonial policy. Nevertheless, like public health articles on doping and poisoning it unveiled authors and audiences concerns surrounding urban degeneration. Opium dens in the London metropole were quickly

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<sup>75</sup> M. Pugh, *State and Society*

<sup>76</sup> C. Schmitt, 'Narrating National Addictions, Dequincy and Opium and Tea' in J. F. Brodie, and M. Redfield (Eds.), *High Anxieties: Cultural Studies in Addiction* (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2002).

reconstructed in the press as the colonial outposts of China.<sup>77</sup> Equally within the works produced by Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle, opium dens are the locations where the English protagonist were metaphorically or literally transformed by oriental practises.<sup>78</sup> Within the mind of middle class Britain, opium smoking could transform the east end of London and the lower classes into victims of addiction. In a narrative of reverse colonisation, the individual and the nation became the victim of racial rather than moral degeneration, characterised by the physical inability to resist foreign culture. In reality, there was no drug based war of attrition orchestrated by the Chinese. The only significant populations of opium smokers on the British mainland were sailors who had acquired the specific method of consumption in China.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the British Foreign Office could also suffer from paranoia given the legacy of the Opium Wars. The Qing imperial court by comparison viewed the wars as an event equivalent to a border skirmish in proportion to more pressing matters of internal stability and rebellion.<sup>80</sup> Overall it is clear that representations of foreign opium consumption within British culture could inflate or stimulate innate feelings of nationalism. Whether the British public took enjoyment or displeasure from these nightmare scenarios they continued to pervade political rhetoric and the press.

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<sup>77</sup> C. Schmitt, 'Narrating National Addictions

<sup>78</sup> M. Roth, 'Victorian Highs Detection Drugs and Empire' in J. F. Brodie, and M. Redfield (Eds.), *High Anxieties: Cultural Studies in Addiction* (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>79</sup> V. Berridge, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use and Drug Control Policy in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England* (London: Free Association Books, 1999).

<sup>80</sup> J. Lovell, *The Opium War* (Picador: London, 2011)

This political conversation was also heavily informed by British imperial expansion and its commercial relationship with the opium trade in South and East Asia. The issue was one that was spearheaded personally by William Ewart Gladstone both as Prime Minister and leader of the liberal opposition.<sup>81</sup> Padwa has argued that English utilitarianism found a natural limit when confronted with opiate addiction.<sup>82</sup> The political philosophy could not reconcile the pursuit of a maximum utility if it led instead to the harm of individuals and society. Conveniently, The Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade founded in 1874 favoured the strong moral undercurrent of emerging medical perspectives. It provided a moral critique of the British Empire which sought to end specifically the British traffic of opium traveling from India to China. The society contained fifteen liberal M.P.s out of the seventeen M.P.s that made up the council's constituency.<sup>83</sup> As such it still reflected a liberal interpretation of the national interest. The first concern was that the trade was being forced on China which impeded its markets or people from achieving freedom.<sup>84</sup> Secondly they believed that the economic effect of opium had caused the legitimate exports of Britain to suffer by constricting incomes.<sup>85</sup> Another British export which galvanised the SSOT and its interpretation of opium was Christianity. Again missionaries believed the spread of religion had failed due to the effects of opium both financially and spiritually within China. Reflecting this concern out of

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<sup>81</sup> M. Jay, *Emperor of Dreams: Drugs in the Nineteenth Century* (Sawtry: Dedalus, 2000).

<sup>82</sup> H. Padwa, *Social Poison: The culture and Politics of Opiate control in Britain and France 1821-1926* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012)

<sup>83</sup> J. B. Brown, 'Politics of the Poppy: The Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, 1874-1916' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 8:3 (1973), pp. 101

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*

the forty six total members of the council eighteen were ecclesiastical ministers.<sup>86</sup> Previously the aggressive mercantilist nature of British expansion had attracted more radical members of the left. The Chartist movement in the fallout of the first Opium War in 1842 had printed admiration for China's anti-drug policies.<sup>87</sup> These hard-line state measures recognised opium addiction as a 'social disease' signalling a departure from the laissez-faire principles of moral improvement.<sup>88</sup> By comparison the liberal vision of the late nineteenth century remained closer to the political centre, which still relied on the free-market and religious imperialism to justify an intervention in the opium trade. Overall the two dominant forces within the society stemmed from a narrow base of its respective patrons with ideological interests beyond domestic politics.

In opposition the machinery of the British Government was predisposed to protect the India-China opium trade. Its harshest critics viewed it as a perverse corruption of British ideals and its defenders a necessary reality of colonialism. The revenue generated from opium has been argued by Trocki, Booth and Courtwright to have sustained colonialism in South Asia if not aid territorial expansion itself.<sup>89</sup> D. Bello has argued that the 1857 Indian Mutiny emphasised the dangers of continuing a policy of annexation and Anglicisation. The result was a move to preserve a system of indirect rule and submitting to 'nativisation' of the opium trade to help consolidate funding to the residencies.<sup>90</sup> As a result opium continued to occupy in

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<sup>86</sup> G. Harding, *Opiate Addiction, Morality and Medicine From Moral Illness to Pathological Disease* (London: Macmillian Press, 1988) P.26

<sup>87</sup> S. Guan, 'Chartism and the First Opium War' *History Workshop*, 24 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 17-31

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid* P.20

<sup>89</sup> D. T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>90</sup> D. Bello, *Opium and the Limits of Empire: The Opium Problem in the Chinese Interior, 1729-1850*, (California: University of Southern California Press, 2001). P.44

mind of officials a significant role in the preservation of colonial rule. Similarly Trocki, Mintz and Bello have all argued that commodification and exchange of psycho-active substances such as opium, sugar and tea helped formed the basis of mass consumer economies linked with the British metropole.<sup>91</sup> However the traditional Marxist perspective compares the opium traffic to vampirism consuming the economic wealth of the host.<sup>92</sup> This critique was also embraced by early Indian nationalists of the nineteenth century who saw the colonial exchange as parasitic.<sup>93</sup> Kathleen Lodwick has argued that the revenue question was one of continuing importance in parliament but the reliability of currency conversions allowed for endless diversions and debate.<sup>94</sup> Despite attempts to prove otherwise, the Indian Government in a peak year such as 1880-81 could receive sixteen percent of its revenue from opium.<sup>95</sup> Overall it is clear that the treasury in the metropole and the colonial administration in the periphery sought the political stability that the opium revenue seemed to provide. The nativisation of the trade for profit contrasted with the liberal perspective that sought to abolish foreign and despotic forms of governance within India. Colonial administrators turned pro-opium advocates would argue they merely inherited the Mughal system exacerbating this conflict.<sup>96</sup> To reformers and especially members of the clergy this was interpreted as a foreign trade subsuming the principles of the British government and nation. This allowed

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<sup>91</sup> C. A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950, Asia's Transformations*. (London: Routledge, 1999)  
Sidney Wilfred Mintz, *Sweetness and power : the place of sugar in modern history* (New York, N.Y. : Viking 1985)

<sup>92</sup> R. Parama; G. Inderpal; C. Kaplan, R. Wiegman, *Alimentary Tracts : Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.) P.12

<sup>93</sup> B.R. Nanda, *Gokhale, the Indian moderates and the British Raj* (Delhi : Oxford University Press 1998)

<sup>94</sup> K. Lodwick, *Crusaders against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China*

<sup>95</sup> Ibid P.73

<sup>96</sup> M. Emdad-ul Haq, *Drugs in South Asia: From the Opium Trade to the Present Day* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000).

the economic question of revenue to become one focused on corruption as it appeared to supersede both the Christian and civilising mission being espoused across the empire.

British colonial politics was also shaped by American intervention and religious leadership. Within Assam the high levels of opium consumption had attracted attention from likeminded reformers in the United States. Jayeeta Sharma has argued that American Baptist missionaries managed to turn young Assamese reformers against the religious justifications of Vaishnavite institutions.<sup>97</sup> Older village chiefs supported opium consumption and indirectly British colonial policy. The colonial administrators had previously used a 'vocabulary of temperance' which blamed the Assamese for lacking the moral virtues of the British.<sup>98</sup> This allowed them to continue the sale of excise opium framing the issue as one of personal responsibility. The American intervention in this case was a product of religious and colonial institutions of their own found within the Philippines. The Americans in 1898 had acquired from Spain a large population of opium addicts which largely informed their protests within Assam.<sup>99</sup> Especially Charles Henry Brent an Episcopalian Bishop and political figure in his own right would continue to have lasting impact on British perceptions of the opium trade. He was able to justify his moral attacks on the opium traffic with evidence from medical institutions established in the Philippines.<sup>100</sup> The American uncompromising position on the opium trade fitted

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<sup>97</sup> J. Sharma, *Empire's garden Assam and the making of India* (Durham N.C. : Duke University Press, 2011)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid P.156

<sup>99</sup> W. B. McAllister, *Drug diplomacy in the twentieth century : an international history* (London ; New York : Routledge, 2000)

<sup>100</sup> A.H. Taylor 'American Confrontation with Opium Traffic in the Philippines', *Pacific Historical Review*, 36:3 (Aug., 1967), pp. 307-324

easily within the framework of the domestic progressive movement and fulfilled Baptist conceptions of redemption. The American government backed these efforts and banned ships from the USA in 1887 from carrying opium to China.<sup>101</sup> The revenue the USA gained from opium unlike Britain was not an issue intertwined with colonial governance or maintaining a profitable treasury. This comparison shows how enforcing a policy based on the disease model of addiction relied on a convergence of religious values and government institutions. The implications for British politics were mostly confined to their colonial possessions. However the connections made within the periphery between Anglo-American missionaries began to legitimise the calls made among liberal politicians in parliament to end the trade completely.

The combination of religious pressure and liberal reformism within British politics was responsible for appointing a Royal Commission to investigate opium in 1893. Similar to Baptist missionaries within America there was a minority of Quaker and Evangelical religious groups within Britain that lobbied government for political action.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless they had successfully tapped into wider societal values about the social role of drugs and opiates and whether they impeded or preserved public health. However the SSOT and associated religious affiliations had only secured a short term advantage with the appointment of the Royal Opium Commission. This point has been stressed anachronistically within the historiography using rationalism and the outcome of the inquiry to explain the political causes. Case in point, Booth

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<sup>101</sup> W. B. McAllister, *Drug diplomacy in the twentieth century : an international history*

<sup>102</sup> J. Miller and G. Stanczak, 'Redeeming, Ruling, and Reaping: British Missionary Societies, the East India Company, and the India-to-China Opium Trade' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 48:2 (Jun., 2009), pp. 332-352

has argued that the commissions' support of the opium trade was a whitewash coordinated by vested colonial and British treasury interests.<sup>103</sup> This is supported by the fact the commission focused purely on Britain, British India and the Native States where the colonial government possessed superior information and cultural advantages.<sup>104</sup> By comparison the religious leadership within the SSOT had focused their attacks on opium exports leaving India for China.<sup>105</sup> On the other hand John F Richards has argued against the traditional position that the commission was government whitewash.<sup>106</sup> He argues that the British parliament upheld a medical and cultural defence for opium consumption against the religious imperialism of missionaries. In opposition Paul Winther has argued the medical rationale to be flawed on the basis opiates were not effective against malaria as the government concluded.<sup>107</sup> This perspective was confined to India by the commission and has been challenged by F. Diköter's work on China during the same period. Despite the change of geography this research did not support the missionaries' anti-opium position. Instead it showed that there was a consistent medical belief opium could protect its users from malaria.<sup>108</sup> Equally F. Diköter argued the moral backbone of the movement to be weaker in Britain with other Christian denominations taking a pro-opium perspective. Overall it is clear the portrayal of the Royal Opium Commission as a government whitewash has been exaggerated, being the result from

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<sup>103</sup> M. Booth, *Opium : A History* (London ; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> J. Miller and G. Stanczak, 'Redeeming, Ruling, and Reaping: British Missionary Societies, the East India Company, and the India-to-China Opium Trade' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 48:2 (Jun., 2009)

<sup>106</sup> J. Richards, 'Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895', *Modern Asian Studies* 36:1 (2002)

<sup>107</sup> P. Winther, *Anglo-European Science and the Rhetoric of Empire: Malaria, Opium, and British Rule in India, 1756-1895* (Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003).

<sup>108</sup> F. Diköter, L. Laamann, and Xun Zhou, *Narcotic Culture: A Social History of Opiates in Modern China* (Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council, 2004).



a combination of hindsight over the controversial outcome and contemporary vested interests that sought to protect the trade.

The lack of impartiality within the commission resulted from a mixture of public relation failures and the colonial landscape. Given the discord between British domestic politics and need to maintain imperial bureaucracies abroad it was clear that the man on the spot could not act as a moral or national judge. For example, the opium monopoly instated by the East India Company remained one of its most efficient and profitable legacies. James Lyall, was a retired officer of the Government of India and commission member who embodied this history.<sup>109</sup> His conservatism embraced the policy of nativising the opium trade to maintain stability and opposed radical intervention in India. Neutrality within the commission and the search for the centre ground also sought out a medical authority who professionally used and critiqued the use of opiates. Sir William Roberts, a distinguished Manchester physician fulfilled this role. This allowed the commission to appear autonomous from imperial government and religious institutions.<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately for the pro-opium case the great majority of doctors who were called before the commission for evidence were colonial or missionary doctors within India. Despite promoting testimony from the medical profession, the political backdrop would still heavily favour government and the colonialist. The nationalist, Lakshmishwar Singh was chosen to serve on the commission but was unlike other campaigners. Others within the nationalist movement had already sought out alliances with liberal reform

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<sup>109</sup> J. Richards, 'Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895', *Modern Asian Studies* 36:1 (2002)

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*

societies in London on the opium issue that placed them in a comprising position.<sup>111</sup> Singh by comparison qualified as landed aristocracy in British terms owning an estate in northern Bihar.<sup>112</sup> His position and title of Maharaja of Darbhanga also owed much to the preservation of indirect rule fulfilled by the British. The anti-opium commission members in contrast allied themselves more readily with liberalism, religion and faith in the market to rule India. This was in opposition to the feudal-colonial order Lakshmishwar Singh still preserved and represented. For example Henry Wilson was considered a radical, both a Puritan and a liberal M.P that was joined on the commission by Arthur Pease, a Quaker who also sat on the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade's council.<sup>113</sup> The members and motivations behind the commission were oddly reflected by two distinct geographical locations: the north of England and British India. The constituency of the commission itself reflected the search for a centre position or compromise between these two forces within British politics. Overall the opium question was exaggerated but remained essential to Government and specific religious denominations functioning in the periphery of the British Empire.

Overall the place of opium within British politics was exaggerated in the nineteenth century. The press for regulation in Britain was primarily a product of public health reformers that sought to sanitise the consumption of opiates. Rhetoric in the press also exaggerated newly published mortality figures associated with opium and linked

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<sup>111</sup> O. Nicholas, *The British left and India metropolitan anti-imperialism, 1885-1947* (Oxford : Oxford University Press 2007)

<sup>112</sup> J. Richards, 'Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895', *Modern Asian Studies* 36:1 (2002)

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*

them with conceptions of class and criminality. However patent medicines had already entrenched themselves within Victorian society as household names. While pressure from pharmaceutical interests sought to rationalise the industry further legislation sought to address public concerns over poisonings more so in name than in action. The concept of addiction exacerbated the issue further when specialists began to question the social role of opiates. Both conservatism and liberalism sanctioned more socially acceptable vices such as drinking so long as they reinforced boundaries of family and work. Opium used for pleasure and as an individual pursuit failed to fit this category. Furthermore, when seen through the prism of Christianity this also contributed to a moral condemnation of addiction. An inability to physically resist temptation or intoxication redefined opium addiction as a disease which became a perceived threat to public health. Cultural works and the British press took what was an issue that affected a minority and turned it into national dilemma. Similarly, traditionalist forces within the press fed off international relations and controversies such as the opium traffic to China. Whether more imaginative literary circles sought to legitimise imperialism or encourage introspection they contributed to a racially inspired fear of opium and the Chinese within British society. In the same vein liberal politicians adopted a reforming mission for empire looking to radically improve relations and trade with China. The Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade also drew upon religious leadership and financial support from prominent Quakers among other denominations in the north of England. The missionary experiences of which allowed many to question the trade and its effect on the spirituality of China. Both groups portrayed habitual opium users as victims of British mercantilism which chose to encourage the spread of a vice and or disease for

profit. The revenue British India accrued from the opium trade served to preserve a sense of stability and the reorganisation strategy of indirect rule. However, given the opium monopoly predated British parliamentary influence in India it quickly became a target for reformers. The structure was viewed as despotic and unchristian which undermined the rhetoric of the civilising mission. It was a political message that was also undermined by American missionary influence within India and the Philippines. Within the cultural and religious sphere Britain did not embrace on a national level the condemnation Quakers and Baptist missionaries energetically delivered. Like the popularity of Godfrey's cordial mix the mass consumption of tea was more important to working class families than perceived notions of redemption. Nevertheless, within high politics it was clear the societal influence of religion in the press and the periphery of empire threatened this balance. The subsequent alliance with liberal politicians created the Royal Opium Commission. Rather than serving to whitewash or exaggerate the opium question, the constituency and outcome of the commission was the culmination of the political interests explored above. It reflected traditional colonial interests and the feudal structure reemployed under British India. On the other hand, it represented liberalism and radical puritan values which challenged the conventionalism of temperance messages and laissez faire economics. Overall the place of opium within politics was not exaggerated but equally it did not reflect the material realities of Britain or South Asian society. Instead the political landscape was a product of conflict between competing political manifestations of god and the national interest.

## **Attitudes in India**

The attitudes towards the internal opium trade of British India and the Government of India's policies is the focus of the thesis. By describing the internal opium trade and the drugs dissemination throughout South Asian society it will produce a previously untold history recovering the silences and voices of the subaltern. This last section of the literature review will examine texts only relevant to South Asia rather than domestic British politics and the wider impact of opium. Rather than discuss the colonial administrators' personal history and beliefs the Subaltern School of historians sought to dig out the subjugated populations from the reports they produced. The tools of the colonial state were increasingly reliant on science, medicine and anthropological studies to make decisions. This last section will discuss these systems and their flaws in recording the lives of those within South Asia. As the drug passed through numerous layers of bureaucracy this will provide competing commentaries on the subaltern who interacted with opium and the state. This literature review has passed from a consideration of the question in its broadest forms examining who gained and who lost, and equally the British political landscape. It will now discuss the question in its narrowest context focusing on British attitudes in South Asia society from 1857-1906.

The divide between public health and the health of the individual was harshly enforced within colonial India. The traditional historiography of health in India has focused on disease and epidemics within India.<sup>114</sup> This provides an important context to the focus period, given the creation of plague regulations and their enforcement in

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<sup>114</sup> Arnold. D., *Colonizing the Body State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India*, (California: University of California Press, 1993).

the late nineteenth century, just as opium came under more political scrutiny. What this body of research showed was that the collective or community beliefs could conflict with the public health motives of the state. Equally, the creation of inspection camps along railways and around major cities were designed to protect commercial routes more so than society from plague.<sup>115</sup> As D. Chakrabarty argues that the public health program of the modern state is one of the most powerful intrusions into the everyday life of individuals which in this instance was an attempt at examining the body itself for infection.<sup>116</sup> The power of the state, as a political entity in this case, conflicted with stronger beliefs held by society. The physical resistance to the measures were partly born from fears that the British were attempting to control the body. Equally fears and rumours over attempts to Christianise the population competed with the existence of a Hindu and Muslim deities both owing their origins to plague.<sup>117</sup> Similar to the use of opium, plague was defined as both an individual and a communal affliction. This set the stage for another potential conflict of societal norms with the public health perception of opium. Many Christian reformers in both China and India would also campaign and characterise the spread of the opium habit itself as a plague.<sup>118</sup> Overall it is clear that subaltern practises and conflicting cultural norms would impact upon imperial health measures and the political formation of the opium question.

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<sup>115</sup>N. McNeill, *Plagues and People*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976).

<sup>116</sup> D. Chakrabarty, 'Community State and the Body: Epidemics and popular culture in colonial India.' In Hardiman, D. Mukherji, P.B., (Eds.) *Medical Marginality in South Asia Situating Subaltern Therapeutics* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid

<sup>118</sup> A. Baumler, *Chinese and Opium under the Republic, The: Worse than Floods and Wild Beasts*

On the other hand, opium was used for a variety of medicinal purposes, both in increasingly dominant western models and subaltern medicine. For instance, the treatment of plague and cholera both used opium which was rarely factored into political discussion of the period. One disease that did receive this treatment however was Malaria. Historian Winther argued that the role of malaria and the effectiveness of opium as a remedy went beyond scientific and the medicinal debate.<sup>119</sup> The political and revenue concerns of the state had overridden health and medical evidence which resulted in a positive image for the use of opium. Whether to continue or destroy the trade either way would have been an act of imperialism that attempted to control the various uses of opium. A. Samanta argued the lack of a regimented response to malaria with medicinal depositories was a reflection of an entrenched adherence to miasma theory to explain malaria.<sup>120</sup> The symptomology fitted within the colonial conception of the natural dangers and extremes of the tropical environment.<sup>121</sup> Equally because malaria lacked the contagious character of plague and cholera it did not pose an immediate risk to commercial interests. The lack of an official response to numerous epidemic level outbreaks saw subaltern practises such as high rates of opium consumption in Assam being explained by high levels of fever and malaria. The role of opium already as a healer of society both in an official and unofficial capacity helped form the inaction of the state to malaria outbreaks and political controversy over its ineffective and continued use.

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<sup>119</sup> P. Winther, *Anglo-European Science and the Rhetoric of Empire: Malaria, Opium, and British Rule in India, 1756-1895* (Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003).

<sup>120</sup> A. Samanta, 'Malarial Fever in Nineteenth Century Bengal, Revisiting the Prophylactic Intervention' in Bala, Poonam. (Ed.) *Contesting Colonial Authority, Medicine and Indigenous responses in Nineteenth and Twentieth- Century India* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012).

<sup>121</sup> Ibid

There were also competing medical systems within India that saw a revival during the late nineteenth century. This ultimately developed into tangible economic action with development of renewed Ayurveda and Unani pharmaceutical production.<sup>122</sup> The links of this movement to the wider Swadeshi movement which developed in the early twentieth century was limited due to opium acting as an active ingredient. Opium remained a British colonial run enterprise which stifled any independent growth of a dedicated opium enterprise in Ayurveda and Unani medicines.<sup>123</sup> The nationalist historiography and its relationship to opium is another tangle in the web of controversy opium has created for itself. On the one hand nationalists such as Gokhale discussed above, wanted to right the wrongs of the opium trade and its impact on China. On the other, the place opium straddled between subaltern medical systems and the power of the British state left it open to political interpretation. Despite continued use and support of opium by the subaltern through consumption and actions, the larger system of revenue and production typified the parasitic relationship between Britain and India. Elite nationalists such as Naoroji Dadabhai used opium as a centre piece of their economic critique stating, “This opium trade is a sin on England’s head, and a curse on India for her share in being the instrument.”<sup>124</sup> From further research the thesis will seek to detail the nationalist attitudes towards the internal opium trade.

On the other hand, from the latest research it appears that opium played an important role in the social and cultural structure of British India. The British had used or

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<sup>122</sup> B. Madhulika, ‘Ayurvedic Pharmaceuticals, Contesting Economic Hegemony’ in Bala, Poonam. (Ed.) *Contesting Colonial Authority, Medicine and Indigenous responses in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century India* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012).

<sup>123</sup> A. Kumar, ‘The Indian Drug Industry under the Raj, 1860- 1920’ in Pati, B., Harrison, M. (ed.) *Health, Medicine and Empire Perspectives on Colonial India* (New Delhi: Longman, 2006).

<sup>124</sup> D. Naoroji, *Poverty and un-British rule in India* (London, 1901) P.215



misused the internal opium trade by organising producers under a monopoly in order to enrich the treasury. However, land holding classes and higher caste peasants also used opium in a very different way to reinforce and cement traditional kinship lines. David Arnold has described how the user of poisons within India were often perceived to be the subaltern or the subjugated.<sup>125</sup> His evidence argued that the Rajputs as a high caste and predominately landholding caste used opium to commit infanticide. The act itself was not carried out by the male elites but by their wives in order to preserve the value of females gifted to lesser households. The imagined value of female wives and daughters reduced their social standing and increased the strength of their relationship with opium.<sup>126</sup> In other words, the more subjugated an individual the more opium became a feature in the lives or deaths. David Arnold argued along very similar lines in his analysis of the subaltern among other social groups more readily identifiable as part of the subaltern-elite dynamic. For instance, he argued that opium speeded the social disintegration of hill tribes from Gudem, a process already underway as a result of colonialism and permanent settlement.<sup>127</sup> Overall it is clear that opium played a role in preserving the social structure and dominance of traditional groups that enjoyed either power or autonomy born from their relationship to the land and its cultural ramifications. When Britain sought to usurp this relationship to the land they disrupted the role of opium and the attitudes of people connected to it.

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<sup>125</sup> D. Arnold, 'The Politics of Poison: Healing, empowerment and subversion in nineteenth century India.' In Hardiman, D. Mukherji, P.B., (Eds.) *Medical Marginality in South Asia Situating Subaltern Therapeutics* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

<sup>127</sup> D. Arnold, 'Rebellious Hillmen: the Gudem-Rampa Risings 1839-1924' in R. Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I: writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Opium used and described as a poison has a developed literature for Britain when compared with the exiting historiography of India. The issue of child deaths as a result of opium overdose was widely debated in Britain which would subsequently spill over into colonial politics. Equally given David Arnolds argument that it was used to practise infanticide, there is a question of whether incidental overdose or poisoning was exaggerated for political purposes. Research focused on the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows there is a pattern of opium use by working-class mothers in mill towns that dosed children with patent medicines in an identical fashion to British mothers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>128</sup> What this shows is that the material realities of the opium trade provided dangerous solutions to the harsh realities of childcare and emerging industrial workforces.<sup>129</sup> Children, another voiceless group of this new society were frequently dosed with opium that was out of their control. This narrative and argument is similar to David Arnold's that argued the female poisoner had little choice to give opium to children, usually at the direction of husbands and other male figure heads.<sup>130</sup> The birth of drug regulation in Britain and their reaction to child poisonings has no comparable narrative for India. Overall this thesis will seek to fill this gap and discuss British attitudes towards opium and child health in India. It will achieve this by expanding the narrative to medicinal and religious attitudes of the period and how they viewed the issue. Equally it can then be contrasted with the dominant politically inspired debate of the nineteenth century and the consequent historiography.

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<sup>128</sup> B. Subho, 'The Paradox of Peasant Worker: Re-conceptualizing workers' politics in Bengal 1890-1939' *Modern Asian Studies* 42:1 (2008) pp. 47-74

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>130</sup> D. Arnold, *Toxic Histories Poison and Pollution in Modern India* (Kindle Edition, Cambridge University Press 2016) P.29

Within India there were numerous operations of the colonial state which could also serve to exaggerate or inflate attitudes about the health impact of opium. An increasing reliance on science to impose imperial rule pervaded the systems and official recordings of the state.<sup>131</sup> Many were based on assumptions of ‘the orient’ and allowed the west to assert its dominance by providing official histories to the population of India. Despite their rationalist underpinnings these histories served to subjugate and provided the most important tool for imposition of foreign rule.<sup>132</sup> Knowledge, tainted by the British national interest and a plethora of oriental categorisation, which provided more self-fulfilling attitudes as the literature increased. B.S. Cohn showed how the Census of India contained numerous inaccuracies that fuelled the ambition of administrators.<sup>133</sup> They would request more resources based on overestimated household populations, in order to increase their personal influence and power. The attitudes created by bustling streets and tightly packed cities from qualitative reports fitted within the British conception of Indian society as dense and chaotic.<sup>134</sup> This was a mistake repeated many times in the post-rebellion Indian Census. Similarly, the *Royal Opium Commission* (1893-5) was another enlightenment inspired report which had its own founding myths and biases at its conception. The report would draw upon opium consumption statistics from the Indian Census, which also demonstrates the explicit relationship between these surveys left unexplored by the historian. A knowledge base and colonial archive built on shifting priorities and imperial ambition has been argued to unveil more

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<sup>131</sup> I. Inkster, ‘Science, Technology, and imperialism in India’ in Habib, S.I., Raina, D., (Eds.) *Social History of Science in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>132</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>133</sup> B.S. Cohn, ‘The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia’, in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and other essays*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 6<sup>th</sup> impression, 2000)

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*

about the British State than its subjects. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued that the subaltern can never escape these systems especially in the context of post-colonial feminism.<sup>135</sup> However, this conclusion and the Subaltern School have shown what is possible with colonial sources when focus is shifted to what has been misrepresented or lost. Ranajit Guha, the absent father of the school of thought, once argued that colonial materials such as gazetteers and official histories formed the backbone of colonial power and discourse.<sup>136</sup> The opposite of this elite discourse was the actions of the subaltern and by reversing the use of language the historian can arrive at the prose of the counter-insurgent and a new history of South Asia.<sup>137</sup> In the lexicon of the nineteenth century both British and Indian writers produced a suppressive effect on opium users and drug users in general. If there was a comparable opposite defining of opium consumption and consumers, the question also asked is, whether these attitudes and dialogue was colonial in origin or the post-colonial subaltern.

In the same way, this introduction has relied on the incidental mention of opium use within other histories reading them largely against their intended overall narrative. Colonial literature and the Subaltern School enjoy a similar relationship to the primary literature given the methodological underpinnings that seek to deconstruct and or read against the grain. Crucially if a history of opium can be written for the Government of India it will be found between the silences and political outbursts of

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<sup>135</sup> G. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988) pp. 271-313.

<sup>136</sup> R. Guha, 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency' in R. Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies II: writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

the period. This will ultimately answer what attitudes about opium were driving the Government of India's policies from 1857-1906?

## **The thesis structure**

The attitudes and policies of the Government of India from 1857 to 1906 were various and not the homogenised position that the literature has so far presented them as. What this thesis seeks to examine is the gap in the literature situated roughly in the period of crown rule and predominately within the late nineteenth century. It will examine what were the differences in opinion and attitudes towards opium that drove or critiqued policy. As such it will not focus on the revenue department given economic and political accounts have already devoted a great amount of attention to this aspect of Government policy both from the perspective of Britain and its economic relationship with China. Similarly, forests have been felled to document the Opium Wars given its watershed status as the opening of China to imperialism which has drove the narrative further east and away from India. From 1857 to 1906 many changes in policy took place that did not follow a distinctive pattern or revenue rationale which stemmed from competing interests within the Government of India. While Government sought to preserve the monopoly, there were many other departments and policies impacted by changing attitudes towards opium. The thesis will examine when and where these changes occurred with a focus on the Government of India's various departments in a thematic structure. It will also examine critics of Government that were driving attitudes and changes from outside the Government bureaucracy. As such the structure of the thesis is thematic rather than following a strict chronology to account for these changes. This will also help avoid repetition from the historiography which attributes a logical structure to decisions and events the British took. This is because the thesis rejects the simplified

version that the British were motivated by revenue objectives considering the plethora of competing attitudes and interests within the hierarchy of government.

Chapter one will examine the attitudes of the Viceroy and Secretary of State for India and their relationship with the British parliament. This will contribute to answering the thesis question by explaining how the differences in attitudes between these two posts and parliament led to policy decisions at the highest level of state. The literature has previously ignored these figures, arguably the two most important officials in terms of their influence and power within the hierarchy of the Government of India. The content of this section will seek to remedy this by focusing on key turning points such as Joseph Pease's 1891 anti-opium motion in parliament and the appointment of the Royal Opium Commission in 1893. It will also discuss the Royal Warrant which appointed the commission and explore the origin and scope of the commission. It will briefly examine failed attempts to reform the financial basis of opium in the 1860s before examining the return of the anti-opium motion in 1906 which was successful. The Secretary of State and Viceroy agreed to a new course of action which would protect the opium revenue but also answer their critics. These critics were both international in character but also internal in the form of Indian nationalists. The difference in attitudes and policy recommendations was resolved by the Secretary of State and Viceroy who ultimately worked together to answer their critics and perpetuate the civilised image of the British Raj. This came at the expense of at least denouncing the opium trade as morally indefensible in name. The official pronouncement allowed them to maintain the private attitude or view that this was necessary in light of strategic considerations and to continue the trade with minimal outside investigation.

Chapter two will examine the attitudes and policies within the Opium Department of the Government of India. The literature has not considered opium agents and the limitations they faced when extending poppy cultivation. However, historians in their effort to document the history of peasant cultivators has given multiple examples of how labour was organised and controlled which will provide context to the analysis. J.F. Richards one of the few dedicated articles on the topic of opium cultivators during crown rule relied heavily on the testimony of George Watt, who penned the *Economic products of India*.<sup>138</sup> An individual who never actually worked at the department responsible for overseeing poppy cultivation and opium manufacture. This was a wider issue identified by Guha in the historiography critiquing the Cambridge school's use of gazetteers which were aggregations of primary source material edited by colonial officials rather than first-hand testimony.<sup>139</sup> This chapter will seek to remedy the lack of sources consulted through use of annual reports and illuminate what were the major changes and innovations of the department. This thesis will examine the attitudes of officials and how their relationship with cultivators drove policy. Factors such as control of soil, irrigation and financial structures imposed on cultivators will be examined. It will explain how policy was aimed at extending cultivation but was hampered by colonial attitudes that sought to dominate both the land and the cultivators it employed.

Chapter three will examine diplomatic attitudes towards smugglers and Maharajas that informed the policies of the Foreign Department of the Government of India.

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<sup>138</sup> J. F. Richards, 'The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium in the Nineteenth Century' *Modern Asian Studies*, 15:1 (1981), pp. 59-82

<sup>139</sup> R. Guha, 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency' in R. Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies II: writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993).



Policies of the East India Company has within the literature been presented as singular in character driven by revenue objectives. This was described as a policy that suppressed smuggling with an attitude that regarded the practise as a form of subversion within the early nineteenth century.<sup>140</sup> However, under the period of crown rule this policy has not been reconsidered in the literature in the light of the aftermath of the 1857 rebellion. Policy became much more flexible considering political agreements and was also a product of the attitudes and decisions of Residents working within the Princely States. There is no literature that examines these figures and the important role they played in shaping and enforcing the opium laws outside British ruled provinces. Political agents and police had to interpret how to enforce policy within different spaces and limitations. They had to navigate aspects of modernity such as telegraph and railways' relationship with smuggling. Finally, it will examine the relationship of opium laws to imperial expansion and the limits of influence they faced at the frontiers. This chapter will close by examining how international competition and politics also operated within these spaces. Multiple factors and attitudes drove policy in different directions to maintain diplomatic relations between the Government of India and Maharajas often at the expense of the opium monopoly.

Chapter four will examine religious attitudes and their impact as critics of the Government of India. While the literature has examined this group and its organisation it has yet to consider what was the origin or driving force behind their anti-opium attitudes beyond religious considerations. For example, Kathleen Lodwick has argued that the moralist element of the anti-opium movement was

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<sup>140</sup> A. Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion: Colonialism, Indian Merchants, and the Politics of Opium* (New Delhi: New Age International, 1998).

characteristic of a crusade or religiously motivated.<sup>141</sup> On the other hand, Diköter argued Christian denominations such as Catholic archive and missionaries uncovered no evidence that they opposed the opium trade questioning whether these attitudes were widely religiously inspired.<sup>142</sup> This chapter will seek to address this aspect of the literature by examining missionary literature that critiqued opium use within India and the Government of India's response. It will discuss various pamphlets and organisations exploring three broad themes. Firstly, it will include missionaries' use of pamphlets and their relation to parliament. Secondly, it will examine the content of these pamphlets particularly their attitudes towards the protection of the Christian family. Finally, it will examine the GOI's stance and response to these claims from civil surgeons, chemical examiners and Catholicism. Kour argued that temperance values and nationalism were also intimately related to attitudes towards opium. As this thesis will show the beginnings of these organisational links are found in the nineteenth century in terms of shared anti-opium attitudes with British religious leaders who advocated temperance values.<sup>143</sup> Overall it will answer what attitudes were driving religious critics and the reactionary policies of the Government of India they helped stimulate. Importantly temperance reformers and Government officials could be one and the same person as the chapter will discuss.

Chapter five will discuss medical attitudes towards opium. The literature unsurprisingly has become somewhat obsessed with the medical concept of addiction

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<sup>141</sup> K. L. Lodwick, *Crusaders against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874-1917* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

<sup>142</sup> F. Diköter, L. Laamann, and Xun Zhou, *Narcotic Culture: A Social History of Opiates in Modern China* (Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council, 2004).

<sup>143</sup> K.D. Kour, 'The opium question in colonial Assam', in H.Fischer-Tine, and J. Tschurennev (eds.) *A History of Alcohol and Drugs in Modern South Asia: Intoxicating affairs* (Routledge: London, 2014).

and its origins. It has also been a foundation block of the Trocki thesis which provides the moral character of his argument. Essentially his argument that the opium trade was an evil cartel relies on addicted drug users that were enslaved to its use in China. By comparison this chapter will seek to cover new ground by examining medical attitudes that related to opium's varied use within South Asia. Importantly during this period, the concept of addiction in medical terms had not fully formed. As chapter four will show Government actions were usually couched in the language of temperance and vice rather than addiction. Chapter five will examine doctors' views and attitudes regarding epidemic disease and emergencies, medicine's use of opium mixtures and institutional responses to vice within the Government of India. There were numerous departments and medical motives from military and civil contexts, each with a unique view of opium and how it should be used or prohibited. Again, this group was partly defined by government and missionary doctors both trained in Britain that shared a common medicinal view of opium. This chapter will discuss numerous every day medicinal and recreational uses of opium in India and show it was these multiple situations and institutional responses that informed government policy rather than a uniform approach based on revenue.



**Chapter one: The Viceroy and Secretary of State's attitudes towards opium.**

## Introduction

He seemed to hear a note of exaggeration on both sides; and he heard the words "philanthropists" and "faddists" on the one hand, and "official-minded" on the other bandied about, each reproaching the other, he thought, unreasonably. There was such a thing, and rightly, as the official mind. The official was the man who carried out policy. It was very well for them and for people outside that House to frame conceptions; when they came to apply those conceptions they had to meet difficulties, and of those difficulties the official mind was naturally the exponent. On the other hand, when he heard the word "philanthropist" used reproachfully, he would not forget that those who had been reproached in their day and generation as philanthropists, were the men and women who had done things of which Englishmen were most proud.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter will consider the views of the Viceroy of India and the Secretary of State for India. It will include a discussion of the policies and relationships with parliament of the post-holders from the 1860s onwards. There are four main sections. The first section will discuss financial plans in the 1860s and the question of reform as the Secretary of State contemplated ways to tackle the risk to the administration's budget of relying on revenue from the volatile trade in opium. The second section will examine the reaction of the two officials to the 1891 anti-opium

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Opium Traffic' The Secretary of State for India (Mr. Morley,) *HC Deb 30 May 1906 vol 158 cc494-516*

movement in parliament and the formation of the Royal Opium Commission. The third will follow on from this analysing the origins of the royal warrant.

The fourth and final section will discuss the attitudes of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State in 1906 when the anti-opium movement returned to parliament. As the quote above by the Secretary of State John Morley demonstrates, tensions remained about the issue in a period which eventually saw a shift in policy.

The chapter is designed to show that even at the highest levels of the colonial administration in India there was no single attitude or approach to the opium trade. After the revolt against British rule in 1857 the Government of India Act of the following year created the Secretary of State post in the cabinet which answered to parliament.<sup>2</sup> Under this reorganisation the Viceroy and Governor-General of India governed the colonies while reporting to the Secretary of State.<sup>3</sup> As Crispin Bates has argued, the objective was to give the Secretary of State in London, ‘supreme control over Indian affairs, and the governor General in India was reduced to his acting agent’.<sup>4</sup> Over the half century or so from the 1860s to the first decade of the twentieth-century the Viceroy in India and the Secretary of State in London found themselves buffeted by a number of often competing considerations as they sought to answer the question of whether the Government of India should continue to be involved in opium commerce. The extent to which the various post-holders agreed or differed in their answers, and the reasons that they adopted the positions that they did, will be outlined below. This chapter contrasts three episodes in the history of

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<sup>2</sup> Ś. Bandyopādhyāya, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, P. 179

<sup>3</sup> Ibid P. 180

<sup>4</sup> C. Bates, *Subalterns and the Raj* P.80

opium to show how relationships fluctuated at the highest levels of the imperial administration with regards to opium. The first came in the decade after the revolt against British rule in India of 1857 as the new administration there sought to reform what had been left behind by the East India Company. The second comes from almost a quarter of a century later as anti-opium reformers in the UK sought to force commerce in the substance onto the political agenda. The last one draws on the events that saw the British empire's trade in opium began to come to a close.



## Opium Accord in the 1860s

Opium revenue was unstable for the Government of India. Crop failures, drought, and famine would impact upon crops so that it was difficult to estimate a yield in any given year and therefore what the income to the administration was likely to be. For example, a letter from the Viceroy of India to The Secretary of State in February 1867 revealed that there was a £1,800,000 deficit in the budget. Around one million of this was due to the shortfall of the opium revenue from a previous estimate.<sup>5</sup> As far as he could see the only way to make good this hole in the financial plan was to raise taxation, which seemed unwise in a time of crop failures, and which certainly looks unlikely given the recent experience of revolt in 1857.<sup>6</sup>

A move to reform the financial basis of the opium revenue was therefore put forward by the Secretary of State, Sir Stafford Northcote in 1868. He wrote to the Viceroy John Lawrence on the 26 March 1868 suggesting, ‘you should adopt some system for averaging the opium revenue’<sup>7</sup> and explained further;

that is, that you should carry a fixed amount to the credit of the revenue every year, carrying the balance in good years to an insurance fund, and drawing upon that fund in bad years.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Letter from Lawrence to Cranborne, 7 Feb 1867*, BL Mss Eur F90/32A, no.11 P. 93

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* P. 93

<sup>7</sup> *Letter from Northcote to Lawrence, 26 Mar 1868*, British library (BL) Mss Eur F90/29, no.15 P. 58

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* P. 58

The potential of this plan was that it addressed a financial weakness within the Indian Government finances which was due to its reliance on cash crops like opium. On the one hand the drug could create large amounts of capital from exports but the internal production was prone to widespread crop failures and blight. Revenue was therefore unpredictable. He ended his message to Lawrence with the advice that, ‘This is worth considering. It seems the only chance of discarding the gambling element from your budgets’.<sup>9</sup>

In a further communication Northcote confirmed his dissatisfaction with the current system hoping action would be taken among the Council of India, ‘I hope Sir R. Temple will consider the possibility of averaging the receipts from Opium.’<sup>10</sup> Temple was recently appointed as a financial member of council in April 1868 one month before Northcote communicated his hopes to Lawrence.<sup>11</sup> He elaborated on his understanding of good and bad opium years to Lawrence arguing against the current system, ‘I mean that instead of saying one year I will take opium at so much, and another year I will take it at something else’.<sup>12</sup> This method combined with the fragility of the crop meant, ‘all which estimates are liable to turn out wholly erroneous’.<sup>13</sup> He believed that it should be the role of the Finance Minister to declare that he would carry the credit of every year to a separate account for opium so that ‘if the produce in the year should be more than the fixed sum the surplus would be

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<sup>9</sup> *Letter from Northcote to Lawrence, 26 Mar 1868* Ibid P. 58

<sup>10</sup> *Letter from Northcote to Lawrence, 8 May 1868*, BL Mss Eur F90/29, no.23 P. 91

<sup>11</sup> David Steele, ‘Temple, Sir Richard, first baronet (1826–1902)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36452>, accessed 21 Dec 2015]

<sup>12</sup> *Letter from Northcote to Lawrence, 8 May 1868*, BL Mss Eur F90/29, no.23 Ibid P. 91

<sup>13</sup> Ibid P. 91

carried to a separate account'.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, if 'it if were less, the deficiency should be made up by drawing upon that separate account.'<sup>15</sup> This method would allow for a balance between expenditure and income without 'disturbance by Opium fluctuations'.<sup>16</sup>

The Viceroy John Lawrence seems to have fully concurred with his colleague back in London as he could see the sense in stabilising opium finances. His initial reply to Northcote on 25 April 1868 stated that the 'suggestion regarding the opium revenue is well worth consideration. I had been thinking of something of the same kind.'<sup>17</sup>

He elaborated;

My idea was that we should take credit for a given sum annually from this source, say 6,000,000: and that all above that should go to redeem so much public debt, & and all below it be made up by borrowing.<sup>18</sup>

The Secretary of State was of a similar mind as he proposed that, 'the Surplus carried to the separate account would of course, be utilised by lending it out for Public loans'<sup>19</sup> and went on that it 'might form the basis of a system of advances and repayments, which I think might be usefully introduced into your finance.'<sup>20</sup> In reply

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<sup>14</sup> *Letter from Northcote to Lawrence, 8 May 1868 P. 91*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid P. 91*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid P. 91*

<sup>17</sup> *Letter from Lawrence to Northcote, 25 Apr 1868, BL Mss Eur F90/33, no.28 P. 130*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid P. 130*

<sup>19</sup> *Letter from Northcote to Lawrence, 8 May 1868, BL Mss Eur F90/29, no.23 P. 91*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid P. 91*

Lawrence again confirmed his approval of the suggestion on 4 June 1868 writing, 'I quite concur in your views as regards the broker mode of dealing with the opium revenue as a financial arrangement.'<sup>21</sup> Both the Secretary of State in London and the Viceroy in Calcutta were in full agreement on how to proceed. The plan was not put into action though. The two senior administrators had not reckoned on opposition from the Viceroy's Executive Council. This was established by the Government of India Act of 1858 and was to act as an advisory body to the Viceroy. In 1861 it was transformed from an advisory body to a cabinet. Although the Viceroy could overrule the Council most business proceeded on the basis of the way in which the voting proceeded when the Council met.

In August 1868 the Viceroy put the plans to the Council only to report to Northcote back in London that 'They talk of the arrangement as tantamount to a sinking fund to which, so far as I can see, it bears no analogy'.<sup>22</sup> He explained that the Council rejected the proposal because it was viewed as needlessly reserving revenue for the Government of India that could be put to use back in Britain. He reported that Council members were quite intransigent on this point, 'many of the members feel displeased with the Budget Despatch, and many are indisposed to any suggestion which does not fall in with their views'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Letter from Lawrence to Northcote, 4 Jun 1868*, BL Mss Eur F90/33, no.40 P. 40

<sup>22</sup> *Letter from Lawrence to Northcote, 11 Aug 1868* BL Mss Eur F90/33, no.58 P. 237

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid* P. 237

As a result Lawrence proposed to proceed with the support of Sir Richard Temple, the new Finance Secretary on the Council, in order to ‘make a special effort on the subject’.<sup>24</sup> He did not seem optimistic though as he closed the letter with, ‘there is little chance of accord’.<sup>25</sup> By September 1868 he reported a ‘great battle’ over the proposed £6,500,000 which was the average value of opium revenues for three years.<sup>26</sup> Lawrence described how he and Temple ‘stood to our guns’ against the council, and anticipated more of these ‘uphill struggles’ with plans to reform the salt and certificate tax.<sup>27</sup> It seemed that the Viceroy and his Council had clashed recently and he suspected that much of the opposition to his plans for opium were down to their feeling ‘very sore’ at his recent success on plans for the certificate tax.<sup>28</sup> In the end an election back in Britain brought the stand-off to an end as a Conservative administration came to power. Northcote was replaced as Secretary of State for India by the Duke of Argyll and Lawrence lost his posting in India to the ill-fated Lord Mayo. The latter quickly resolved to continue the work of his predecessor in reorganizing the finances of the British government there, and he was quick to acknowledge that opium was a gambling transaction from beginning to end.<sup>29</sup> However, he believed that the backing of opium merchants by Government would always carry such a risk and they had to learn why and how to balance this element.<sup>30</sup> He also committed himself to a less confrontational approach, reassuring the Secretary of State that ‘you shall be kept informed of all that goes on, but for

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<sup>24</sup> *Letter from Lawrence to Northcote*, 11 Aug 1868 P. 237

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* P. 237

<sup>26</sup> *Letter from Lawrence to Northcote*, 26 Sep 1868, BL Mss Eur F90/33, no.69 P. 266 -267

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid* P. 266-277

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid* P. 273

<sup>29</sup> *Letter from Mayo to Argyll*, 26 Apr 1869, BL Mss Eur B380/1, f393

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*

obvious reasons the greatest reticence in public on this subject is very desirous'.<sup>31</sup>

The episode shows that even when there was agreement on opium policy between two of the most senior officers of the British state whose responsibility it was, they could be thwarted by other groups and competing interests.

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<sup>31</sup>*Letter from Mayo to Argyll, 26 Apr 1869, BL Mss Eur B380/1, f393*

## The Pease Motion

The Royal Opium Commission (ROC) remains controversial as some insist that it was a 'whitewash' of the opium issue designed to justify the revenues taken from trading in the drug by the British administration in India while others have argued that it was nothing of the sort, John Richards going so far as to say that it was a 'cultural defence' of South Asia against interfering British moralists.<sup>32</sup> Most of the discussion of the ROC, however, focuses on its outcomes and far less attention has been paid to its origins.

By 1891 the pressure on the government in Britain to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate British commerce in opium in Asia was building in Parliament and across the country.<sup>33</sup> The Secretary of State was Richard Assheton Cross who became Viscount Cross and the Viceroy was Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, Lord Lansdowne. Both served at the time in a Conservative administration which was to fall from power in the summer of 1892. The opium issue came to a head in April 1891 when the head of the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade (SSOT), Sir Joseph Pease, tabled a motion in the House of Commons that declared the Indian opium traffic to be 'morally indefensible'. This blurred party lines as Conservatives

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<sup>32</sup> V. Berridge, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use and Drug Control Policy in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England* (London: Free Association Books, 1999). \*Numerous historians conclude that the commission was a whitewash. Berridge concludes on the same judgement but remarks it is an understudied area.

J. Richards, 'Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895', *Modern Asian Studies* 36:1 (2002) is the only dedicated attempt at a political examination. It focuses on the individual members of the appointed commission rather than the Viceroy and Secretary of State for India or the reports content.

<sup>33</sup> J. Madancy (ed.), *Royal Commission on Opium, 1893-94: Reports, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendices*, (New Delhi: Ganesha, 2003).

by Joyce Madancy (Author), Joyce A. Madancy (Editor)

like Sir James Ferguson, previously Governor of Bombay, shared in the moral outrage of liberal agitators.<sup>34</sup> Kathleen Lodwick has shown that the motion had formidable backing in the Commons but never passed owing to an amendment that confused the issue with a safeguard for the financial standing of India.<sup>35</sup>

The fall-out from this episode shows how divided were attitudes and approaches at the highest levels of government. A set of correspondence survives which shows that the Viceroy and the Secretary of State had different interpretations of these events and also of how to proceed. The latter wrote in April in the immediate aftermath of the 1891 motion that the Viceroy was not to take it 'too seriously'<sup>36</sup>, a message he repeated a week later when he added that 'I thought it only right to send you a telegram (dated 8th April) to say that you were not to take the proceedings in the House of Commons too seriously'.<sup>37</sup> He assured his counterpart that no rash action would be contemplated, 'I told Mr. Smith that Lord Salisbury must be consulted before any answer could be given.'<sup>38</sup> Cross also added an explanation of why the affair had become so messy which directed blame elsewhere, 'I think it was very disgraceful that the members of the late Government did not vote with us, but ran away.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Royal Opium Commission, Volume 1: Minutes of evidence 8 September to 6 September 1893 (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) \*At the opening of the London proceedings Joseph Pease leader of the anti-opium society opened with the former governor's testimony against opium.

<sup>35</sup> K. Lodwick, *Crusaders against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874-1917* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> *From Secretary of State, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1891, Opium*, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/2 P. 1

<sup>37</sup> *From Secretary of State, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1891, Opium*, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/2 P. 1

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid* P.1

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid* P.1



Subsequent correspondence from the Secretary of State to the Viceroy confirms this picture of efforts to control concern in India. Explanations were provided of the surprise success of Pease's motion and of the 'agitators' early in May.<sup>40</sup> He opened his telegram to the Viceroy with 'I was much annoyed at the vote of the House of Commons on the opium question. Mr. Smith assures me that the whips did their best.'<sup>41</sup> He also stated that 'I believe the real fact to be that the agitators had deluged the constituencies with literature and exaggerated statements'<sup>42</sup> and that 'the constituencies had deluged their members with the same.'<sup>43</sup> He thought this explained why 'many of our men did not come down to the House to the after-dinner debate, and that of those that did come a very large number walked out of the House, and several voted the wrong way, giving a cheap vote which cost them nothing, to please the agitators'.<sup>44</sup>

The Secretary of State continued in this vein. He reported the absence of strong voices that protected the opium trade such as Sir John Gorst who was absent due to poor health and again pointed the finger at the opposition, complaining that his Council was, 'very sore ... the worst of it was that the members of the late Government would not say a word'<sup>45</sup> and that others let him down, 'I had been led to believe that Sir. U.K. Shuttleworth would certainly speak for us.'<sup>46</sup> To deflect

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<sup>40</sup> *From Secretary of State, 8th May 1891 Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/3 P. 2*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid P. 2*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid P. 2*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid P. 2*

<sup>44</sup> *From Secretary of State, 8th May 1891 Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/3 P. 2*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid P. 2*

<sup>46</sup> *From Secretary of State, 8th May 1891 Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/3 P. 2*

attention away from the immediate crisis he ended with the more general conclusion that ‘all this is very sad, as showing a want of the sense of responsibility’.<sup>47</sup>

As the man in parliamentary frontline Cross was eager for tools to use to undermine the anti-opium position. The first was information. As will be seen the Government of India was not always keen to provide this for fear of adding fuel to the debate, so the Secretary of State back in London had to try to put a positive gloss on his requests.

I am sure that there is much ignorance on the subject, and one of the more sensible of those who stir in the matter is the Bishop of Durham, who is most anxious for information.<sup>48</sup>

He went on to complain that the data that he had to hand had proven unsatisfactory in trying to ward off further action from Pease and his colleagues.<sup>49</sup> More significantly, he clearly had plans to take the initiative in the House of Commons. The first issue on which he envisaged progress was that of the Government of India’s use of a monopoly in Bengal to control opium sales there. In May he noted that ‘some of my colleagues are much opposed to the manner in which the Government is

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<sup>47</sup> *From Secretary of State, 8th May 1891 Opium P. 2*

<sup>48</sup> *From Secretary of State, 15th May 1891 Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/4 P. 3*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid P.3*

directly mixed up in the traffic'<sup>50</sup> going on to state that 'they see no objection to a heavy duty.'<sup>51</sup>

In July he added another matter to the discussion, 'your telegram (dated 2<sup>nd</sup> July) warns me that you are against the appointment of any Commission'.<sup>52</sup> Cross believed that appointing a small expert group to look into the opium question would satisfy many supporters of Pease and be an ideal compromise because if a larger committee was decided upon he foresaw 'great difficulty in selecting names that would give satisfaction. As to the small Committee of three, I should have no difficulty in that respect.'<sup>53</sup> Inaction was not an option he reminded the Viceroy, and Cross took the opportunity to remind his colleague that

There will, if we do not take great care, be a sweeping storm next session in the House of Commons, as there was in the matter of the Contagious Diseases and Abkari.<sup>54</sup>

This was a reference to the campaigns for repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1884 and the call in the House of Commons for reform of alcohol taxation in India in 1889.<sup>55</sup> This led the Secretary of State to warn the Viceroy of changing attitudes in

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<sup>50</sup> *From Secretary of State, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1891 Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/4 P. 3*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid P. 3*

<sup>52</sup> *From Secretary of State, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1891, Opium, TNA CAB/37/29/19/5 P. 4*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid P. 4*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid P. 4*

<sup>55</sup> P. Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920* (Ashgate: Hampshire, 2005) P. 53

Britain<sup>56</sup> and to warn him that ‘meanwhile as wise men, we must make all the use of our time at our disposal.’<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless the Viceroy wrote from India in the wake of the controversy to complain of the embarrassment it had caused his administration.

The Vote of the House of Commons on Sir J. Pease’s motion has naturally provoked a very strong feeling here. I find it difficult to believe that sufficient care is taken in cases of this kind by the Government whips to avert a defeat. This is not by any means the first time in which the Government of India has been placed in a most embarrassing position by similar negligence, and if such occurrences are repeated, either the government of India will become impossible or the authority of the House of Commons must be seriously impaired.<sup>58</sup>

Correspondence between the two suggests reveals that both were coming round to the idea of some sort of official enquiry in 1891 in order to take the steam out of the anti-opium campaign in Parliament, there was some disagreement on just what form this should take. The Secretary of State imagined it to be a three man ‘small’ commission.<sup>59</sup> However the Viceroy was keen to have something larger to avoid the

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<sup>56</sup> *From Secretary of State, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1891, Opium TNA CAB/37/29/19/5 P. 4*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid. P. 4*

<sup>58</sup> *From Viceroy, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1891. Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/2 pp. 1*

<sup>59</sup> *From Secretary of State, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1891, Opium. Extracts From Private Correspondence with The Viceroy. Printed for the use of the cabinet. The National Archives (TNA), CAB 37/29/19/5 pp.4 \*The folder is labelled ‘Opium’ and will be used hereafter.*

risk that a smaller group would quickly reach a consensus.<sup>60</sup> He stated when probed on the idea of a commission that, ‘I do not think that the appointment of an Opium Commission of three members ... would have helped matters much’.<sup>61</sup> Lord Lansdowne went on to concede that ‘as to opium, we may eventually be driven to appoint a Royal Commission’<sup>62</sup> and then argued that ‘a strong and fairly numerous Commission would be in my opinion, be less objectionable than your original proposal for a Commission of three members’.<sup>63</sup> The Viceroy emphasised that he believed that a three-member commission could not be relied upon to be ‘moderate’ and he feared it might more easily be swayed by what he called the ‘fanaticism’ he saw in parliamentary discussion.<sup>64</sup> The reason for this was that he perceived three factions with an interest in the opium question, officials appointed by the Government of India (GOI), representatives of the India Office (IO), and the anti-opium reformers.<sup>65</sup> A group with a member from each faction might easily see the man from the GOI outnumbered. Clearly his hope was to dilute critics by immersing them in a larger group.

It was similarly clear that the Bengal opium monopoly was not up for discussion as far as Lord Lansdowne was concerned. Instead he turned attention to Bombay and intervened there to end the taxation structure for opium and the public consumption of the drug. In September 1891 he assured his colleague in London that ‘we have written to the Bombay Government, telling them that they must find some other

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<sup>60</sup> *From Viceroy, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1891, Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/5 pp.4*

<sup>61</sup> *From Viceroy, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1891. Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/5 P.4*

<sup>62</sup> *From Viceroy, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1891. Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/5 P.4*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid P.4*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid P. 1*

<sup>65</sup> *From Viceroy, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1891. Opium, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/5 P. 4*

substitute for the guaranteed minimum vend system'.<sup>66</sup> He tied this to a further measure;

Besides this, a circular has been sent to the Local Governments, telling them that we propose to put a stop to licenses for consumption on the premises.<sup>67</sup>

Bengal was by far the largest market for opium in India and the monopoly there was certainly the most complex government intervention in the supply-side in all of its south Asian territories. Landsdowne later made it explicit that 'I would certainly not touch the question of the Bengal Monopoly at present it would be an extremely difficult subject to deal with' adding 'I do not for a moment believe the abandonment of the monopoly would diminish the use of the drug'.<sup>68</sup> By taking action in the Presidency on the other side of the sub-Continent it seems that the Viceroy was seeking to divert attention rather than effect radical change. He concluded his summary of these events with the note that 'These changes will, I hope, greatly strengthen your position when Parliament meets again'.<sup>69</sup>

It is also worth adding that the Viceroy was not given to providing information beyond that which he thought was useful to his cause. His replies often obfuscated with simple notes along the lines of 'I have written to you in a recent letter with

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<sup>66</sup> From Viceroy, 30th September. *Opium*, TNA, CAB 37/29/19/5 P. 5

<sup>67</sup> Ibid P. 5

<sup>68</sup> From Viceroy, 25th October 1891, *Opium* TNA, CAB 37/29/19/8 P. 7

<sup>69</sup> Ibid P. 5

regard to the Opium Despatch'<sup>70</sup> or 'I have already written to you fully as to opium.'<sup>71</sup> On other occasions he would simply assert, for example that 'our case with regard to the alleged increase of consumption is strong'<sup>72</sup> or that 'I cannot help thinking that the evidence with which we have supplied you ... should be sufficient to satisfy the House of Commons.'<sup>73</sup> By the end of the year his position was terse, and created the impression of someone who felt that he had done everything he could and would not be providing any further information or policy initiatives; 'I will take no further steps until you have considered the Despatch and are able to tell me the conclusion at which you have arrived'.<sup>74</sup>

The Secretary of State's responses show that his eyes were firmly on the political context in Britain rather than on the place of opium revenues in the finance of the empire. In October 1891 he warned the Viceroy darkly that 'should the Government change after the next election you need expect no mercy.'<sup>75</sup> His response on concessions made in Bombay was equally mindful of the reception back in the UK

I agree with you that it would be quite impossible to explain it satisfactorily, or with any hope of success, either in parliament or on the platform. I am very glad therefore that this is to be all changed. I am also delighted to hear that "opium dens" are to exist no longer.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> From Viceroy, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1891, *Opium* TNA, CAB 37/29/19/8 P. 7

<sup>71</sup> From Viceroy, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1891, P. 6

<sup>72</sup> From Viceroy, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1891, P. 7

<sup>73</sup> From Viceroy 19<sup>th</sup> November 1891, *Opium* TNA, P. 7

<sup>74</sup> From Viceroy 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1891, *Opium* TNA, P. 7

<sup>75</sup> From Secretary of State, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1891. *Opium*. TNA CAB/37/29/19/7 P. 6

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid* P. 6

On being told that he should not encourage the idea of doing away with the Government monopoly in Bengal Cross wrote ‘on this last point I feel sure that I should have many members of the Cabinet against me, so please take the matter in hand.’<sup>77</sup> His concern with how intransigence on the issue would be received in London was clearly driving his approach to the issue of opium revenues.

This spat in the immediate wake of the Pease motion on opium of 1891 is revealing and offers new perspectives. For example, much has been made of the arrival of a new Prime Minister in 1892 and the personal commitment of William Gladstone to an opium commission.<sup>78</sup> The evidence above shows that as early as 1891 there was agreement among the highest levels of the government of India that some form of commission would take place, although opinions hardened early on about what precisely this should consist of. Historians have also shown some interest in the selection of members and their political backgrounds.<sup>79</sup> However, what this neglects is the political conflict between the Secretary of State and Viceroy that led to the *number* of members that would make up the commission in the first place and the importance of this debate for calculations about its outcome. These clearly show that from the very start of discussions that were to lead to the Royal Opium Commission

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<sup>77</sup> *From Secretary of State, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1891. Opium.* TNA CAB/37/29/19/7 P. 6

<sup>78</sup> M. Jay, *Emperor of Dreams: Drugs in the Nineteenth Century* (Sawtry: Dedalus, 2000). \* Mike Jay’s chapter on opium argued Gladstone used to lace his coffee with laudanum before big speeches in the commons. The former anecdote is not referenced and is not replicated elsewhere in the literature which stresses his anti-opium position.

<sup>79</sup> See J. Richards, ‘Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895’, *Modern Asian Studies* 36:1 (2002) is the only dedicated attempt at a political examination. It focuses on the individual members of the appointed commission rather than the Viceroy and Secretary of State for India or the commissions reports content.



senior figures in imperial government were working out ways of ensuring that it was put together in ways likely to produce a favourable outcome. Perhaps most important of all for this thesis is the observation that throughout there was disagreement among those senior figures. Once the dealings of the British administration in opium in India were subjected to the disapproval of the House of Commons the correspondence detailed here shows that the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India took very different positions on how to proceed.

## **The Royal Warrant**

The royal rather than parliamentary authority was another important milestone in the formation of commission. This was cause for disagreement between the Home Office and India Office on who would countersign appointment of said authority. John Wodehouse 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Kimberley and the Secretary of State for India 1892-1894 under Gladstone was a seasoned colonialist having previously served as Secretary of State for the Colonies and Under-Secretary of India. His legacy was a symbolic addition to the royal warrant which is an easily overlooked aspect of how the commission was officially appointed.

The India Office and Home Office had been exchanging drafts of appointments for the Royal Opium Commission and on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1893 the latter received an attached minute highlighted two unusual requests,

The India Office have been in communication with us, in anticipation of this letter, as is the preparation of the Commission. The accompanying draft Commission has accordingly been prepared & submitted to the India Office with certain queries which Lord Kimberley has answered. Mr Wollaston of the Revenue, Statistics & Correspondence Department brought back the draft to us today. There are two unusual things which Lord Kimberley we understand is very anxious to have: one is, that the Commission may be countersigned by himself...the other that the MPs on the Commission may be described as such in the Royal Warrant...<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Minute: Opium Traffic in India, Requests steps to be taken for the preparation of the usual document formally constituting the Royal Commission of Enquiry. Names of the Members attached.*

There was a continued exchange between the Home office, and India Office who argued around what was the correct procedure for obtaining a royal warrant. The Home Office were quick to point out that the India Office's jurisdiction in this matter was not established practise. They asserted this in response to the Secretary of State claiming they had done so for royal commissions in the past and memorials for officers.<sup>81</sup>

This was claimed by Mr Wollaston in the India Office and Lord Kimberley who left a memorandum with the draft detailing the warrants. However, following this memorandum, the Home Office failed to verify the claims of the India Office finding no trace of these warrants in archives,

Search for these Warrants has been made in our books but no trace of them, or authority for issuing such Commissions, is to be found in this Department. Moreover the Warrants, which are printed with the Reports of the Commissions are prepared differently, in several respects, from H.O. Commissions ; so that there is no doubt that they were issued by the India Office, are therefore not support to the application now made that the present Commission may now be Countersigned by the S. of S. for India.<sup>82</sup>

The jurisdiction of the Home Office had been counter argued by the Secretary of State by citing two other cases namely the November 1853 Indian Law Commission, & the Colonial Exhibition in 1884 which saw the India Office replace the Home office as the conduit to royal warrants,

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*Folio contains multiple letters, accompanying minutes and drafts filed under B15025 and drafts Home Office (HO) 45/9875/B 15025, The National Archives TNA. P. 1-2*

<sup>81</sup>Memorandum: Mr Wollaston, herewith the draft of the commission Home Office (HO) 45/9875/B 15025, TNA P. 3

<sup>82</sup>17<sup>th</sup> August 1893, Note from Home Office signed C.D. (HO) 45/9875/B 15025, TNA P. 4

In accordance with the precedents of the Indian Law Commission in November 1853 and the Indian & Colonial Exhibition in 1884, - the procedure would seem to be for the India Office to settle the terms of the commission who are to be the members & to obtain H.M. Pleasure on these points, & then to write officially to this department for the preparation of commission itself.<sup>83</sup>

While the record of this activity could not be located in the Home Office archives they waived on which department actually had authority in these cases,

Royal Commissions on Indian Subjects are extremely rare, in the records of the H.O., & the India Office would know better, perhaps, than we do, whether all Royal Commissions on Indian Subjects are issued through the Home Secretary.<sup>84</sup>

This evidence shows that the Secretary and India Office had continuing influence on the scope and tenor of the Royal Opium commission by reaffirming their knowledge of 'Indian Subjects' among the different administrative branches of the British Government.

In the end Secretary Kimberley's 'unusual' request was granted in October 1893 and is evidenced by the presence of his signature on page vi of the final first volume of the Royal Opium commission on Queen Victoria's royal warrant.<sup>85</sup> The Home Office noted that this was not setting a new precedent for parliamentarians recording this as,

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<sup>83</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> August 1893, Note from Home Office signed C.D. Ibid P. 4

<sup>84</sup> Ibid P. 4

<sup>85</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 1: P. vi*

he [The Home Secretary] sees no objection, although it is, as a rule never the practise to include the membership of Parliament among description of persons in a Royal Warrant.<sup>86</sup>

This purpose of said countersignature and membership being listed was in Kimberley's mind to impress upon 'the natives' the prestige of the membership detailed in the original minute of the Home Office letter stating,

[P.S. The reason why L. Kimberley is desirous of having the membership of Parliament stated, is, that the prestige of such membership is of great weight with the natives of India.]<sup>87</sup>

Within the historiography Metcalf argued that throughout the Disraeli and Gladstone's terms the image of Victoria as the Queen Empress of India was utilised in numerous contexts.<sup>88</sup> The Secretary of State and the India Office encouraged the commission members to be enveloped under her issuing of the warrant. This blurred the distinction between royal and parliamentary authority, to sell the prestige of the members and the commission to India. For this thesis it demonstrates a layer of disagreement between senior officials of the India and Home office just beneath the surface of the Royal Opium Commission.

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<sup>86</sup>Signed CD. 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1893, Home office minute, Folio contains multiple letters, accompanying minutes and drafts filed under B15025. Home Office (HO) 45/9875/B 15025, TNA. Ibid. P. 5

<sup>87</sup> Minute: Opium Traffic in India, Requests steps to be taken for the preparation of the usual document formally constituting the Royal Commission of Enquiry. Names of the Members attached. Folio contains multiple letters, accompanying minutes and drafts filed under B15025 and drafts. Home Office (HO) 45/9875/B 15025, TNA. P. 2

<sup>88</sup> T. R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

## **The Taylor Motion**

The issue resurfaced again in 1906. The question comes up once more then of how far the response was consensus-driven to the point that it could be described as the 'British' position or whether once more there were factions and disagreements. This time round the answer seems to focus on consensus.

By 1906 the Secretary of State was John Morley, who had been appointed the previous year and would serve until 1910. The Viceroy in India was the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Minto, Gilbert Elliot-Murray-Kynynmound, also appointed in 1905 and he would serve the same term in office as his counterpart in London. Both men had experience in colonial government as the former had served as Chief Secretary of Ireland and the latter as Governor-General of Canada. While the former was a Liberal and the latter a Conservative they shared a commitment to the success of the British Empire. They would go on to introduce a set of constitutional adjustments in India in 1909 through the Indian Councils Act that was designed to involve greater numbers of Indians than ever before in the machinery of government there, changes that would come to be known as the Morley-Minto Reforms. They also came together on opium.

In 1906 Theodore Taylor, Liberal MP for Radcliffe cum Farnworth in Lancashire, stood and opened his speech with the following lines:

The Motion standing in his name reaffirmed the conviction of the House that the Indo-Chinese opium trade was morally indefensible and requested His Majesty's Government to take such steps as might be necessary for bringing it to a speedy close. This subject had not been discussed in the House for eleven years, but he was quite sure that hon. Members would admit that a Parliamentary discussion of it was overdue in consequence of the growth of public opinion, attested by the correspondence and telegrams received during the last few days. The first part of his Resolution followed the wording of the Resolution passed in 1895 by a large majority, and the second part was a natural consequence of the first proposition.<sup>89</sup>

Earlier in the year the issue of opium revenues had been re-emerging in the House of Commons with questions about the regulations that governed opium trading with China and the amount of the product sold from India.<sup>90</sup> On the day that the motion was put to the House petitions had arrived there calling for the abolition of the opium trade from Cardiff, Edinburgh and Penarth. Hansard records that after a short debate it was 'Resolved, That this House reaffirms its conviction that the Indo-Chinese opium trade is morally indefensible, and requests His Majesty's Government to take such steps as may be necessary for bringing it to a speedy close'.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Hansard, House of Commons, 22 May 1906 vol 157 c1129

<sup>90</sup> Hansard, House of Commons, 30 April 1906 vol 156 cc233-4

<sup>91</sup> Hansard, House of Commons, 30 May 1906 vol 158 c516.

The British government found itself in a similar position to that of 1891, and this time the reaction could not have been more different at the highest levels of the administration of India. Morley wrote to Minto the day after the vote to explain the outcome.<sup>92</sup> The amount of ‘steam’ built up in England and Scotland, in the words of the Secretary of State, combined with firm election pledges by the recently elected Liberal government accounted for the majority.<sup>93</sup> Instead of his predecessor’s efforts to calm his counterpart in Calcutta, he allowed himself the following outburst.

Let me warn you that it is a lifelong “fad” of mine not to be afraid of either of two words: - “philanthropist” is one, and “agitator” is the other. Most of what is decently good in our world has been done by these two much abused sets of folk, don’t you think so?<sup>94</sup>

Morley’s tone reflected his active participation in the debate in the House of Commons. Following Taylor’s opening speech the Secretary of State had enthusiastically joined in on the side of the ‘agitators’, ending his statement in Parliament with the question ‘This hideous traffic had two sides- the Chinese got their sensual pleasure and paid a terrible price for it, but was not the money we got in return the wages of our national sin?’<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Letter from Morley to Minto 1 Jun 1906*, BL Mss Eur D573/1, f114

<sup>93</sup> *Letter from Morley to Minto 1 Jun 1906*, BL Mss Eur D573/1, f114, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid* P. 1-2

<sup>95</sup> Hansard, House of Commons, May 1906 vol 158 cc494-516



In place of an irritated reply from the Viceroy, as had been the case back in 1891, Minto's response was civil.

I quite agree with you as to "philanthropists" and "agitators." We owe much to both of them. The only thing is that both of them are liable to disregard surrounding circumstances and conditions; and whilst accepting their good intentions and often benefitting by the seed they sow, it must remain with us to judge the possibilities of their aims. Besides, though philanthropists are always honest, I am afraid we cannot say so much for all the agitators.<sup>96</sup>

The opium question was raised once more later in the year when the government of the USA proposed a conference to assemble all those interested in the opium issue in Asia to discuss options.<sup>97</sup> The outcome was the Shanghai Opium Commission in 1909, the first of the international meetings that was to lead to the emergence of the international drugs regulatory system through the League of Nations after the First World War. Morley informed Minto of developments and again made it clear that he felt that the British should participate as to refuse 'will put us unpleasantly wrong with the civilised world, won't it?'<sup>98</sup> He reminded the Viceroy that it would also put them at odds with public opinion. The Viceroy was once again compliant in the same spirit of his response to the parliamentary motion, which was to agree broadly in principle while drawing attention to matters of detail.

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<sup>96</sup> Letter from Minto to Morley 20 Jun 1906, BL Mss Eur D573/8, f99 P. 1

<sup>97</sup> W. McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth-Century*, (Routledge 2000).

<sup>98</sup> *Letter from Morley to Minto 26 Oct 1906*, BL Mss Eur D573/1, f223 P. 7

As to Opium, I agree with you in the risk of refusing to share in the United States proposals. Our great difficulty, here as far as I can see, would be the interference with the opium revenue of Native States.<sup>99</sup>

From this point onwards Morley and Minto worked together and kick-started the process of reducing opium exports from India to China. Morley reported to the House of Commons in February 1907 that the government of the latter had made contact with him regarding a plan to reduce opium production there if opium exports from the colonial administration in South Asia could also be wound down. A year later he was able to report that

On the 29th July last in reply to a Question in this House I explained the proposals which His Majesty's Government had communicated to the Chinese Government for carrying out, in cooperation with that Government, the policy of restriction. I am glad to say that the Chinese Government have accepted with expressions of gratitude our scheme for a progressive reduction of the export of opium from India.<sup>100</sup>

What has come to be known as The Ten Year Agreement of 1907 had taken little more than twelve months for Minto and Morley to thrash out in order to bring to an

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<sup>99</sup> *Letter from Minto to Morley 18 Nov 1906*, Mss Eur D573/10, f35 P. 12

<sup>100</sup> Hansard, House of Commons, 03 February 1908 vol 183 cc511-2.

end a trade that had been established for almost a century. William McAllister has concluded that 'The Ten Year Agreement served as an influential model for the next six decades'.<sup>101</sup>

The reasons for this sudden shift in policy direction, and for the ready cooperation of Minto and Morley in effecting it, are numerous. Morley has been described as a 'Gladstonian Liberal' and shared the former Prime Minister's politics<sup>102</sup> so it was little surprise that he championed the end of the opium trade to China. Moreover, when the issue came to the House of Commons in 1906 it was to a chamber packed with Liberal MPs after their landslide victory of that year which saw them establish a majority of over a hundred seats.

Morley's speech in the House of Commons during the debate of the Taylor motion also revealed another context for understanding the sudden change of direction on opium in Asia.

In that great task, in that civilising mission of the regeneration of the East, whatever our attempts might give us, or might fail in giving us, do not let us fall behind Japan or India.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> W. McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth-Century*, (Routledge 2000), p. 25.

<sup>102</sup> Hamer, David. "Morley, John, Viscount Morley of Blackburn (1838–1923)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 accessed 13 January 2018.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*

These international references were to actions taken by the Meiji Government of Japan after annexing Taiwan in 1895. The colonial administration established there had introduced a licence system to regulate opium use.<sup>104</sup> The reference to India was actually to Burma. The British administration there had banned opium smoking for locals and only allowed it for migrant workers from China and India.<sup>105</sup> Morley's statement should be seen in the context of some of the issues related to imperialism that had begun to emerge in the UK at the start of the twentieth-century. South Africa had been a thorn in the side of the outgoing administration as the Boer War was viewed as a brutal and badly organised fiasco and the place of Chinese workers in the mines there had been likened to 'slavery' by Liberal candidates.<sup>106</sup> Morley's rhetoric can therefore be seen as a renewal of the new government's commitment to empire, but to a certain vision of that which emphasised its moral side through the 'civilizing mission'.

At the cabinet level of the new government Sir Edward Grey the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs also came under pressure from American religious reformers to end the opium trade. One letter in particular he received from Rev. Wilbur F. Craft the International Reform Bureau in Washington D.C. on December 27, 1905 stated that they should follow in Japan and America's example. He opened by recounting his past correspondence with the British stating,

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<sup>104</sup> H. Tsai, *Taiwan in Japan's Empire-Building: An Institutional Approach to Colonial Engineering*, (London: Taylor & Francis, 2008)

<sup>105</sup> A. Wright, *Opium and Empire in Southeast Asia: Regulating Consumption in British Burma*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014).

<sup>106</sup> Spencer, Scott C. (2010) 'British Liberty Stained: "Chinese Slavery", Imperial Rhetoric, and the 1906 British General Election', *Madison Historical Review*: Vol. 7, Article 3. Available at <http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/mhr/vol7/iss1/3>

I have had correspondence with members of the Cabinet of the last two Government of England in regard to two great international questions that are closely related; the protection of the savage races against intoxicants, which destroy the new markets of the world as well as the savages themselves, body and soul...

Those who are interested in this last reform in this country as well as in England are hoping that the new Government will at least do justice to China and to itself, and to the commerce and conscience of the world by allowing China to take the same course which Japan has wisely taken, to its own great benefit, of suppressing opium traffic, which in cutting of \$15,000,000 of revenue from India would we believe add unspeakably to the good name and international influence of the British Empire, especially in the United States and in Japan, and would also <sup>107</sup>

This letter and the reference of a joint American and Japanese condemnation of the opium trade had been written two months after the end of Russo-Japanese war 1904- 1905. The recognition of Japan by America as surpassing a western power also partly fueled these calls for change in policy by the British Government.

There were also strategic considerations for the British to consider following the defeat of Russia. During the 1906 debate on opium Morley explained that

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<sup>107</sup> To Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, From Rev. Wilbur F. Crafts The International Reform Bureau, (FO 371/22) Political China Files 1026-1213, 1906, 22 (FO 371/22) TNA P. 3

More than once in this House they had been told that the great fear of invasion of India came from the north. Now that the great military power of the north had been crippled, surely the military expenditure might be reduced.<sup>108</sup>

In private he wrote to Minto that

China is likely to be a much more troublesome Asiatic neighbour than Russia in the near future. And, by the way, it seems from some recent telegrams as if there were a genuine anti-opium move in China.<sup>109</sup>

For much of the later nineteenth-century the British administration had looked northwards to Russia as the greatest threat to the empire in India.<sup>110</sup> However, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 to 1905 had resulted in victory for the Asian nation and had suggested that the Russian military was not as great a threat as previously reckoned, particularly as it has suffered significant naval losses.<sup>111</sup> Conversely, it had pointed to the emerging potential of Asian nations to rival European powers and to contest their ambitions in that part of the world. Morley's statement within a year

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<sup>108</sup> 'The Opium Traffic.' HC Deb 30 May 1906 vol. 158 cc494-516

<sup>109</sup> *Letter from Morley to Minto, 29 Aug 1906* BL Mss Eur D573/1, f179 P. 3

<sup>110</sup> M. A. Yapp, 'British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India.' *Modern Asian Studies*, 21, (1987). pp 655

<sup>111</sup> S. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

of the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth between Japan and Russia clearly reflects these shifting strategic calculations.

Well documented within the literature the American's also brought their own colonial experience from the Philippines to the negotiating table. In his letter to Sir Edward Grey in 1905 the Reverend Wilbur Crafts included a note,

Mainly to say that I am sending for your examination some very carefully prepared and important literature on this subject, including the important report of our Philippine opium commission, which has been largely turned into law in the enactment of opium prohibition, by our last Congress, for the Philippines. All well wishers of Great Britain and of the new Government will hope that a speedy end is to be made of the long injustice that has been done in China.<sup>112</sup>

American missionaries such as Rev. Wilbur Crafts in Washington and Rev. Charles. H. Brent in the Philippines were backed by the progressive political movement in America which condemned the trade.<sup>113</sup> The report of the Philippine opium commission referenced above was published in 1905 and its analysis also focused on regulations in British territories. This critique included Burmah which was governed by the Government of India.<sup>114</sup> Washington had adopted the policy of banning ships

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<sup>112</sup> *To Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, From Rev. Wilbur F. Crafts The International Reform Bureau, (FO 371/22) Political China Files 1026-1213, 1906, 22 (FO 371/22) TNA P. 3*

<sup>113</sup> Arnold H. Taylor 'American Confrontation with Opium Traffic in the Philippines', *Pacific Historical Review*, 36:3 (Aug., 1967), pp. 307-324

<sup>114</sup> *Report of the committee appointed by the Philippine Commission to investigate the use of opium and the traffic therein and the rules, ordinances and laws regulating such use and traffic in Japan, Formosa, Shanghai, Hongkong, Saigon, Singapore, Burmah, Java, and the Philippine Islands (Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, Washington, Govt. 1905).*

shipping opium to China from the USA as early as 1887.<sup>115</sup> By comparison the shortcomings of the British in terms of policy were highlighted increasing the pressure for an international inquiry.

There were political factors in South Asia that help to explain the shift in policies on opium. After Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905 Indian nationalists had increased their activities in opposition to imperial rule through the Swadeshi movement that included boycotting British goods and public institutions, organising meetings and processions, propaganda through press, and diplomatic contacts.<sup>116</sup> Minto and Morley both sought ways of winning over moderate nationalists with concessions and reforms, even going as far as to agonise over how to invite Gopal Krishna Gokhale, an Indian member of the Imperial Council of the Governor-General of India, to the King's birthday dinner in June 1906 as an equal to the British members of the Viceroy's legislative council.<sup>117</sup> Senior members of the nationalist movement had explicitly opposed the opium trade for a number of years. Dadabhai Naoroji, the first Indian member of the House of Commons, openly advocated an anti-opium position. In his Magnum opus *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901) he dissected the British role in the opium trade and argued that it tarnished the Indian nation both economically and politically.<sup>118</sup> His publication was regularly advertised among Indian temperance literature in the *Abkari* journal that also spread the anti-opium message.<sup>119</sup> Gokhale shared these critiques and

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<sup>115</sup> W. B. McAllister, *Drug diplomacy in the twentieth century : an international history*

<sup>116</sup> C. Bates, *Subalterns and Raj: South Asia since 1600* (Routledge, 2007).

<sup>117</sup> *Letter from Minto to Morley 20 Jun 1906*, BL Mss Eur D573/8, f99 P. 1

<sup>118</sup> D. Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (London: S. Sonnenschein, 1901)

<sup>119</sup> *The Abkari: The Quarterly Organ of the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association*. (London: Anglo-Indian Temperance Association, 1890-1932.)



convictions.<sup>120</sup> Action on opium can be seen as an early effort by both the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy to make concessions to the concerns of moderate Indian nationalists in order to see off a more radical turn.

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<sup>120</sup> B.R Nanda, *Gokhale, the Indian moderates and the British Raj* (Delhi: Oxford University Press 1998)

## Conclusion

In tackling the question of what drove British policies towards opium between 1857 and 1906 this chapter has concentrated on the highest levels of the administration of India in that period. It has shown that British policies changed over the period, and that there was rarely agreement on how to approach the issue even among senior officials.

In the decade after the British government took direct control of India in 1858 it became clear to the authorities that opium was a large financial asset but also a liability owing to risks of crop failure and fluctuating yields. The Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy agreed that the liability and the risk ought to be managed. In bad years falling income from revenues could produce significant deficits in the budget for colonial India and creating an account in which a surplus from a good harvest could be held back to off-set a poor one seemed to both to be the best way to proceed. Their agreement was clear in the sources. However, there were others at this senior level that dissented from such a view. The Council had other ideas and managed to stymie the reforms. Many seemed less interested in stabilising Indian finances than in making income there available for remittances to Britain or for other purposes in the Empire. There was also a political game being played, in that members of the Council felt that they had lost out in a previous tussle with the Viceroy over tax reform and that therefore this was an opportunity to reassert the authority of their corporate body. Disagreement drove policy in the 1860s.

The Pease motion of 1891 similarly showed that divisions at the highest levels of imperial government were behind the positions adopted on opium. The emergence of the anti-opium lobby as a political force by the 1890s had introduced new elements into the dynamics of policy. The Viceroy was determined to do what he could to preserve opium revenues for the finances of his administration. On the other hand the Secretary of State seemed to see the implications of the Pease motion more in political terms and in the context of rivalries in the House of Commons. He was concerned to manage opposition to the opium trade there and he was keen to seek ways in which it could be mollified. The outcome was a series of uneasy compromises between the two officials, as they bickered about how best to construct a committee that would find in their favour, and skirted around the compromises to be made in India.

The royal warrant for the Royal Opium Commission was another important milestone that demonstrated the piecemeal influence of the Secretary of State. What this demonstrated was not just the conflicts between the Secretary of State and Viceroy but internal divisions between the Home Office and India office. The issue of who would countersign the royal warrant to appoint the commission in the end was granted to the Secretary of State John Wodehouse and Earl of Kimberley. This was a symbolic victory for the imperialist vision of the British Empire which blurred the lines between a royal and parliamentary style inquiry. John Wodehouse believed with his experience of colonial affairs that inclusion of the members of parliament on the warrant would carry more 'weight' and 'prestige' with 'the natives of India.' The Home office also noted it as highly irregular that members of parliament be named on the warrant. Importantly, this evidence demonstrates how

the attitudes of the Secretary of State continued to influence the formative and early drafts of the commission. To reiterate this demonstrated yet more precarious policy arrangements managed by the Secretary of State.

Policy change only occurred when both Secretary and Viceroy agreed that something ought to be done, when there was a clear way forwards and when the wider context made action seem sensible. Minto and Morley found themselves faced with hostile Indian nationalist sentiment, a rapidly changing strategic context in Asia, the need to promote a healthy image of empire and of a more responsible colonialism, and a Liberal government in Britain many of whose MPs were longstanding critics of the opium trade. In this context it is little wonder the consensus was readily arrived at. While correspondence between the two shows that they could differ on points of detail, it also proves that it was only in 1906 that agreement drove policy at the highest levels of the government of imperial India.



## **Chapter two: The Opium Department and cultivators' attitudes.**

## Introduction

Mr. H. J. Wilson: I beg to ask the Secretary of State for India whether he is aware that in the Reports of the Bengal Opium Department it appears that the area under poppy cultivation increased from 770,000 big has in 1889–90 to 890,000 big has in 1896–7;..whether he will call the attention of the Indian Government to the undesirability of tempting cultivators by the offer of Government advances to sow poppy instead of more profitable food crops.

The Secretary of State For India, Lord G. Hamilton: ...The cultivators are perfectly free to sow food or other crops as they may prefer; and if food crops are more profitable, as stated in the question, they will no doubt sow them. The present system is the result of long experience and much inquiry and consideration, in which full weight was given to the importance of controlling the traffic in opium and keeping it within bounds, and I should be reluctant to interfere with the rules and regulations of a system which has worked well.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will consider some of the assertions made in the Secretary of State for India's statement to the House of Commons in 1900. His assessment of opium-producing processes in India was that it was a 'system' which was 'the result of long experience' and which, crucially, worked well. The larger question behind this thesis is what drove British policies towards opium between 1857 and 1906 so

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<sup>1</sup> 'India—Poppy Cultivation In Bengal.' HC Deb 02 August 1900 vol 87 c430

considering this statement seems useful as it draws attention back to the ideas and approaches, or ‘rules and regulations’ in Lord Hamilton’s words, behind the operations designed to secure the product and revenues from it for the British administration.

The first section will consider how the various arms of the administration organised themselves to manage the production of opium after 1857. A glance at the records suggests a tangled picture rather than the ‘system’ mentioned above, as various agencies found themselves concerned with getting the product to market. It also seems that ideas varied and changed within key agencies about how best to structure departments and what they ought to achieve.

A second section will then consider policy interventions by key agencies. These include environmental policies, for example decisions about whether to build wells or canals to manage water in opium-producing areas. They also include financial initiatives which were designed to induce agricultural producers to invest in opium harvests, or to compel them to do so. The chapter will assess what drove decisions about these, and what determined their outcomes.



## **The Opium department and its organisation**

The Opium Department from 1857 onwards became a government branch responsible for the cultivation, collection, manufacture, and transit of opium in India and beyond. Its origins lay in the period of East India Company rule and it answered to a board of revenue officials. It ultimately sought to manage producers in order to control the lucrative export of opium to China. It seems to have been a unique body in the history of British government as there was no comparable specialist class of civil servants responsible for the production of opium, or any other agricultural product for that matter, in the UK.

A period of re-organisation in the Benares Opium Department in 1870/1 sheds light on one of the key concerns of the agency. This was to assert British control over more and more of the opium-producing regions of south Asia. It also suggests a second consideration though, which was to keep a tight rein on the cost of doing this. Opium Agent C.F. Carnac stated that

In 1870, in order to extend the cultivation, the agency was remodelled by (in margin Re-organization of 1870. No brackets) Mr Richardson, and the re-adjustment was so effected as to secure an increase of 60,000 beegahs without any increase of expenditure.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> No. 335 dated 16th January 1872 From C.F. Carnac, Esq., Opium Agent of Benares, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, *Report on the Administration of the Opium*

Writing in 1872, however, Carnac observed the adverse consequences and incomplete outcomes of this extension of the Department's sphere of influence.

The division of Goruckpore is especially notable. Here we have one of the largest divisions of the Agency with only three kotees to control a cultivation of upwards of 50,000 beegahs. I unhesitatingly affirm that, with a cultivation so scattered as that of Goruckpore, it is simply impossible for the kotee officers to exercise anything approaching to an efficient supervision of the charges entrusted to them. Even with the cultivation in a ring fence as in Behar, the supervision of more than 20,000 beegahs by a gomastah and three mohurirs would be most difficult: with a widely scattered cultivation as in Goruckpore, it is simply impossible.<sup>3</sup>

It seems that in the rush to extend control while cutting costs the Department had reduced staff numbers at the same time. Richards has wrongly assumed that the Benares sub agencies after 1857 remained divided into fifty-three *Kothis*.<sup>4</sup> The 'gomastah' or *Gumashta* was the first Indian officer below the Opium Agent who

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*Department inclusive of the Operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium during the year 1870-71.* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent Government Printing, 1872.) P. 24

<sup>3</sup> No. 335 dated 16th January 1872 From C.F. Carnac, Esq., Opium Agent of Benares, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department inclusive of the Operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium during the year 1870-71.* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent Government Printing, 1872.) P. 25

<sup>4</sup> J. Richards, 'The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium', P. 71

headed the sub agencies with *mohurirs* serving under them as ‘native supervisors.’<sup>5</sup> In Benares there were sixteen of these sub-agencies.<sup>6</sup> Mohurirs managed a group of *kothis*, a further unit of subdivision at the local level with a Kothi manager usually a village headman. Following the 1870 reorganisation one out of four kotee or *kothi* had been abolished in Gorakhpur.<sup>7</sup> This was also policy in Gazipur and Azamgarh when the 1870-71 reforms abolished half of their *kothis* for each division, effectively doubling the area of supervision for the *kothi* officers in charge.<sup>8</sup>

In other contexts Allan and Bello have shown that attempts to increase cultivation were met with geographical barriers and resistance at the fringes of empire.<sup>9</sup> The inability to control widely scattered cultivation was also a common characteristic with the growth of cannabis in British India. Mills has also argued that creative use of geography enabled communities to resist the state’s efforts to impose closer control on cannabis production and commerce.<sup>10</sup> In this case, it seems that the Opium Department found itself shaped by conflicting objectives. The authorities sought to rapidly increase the acreage under the control of the Opium Department

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<sup>5</sup>J. Sharma, *Empire’s Garden: Assam and the Making of India* (Duke University Press, London 2011) P. 76 for definition of *mohurirs* and J. F. Richards, ‘The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium in the Nineteenth Century’ *Modern Asian Studies*, 15:1 (1981) P. 72 and 71 for definitions of *Gumashta* and *kothi* respectively.

<sup>6</sup> The standard North Indian unit of land measurement Beegah or *Bigha* was 5/8 of an acre according to J.F Richards but could vary by region. P. 72

<sup>7</sup> No. 335 dated 16th January 1872 From C.F. Carnac, Esq., Opium Agent of Benares, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department inclusive of the Operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium during the year 1870-71*. (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent Government Printing, 1872.) IP/ NLS P. 25.

<sup>8</sup> No. 335 dated 16th January 1872 From C.F. Carnac, Esq., Opium Agent of Benares, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, P. 25

<sup>9</sup> N. Allan ‘Opium production in Afghanistan and Pakistan’ P. 148

<sup>10</sup> J. Mills., Steinberg M, Hobbs J, editors. ‘Cannabis in Colonial India: consumption, production, state intervention and resistance in the nineteenth century.’ In *Dangerous harvest: drug plants and the transformation of indigenous landscapes*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

while reducing the costs of the latter which reduced its capacity to effectively monitor output.

Then there were the questions of how the Opium Department's agents should be grafted onto local opium-producing communities. Karl Trocki has argued that, under British Government rule after 1857, opium cultivators were forced or enslaved by landlords.<sup>11</sup> While coercion was a factor Klimburg believed it was exaggerated. He argued that Trocki's sources were limited and that in fact local landlords, the *Zamindars* or *Taluqdars*, exerted a large amount of influence over opium lands.<sup>12</sup> Richards has similarly argued that in the 'northwestern Sub-Agencies, were nearly certainly village headmen'.<sup>13</sup> These *Lumbardars* were the class that received subsidies for well construction after 1874 and they oversaw the valuation of the crop.<sup>14</sup>

A controversy developed about these headmen and the privileges they had become accustomed to in return for their cooperation and this reveals much about what forces lay behind Opium Department operations in this period. One of these privileges was *Khurchan*. *Khurchan* was the scrapings of opium left over in the cultivators' pots after the weighing process. The *Lumbardar* had become entitled to this, and this became a source of friction. In 1883 officials reported that cultivators

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<sup>11</sup> A. Klimburg, "Some research notes on Carl A. Trocki's publication *Opium, empire and the global political economy*." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64.02 (2001): 260-267.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>13</sup> J. F. Richards, 'The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium in the Nineteenth Century' *Modern Asian Studies*, 15:1 (1981) P. 71

<sup>14</sup> J. Banaji, 'Seasons of Self-Delusion: Opium, Capitalism and the Financial Markets' \*numerous other historians support this in passing including Farooqui and Richards as demonstrated above.

would come to the weighing stations themselves to ensure that excessive amounts of *khurchan* were not being levied by the *Lumbardar*. It also found that investigating *Kurchan* for headmen revealed a variety of exactions by intermediaries at the cultivation and collection stage. In the final report they established that, contractors or *Khatadars* were also extracting *Khurchan* or *Kharcha* stating,

The fact [is] that khatadars even now take “*kharcha*” at so many annas a bigha, on the ground that they are answerable for the demands of the subordinate officers of the Opium Department,<sup>15</sup>

They went on to conclude that

it is notorious that opium growers have still to submit to many unauthorised exactions; but it is not conceivable that complaints of such exactions should occur in our times meet with such scant attention as that noticed above, or that oppression should now-a-days be practised with such open impunity.<sup>16</sup>

Despite this it seems that the annual reports of the department by the end of the century show that little had been done about this. By 1898 F. Wright from Benares,

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<sup>15</sup> *Report of a Commission Appointed by the Government of India to Enquire into the Working of the Opium Department, in Bengal and the North-Western Provinces* (Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, 1883.) P. 41

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* P. 41

an opium agent, noticed that levying *Kurchan* was not standard practice across all opium-producing areas.

As far back as 1883 this question has been under discussion. In that year my Predecessor (Mr. Rivett-Carnac) reviewed the subject, and it again formed one of the points of the severe criticism by Mr A. G. Tyler of the Bihar Agency, who asserted that “the amount of *khurchan* exacted was excessive” in this Agency.<sup>17</sup>

A.G. Tyler and F. Wright clearly held different attitudes towards the practise of *Khurchan*. F. Wright in Benares saw the problem as one of administration which could be handled with financial remuneration to intermediaries. This change was facilitated by the headmen who had already begun to exact their *Khurchan* in the form of money from cultivators. After discussion with district officers from Basti and Allahabad he advocated *Lumbardars* be paid, ‘by Government in coin at the rate of Rs. 4-8 per maund, instead of as now being allowed the scrapings from the cultivators’ pots’.<sup>18</sup> Due to the disparity in *khurchan* takings between Bihar and Benares there was no comparable policy considered in Bihar to conciliate the *Lumbardars*. Wright of the Bihari Agency concluded that

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<sup>17</sup> No. 261-4689, dated Ghazipur, the 24<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup> November 1898. From- F. Wright, Esq., B.A., I.C.S., Benares Opium Agent, Ghazipur, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P., Calcutta. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1898-1899* ( Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1900) V/24/3123 BL P. 111

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

I unhesitatingly condemn the present system and recommend that a fixed commission be paid by Government ... a blow would be struck at the fraud and villainy which is now rife, under a system by which we retain a portion of a cultivator's produce, make it a present to the lambedar for services rendered to Government, which practise is decidedly illegal and a scandal.<sup>19</sup>

The policy consideration was also the product of a local sub-deputy. As such the change in policy was brought about through geographical tension within Bihar and a solution devised in the local region of Basti. The Sub-deputy for this location had recommended to F. Wright, 'increasing the lambedar's commission to Rs. 7 per maund (in lieu of the scrapings)'.<sup>20</sup> There was no comparable commission based policy considered in Bihar to conciliate the *Lumbardars* who organised the cultivators. The justification offered by the Basti Sub-deputy was, 'we should not only conciliate the *asamis* [cultivators], but it would be the means of giving Government a larger quantity of opium for provision.' This policy was also designed to replace the *khurchan* practise and others like them

There would be an end to the 100 different anomalies and malpractices at the scales which are rife at present ... which as long as the system continues cannot be rectified.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> No. 261-4689, dated Ghazipur, the 24<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup> November 1898. From- F. Wright, Esq., B.A., I.C.S., Benares Opium Agent, Ghazipur, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P., Calcutta. P. 111

<sup>21</sup> Ibid P. 111

If nothing else, this exchange of correspondence shows that there were considerable variations in policy between opium-growing regions. Practices in Benares when it came to organising intermediaries were at variance with those in the Bihari agency across the closing decades of the nineteenth-century and seem to have been driven by custom rather than any clearly thought-out rationale. The 'system' referred to in 1900 by the Secretary-of-State in the House of Commons seems to have been anything but when viewed from the bottom up.

Another controversy with its origins in correspondence in 1883 related to who should be employed by the Opium Department and in which posts. It provides another set of glimpses of how opium production worked in practice. In this year a petition was forwarded to the Viceroy by the Graduates' Association at Allahabad which demanded that, 'the gazetted appointments in the Opium Department and the Factory Assistantships might be thrown open to Natives.'<sup>22</sup> The reply from Opium Sub-Deputy agent C.M Armstrong to a subsequent public service commission made his position on this issue clear.

I would not employ any Natives as Assistants or Sub-Deputy Opium Agents, because Natives would mix too much with their subordinates- a result which might lead to fraud and irregularity, and because Natives are not, in my judgement, so ready to meet emergencies. When I speak of Natives, I mean

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<sup>22</sup> *Proceedings of the Sub Committee, Public Service Commission: Opium Department* (Simla Printed by the Superintendent, Government Central Press. 1887) V/26/210/15 P. 11



Asiatics, whose manner and customs would be the same as those of their subordinates.<sup>23</sup>

Armstrong had entered the department in June 1854 as Assistant to the Benares Opium Agent on a salary of Rs. 150.<sup>24</sup> He was promoted in 1859 to be Sub-Deputy Opium Agent in Ghazipur. His attitudes toward 'Asiatics' seem typical of the Opium Department at the time. His testimony suggested he could come up with a number of reasons for such a conviction, 'I think cultivators have more regard for a European and would prefer him to a Native as Sub-Deputy Opium Agent'<sup>25</sup> he argued for example, while also nuancing his assertion by insisting that 'This doubt was especially felt in reference to the employment of Natives of Lower Bengal among Natives of Behar and up-country cultivators.'<sup>26</sup>

Quite how long racist attitudes had determined appointment policy in the Opium Department was made clear from the testimony of others. Babu Kristo Chunder Ghose Kavest, Indian assistant sub-deputy in the Patna Agency, asserted that

The introduction of a European Officer was found necessary, and so in 1828, the Collectors of districts were appointed *ex-officio* Deputy Opium Agents...Finally, in 1835 or 1836, Sub-Deputy Opium Agents were

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<sup>23</sup> Witness No. III -31st March 1887. Examination of C.M. Armstrong, Esq., Sub-Deputy Opium Agent, Lucknow. *Proceedings of the Sub Committee, Public Service Commission: Opium Department*, P. 33

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid P. 12

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. P. 12

appointed in every district, and the work of supervision and management was placed entirely in their hands.<sup>27</sup>

He was able to provide some rationale for this decision.

If Native agency had worked properly and efficiently, certainly a trading company ( for the arrangement was made not by the Crown, but by the East India Company) would never have sanctioned an expensive European machinery... as a matter of fact, the works of measurement, settlement weighments, advances of money, and despatches of opium to the Factory all rested in the hands of Native Officers. The Deputy Opium Agent's supervision did not materially differ from that of the Opium Agent's.<sup>28</sup>

Kavest summarised the attitudes of the time as 'Native agency is cheap. But Native supervision is lax, and Native management is weak, irregular and unenergetic.'<sup>29</sup> The 1883 petition by Indian graduates challenged this directly and the resulting commission revealed dissent. Babu Jagadeshwar Chatterjea, Officiating Personal Assistant to the Opium Agent in Benares complained that

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<sup>27</sup> Witness No. VI-31st March 1887. Examination of Babu Kristo Chunder Ghose, Kavest, Native Assistant to the Sub-Deputy Opium Agent in the Patna Agency. *Proceedings of the Sub Committee, Public Service Commission: Opium Department*, P. 36

<sup>28</sup>Witness No. VI-31st March 1887. Examination of Babu Kristo Chunder Ghose, Kavest, Native Assistant to the Sub-Deputy Opium Agent in the Patna Agency. *Proceedings of the Sub Committee, Public Service Commission: Opium Department* P. 36

<sup>29</sup> Ibid P. 36

I cannot suppose Native Officers would have less influence with the cultivators than European Officers have. I see no reason to apprehend that a Native Sub-Deputy Opium Agent would become so intimate with his subordinates that there would be any irregularity, provided he combined the qualities I have mentioned before ... If there were a disturbance at the time of weighment, I think a properly selected Native would keep order, if he had the qualities I have mentioned combined with courage. All depends on the system of selection.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately the petition was a measured success, as concessions were made. Following the commission in 1885 the Viceroy new rules for the department stated that 'Natives of India should henceforth be held to be eligible for appointment to the grades of Sub-Deputy and Assistant Sub-Deputy Opium Agents'.<sup>31</sup> However, the top jobs remained closed to Indians and a racial bar continued to determine who rose to the highest ranks in the organisation.

Among the statements made by Armstrong during the controversy was the below.

As for the second reason, readiness to meet emergencies, I may give as an illustration a dispute arising during a weighment, where large numbers of

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<sup>30</sup> Witness No. V -13th March 1887. Examination of Babu Jagadeshwar Chatterjea, Officiating Personal Assistant to the Opium Agent, Benares. *Proceedings of the Sub Committee, Public Service Commission: Opium Department* P. 35

<sup>31</sup> *Proceedings of the Sub Committee, Public Service Commission: Opium Department* P. 13

cultivators think that they are being hardly dealt with and make disturbance; a European would quell it, while a Native could not. I think cultivators have more regard for a European and would prefer him to a Native as Sub-Deputy Opium Agent.<sup>32</sup>

This draws attention to another aspect of how the Opium Department operated in practice, or malpractice perhaps. The 1883 commission appointed by the Government of India to enquire into the working of the opium department investigated a number of fraud cases.<sup>33</sup> In 1875 the ‘Shahjahanpur frauds’ took the following form.

Supposing ten men to have delivered each 3 seers of opium, in one pot each, each man’s opium was declared at scale to weight 2 ½ seers only, or in all 25 seers; meanwhile the actual weight had been 30 seers, 30 seers had gone to store, and there remained 5 seers unaccounted for; this 5 seers was entered in the books in a fictitious name, and a ticket for it was given to an accomplice<sup>34</sup>

In this case the weighmen and storemen colluded to divert the undeclared values of opium onto a cultivator’s ticket that could redeem the money later. The attitudes

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<sup>32</sup> Witness No. III -31st March 1887. Examination of C.M. Armstrong, Esq., Sub-Deputy Opium Agent, Lucknow. *Proceedings of the Sub Committee, Public Service Commission: Opium Department*, P. 33

<sup>33</sup> *Report of a Commission Appointed by the Government of India to Enquire into the Working of the Opium Department, in Bengal and the North-Western Provinces* (Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, 1883.) Ibid P. 42

<sup>34</sup> P. 42

among senior opium agents defended the crucial role of the 'European' at the weighment centres. However, the racial biases and policies of the department placed these officials in a position of trust that could be easily abused. In this case, 'strong suspicion rested upon the European officer in charge of the weighments of being at least accessory to fraud'.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the European weighman was not convicted by the Government of India while the three suspected Indian employees all received prison sentences.<sup>36</sup>

In 1880 the Sultanpur fraud demonstrated how village headmen took advantage of their place in the system to divert the Government of India's opium takings:

The Sultanpur plan was even more ingenious:- The weights were correctly called at the scale; but in the books, and on the cultivators' tickets, a trifle was short-entered for a few of the cultivators of some of the villages ; the amount thus short-entered was then entered in the name of the *lambardar*<sup>37</sup>

They were able to achieve this result because the opium, 'was always weighed last; thus the proper amount of opium was received and paid for by Government'.<sup>38</sup> The responsible *Lumbardar* would then return the money to a confederate within the

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<sup>35</sup> *Report of a Commission Appointed by the Government of India to Enquire into the Working of the Opium Department, in Bengal and the North-Western Provinces* (Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, 1883.) P. 42

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid* P. 42

<sup>37</sup> *Report of a Commission Appointed by the Government of India to Enquire into the Working of the Opium Department, in Bengal and the North-Western Provinces* (Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, 1883.) P. 42

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*. P. 42

Government, ‘telling him that a mistake had been made...’. The money was cleaned by this process because the admission of the mistake was, ‘a fact which the *lambardar*, the correct weight of whose opium had been called out at the scale, could not deny’.<sup>39</sup> The skimmed money was then divided by the confederates having been returned and no record existing beyond the false *Lumbardar* account which was accounted for by the admission of a mistake.

These instances of fraud provide glimpses of just how extensive corruption could be in the processes of the Opium Department as it sought to secure produce and revenues for government. It certainly suggests that instead of the well-run system confidently referred to by the Secretary of State in 1900, the operations of the Opium Department were often driven by the motivations of conniving European employees and manipulative local intermediaries.

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<sup>39</sup> *Report of a Commission Appointed by the Government of India to Enquire into the Working of the Opium Department*, P. 42

## **Environments and cultivator communities**

If there were variations and inconsistencies in Opium Department practices and operations within the agency itself then the question remains of how far their policies towards the production of the plant and the substances made from it were any more uniform, and what shaped them. A story from Bihar is a useful place to start. J.A. Hopkins, Opium Agent there in December 1895, observed that

Cultivators are largely influenced by the ‘Hatya Nichatra’. If rain falls then it is good, and cultivators rush to the fields to till and sow; but the good influences of the ‘Hatya’ may be rendered abortive by the baneful influence of the rain in the ‘Chitra’ which is supposed to produce blight, caterpillars and maggots.<sup>40</sup>

His anecdote suggests that when it came to something as important to the production process as planting the crop, he was an observer rather than an active participant. The influence of local knowledge and cultivator beliefs decided when Government opium was grown rather than any foreman or official.

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<sup>40</sup> No. 542, dated Bankipore, the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1895. From J.A. Hopkins, Esq., Opium Agent, Bihar, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1894-1895* ( Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1896) IPC, NLS, P. 3

The management of water for the plants was one area of activity that the Department intervened in. John Richards has particularly focused on subsidised well construction by the Opium Department to promote for intensive cultivation within monopoly lands as evidence that it was not simply an exploitative institution but rather sought to invest back into the land and local communities.<sup>41</sup> The provision of water will therefore be considered first.

Evidence of the regional development of wells can certainly be found to support Richards, and it appears to have begun in the 1870s often at the direction of the agency and the enthusiasm of the agents in charge. For instance, Opium Agent, Dunbar Blyth stated that,

Such as been my constant endeavour in Aliganj, with the result that since the season 1874-75, when the masonry wells initiated by me here began to give results, in this subdivision has been the 3,705 new masonry wells made departmentally through the raiyats and the 845 old masonry ones repaired, for without wells nothing can be done in poppy culture.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> J. Richards, 'The Opium Industry in British India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 39:2/3: (2002)

<sup>42</sup> No. 468(a), dated Bankipore, the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1899. From- W. Dunbar Blyth, Esq., M.A., LL.D, I.C.S., Opium Agent, Bihar, To -The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P., Calcutta. *Report on the Administration of The Opium Department, Inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1898-1899* (Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, 1900) V/24/3123 BL P. 11



In part this could be seen as a response to longstanding concerns among cultivator communities about the cost of canals. Vinita Damodaran argued that in eighteenth century Bengal cultivators would oppose canal construction on the basis that they would have to pay canal dues.<sup>43</sup> Similarly canal construction was also opposed by Zamindars who could charge cultivators for the use of wells on their land as opposed to government canal levies that could also target the landlords themselves and add further responsibilities.<sup>44</sup>

Elsewhere though, wells were not the chief source of water. For instance, in 1894 the divisions of Etawah, Fatehgarh and Mainpuri were, 'chiefly irrigated by canal water.'<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere jheels (lakes) and tanks for storage of water were incorporated into the water-management strategies of the cultivators.<sup>46</sup> In Gaya, Shahabad, Tehta, and Monghyr sub-agencies in 1896 there was no permanent supply of water and instead cultivators resorted to

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<sup>43</sup> V. Damodaran, 'East India Company, Famine and Ecological Conditions in Eighteenth-Century Bengal' in V. Damodaran A. Winterbottom A. Lester (Eds.) *The East India Company and the Natural World* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2015) P. 92

<sup>44</sup> Ibid P. 92

<sup>45</sup> No. 355-4764, dated Ghazipur, the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1894. From- Frank Wright, Esq., B.A., C.S, Opium Agent, Benares, To- The Secretary to the Boards of Revenue, Lower Provinces. *Report on the Administration of The Opium Department, Inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1893-94. From 1<sup>st</sup> September 1893 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 1894.* (Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, 1895). India Papers Collection, NLS P. 56

<sup>46</sup> Ibid P. 56

kutchra wells or water holes re-excavated annually, anicots of earth, banking up running streams and pynes of cuts also annually made or renewing conducting water from one place to another.<sup>47</sup>

Others reported experimentation and changes in attitudes from time to time among producers, 'it is stated by Mr. J. Christian that for a time the cultivators took largely to canal water' but 'it is said, is not as suitable to the poppy plant as well water is. The cultivators are, he reports, now going back to the use of well water.'<sup>48</sup> Clearly the Opium Department involved itself in water-management at some times and in some places, but in others its agents preferred to stay out of the way and simply to observe local practices.

Difficulties with water supply were only one of the challenges facing opium cultivators and the British officials that relied upon them. As mentioned in chapter one the opium crop was perceived to be a particularly fragile one and there were multiple reasons for this. The evidence suggests that the Opium Department failed to come up with any consistent responses to them.

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<sup>47</sup> From E.H.C. Walsh Esq, offg, secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P., To the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, Calcutta, the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1896. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1894-1895* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1896) India Papers Collection, NLS P. 7,

<sup>48</sup> Ibid P. 11-12

For example, in January 1871 the department expected a bumper year on the initial appearance of the crop.<sup>49</sup> Within the space of a month in February the signs of blight in the crop became apparent within the Patna sub-division,

The plant, which had been in a very flourishing condition began to look pale and sickly, and rapidly withered and died, whether the field was irrigated or not, the strongest and healthiest plants.<sup>50</sup>

The department reported that the prevalent opinion amongst the people was that the failure was down to heavy rain during the sowing period as in October there was a 'heavy downpour, which lasted for eight days, and in some places longer'.<sup>51</sup> The knock-on effect of saturated soil in 1872 was exacerbated by additional environmental pressures in February and March,

soil having been washed out of the land by heavy rain in October, the plant growing on it was rendered more than usually susceptible to the injurious influence of this heat. The havoc committed by the blight was increased by the severe storms of hail and rain which occurred in the end of February and

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<sup>49</sup> No. 426, dated 28th December, 1871. From- R. Abercrombie, Esq., Opium Agent of Behar To- The Secretary to the Board of the Revenue, Lower Provinces, Opium Dept. Report on the administration of the opium department (inclusive of the Operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium) during the year 1870-71. Calcutta: Office of the superintendent Government Printing, 1872.) NLS Pg 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid P. 2

<sup>51</sup> Ibid P. 2

beginning of March, and washed the juice out of the capsules before it could be gathered.<sup>52</sup>

The weather in turn had a negative effect on labour patterns that coincided with the cultivation cycle. Migratory workers that specialised in the weeping of the poppy during harvest would need to look elsewhere when the produce was washed away. By comparison those farmers that accepted advances under the conditions of the land license would have had to continue cultivating opium to meet the acreage promised.

The visible environmental pressures and early signs to abandon production during the sowing period were not recognised by the slow mechanism of department tours. For instance, in 1896 waterlogging of the larger paddy harvest had prolonged the sowing process of numerous crops. Accumulatively these crops also diverted labour from the tillage, sowings and weeding of the poppy fields.<sup>53</sup> Facing these conditions irrigation was not the first material priority for labour which ignored sunk costs and sought to divert efforts to new crops. The Opium Department operated on annual cycles while often cultivators and labourers had to respond to crises and make decisions that emerged on much shorter timescales and almost on a week-by-week basis.

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<sup>52</sup> No. 426, dated 28th December, 1871. From- R. Abercrombie, Esq., Opium Agent of Behar To- The Secretary to the Board of the Revenue, Lower Provinces, Opium Dept. Report on the administration of the opium department (inclusive of the Operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium) during the year 1870-71. Calcutta: Office of the superintendent Government Printing, 1872.) Pg 2.

<sup>53</sup> From E.H.C. Walsh Esq, offg, secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P., To the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, Calcutta, the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1896. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1894-1895* ( Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1896) P. 4

If cultivators and producers made the wrong decisions then there could be catastrophic consequences for them. The famine thesis in South Asia has been articulated by Emdad-ul Haq. He argued that ‘Bengal, a great alluvial plain with the richest soils, the finest climates and rivers, suffered repeated famine mainly after its paddy fields were converted into poppy cultivation’.<sup>54</sup> In opposition to this Richards asserted that,

Since the total area under poppy was less than 2 per cent of the entire area cultivated within the eastern Gangetic valley it is hard to see how opium could have substantially contributed to food scarcities<sup>55</sup>

While the Opium Department in 1896 concluded that there was no causal link between opium production and famine, it certainly remained the case that they viewed the production of food crops with suspicion. For example, E.H.C. Walsh Esq, official Secretary to the Board of Revenue Officials from the Opium Department, actively discouraged local food production on poppy lands. He blamed a decline in poppy production on;

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<sup>54</sup> M. Emdad-ul Haq, *Drugs in South Asia: From the Opium Trade to the Present Day* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000). P. 53

<sup>55</sup> J. Richards, “‘Cannot We Induce the People of England to Eat Opium?’ The Moral Economy of Opium in Colonial India.’ in J. Mills, and P. Barton, (eds.) *Drugs and Empires: Essays in Modern Imperialism and Intoxication, C.1500-C.1930* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). P. 76

Firstly, the density of the population causing the soil to be overcropped in order to procure food grains; and a succession of partial failures of poppy and other crops has obliged the vast majority of the raiyats to put down fresh crops on the poppy lands as soon as the poppy has been cut, causing the soil to be still further overcropped.<sup>56</sup>

In fact agents of the Opium Department had long sought to discourage food production on lands suitable for opium. They often fretted that the cultivator could now engage in more-remunerative and durable crops than the poppy. As early as 1871 the department realised that the reduction of Sub-Deputies in scattered cultivating areas would exacerbate this trend, which would lead to lapses in continuous and efficient supervision and 'laxity of control.'<sup>57</sup> However the trend of crop substitution gained pace in the 1890s and the department monitored various crops that posed economic threats to the financial stability of opium. E.H.C. Walsh wrote in February 1896

The real cause of the declination of the cultivators in the Bihar Agency to engage to grow poppy is the poor produce of the last seven or eight years,

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<sup>56</sup> From E.H.C. Walsh Esq, offg, secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P., To the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, Calcutta, the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1896. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1894-1895* ( Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1896) P. 8-9

<sup>57</sup> No. 335 dated 16th January 1872, From C.F. Carnac, Esq., Opium Agent of Benares, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, Report on the administration of the opium department, inclusive of the Operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium, during the year 1870-71. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent Government Printing, 1872.) P. 24

combined with increased facilities for transit of the coarser and bulkier, but less troublesome and precarious kinds of produce.<sup>58</sup>

By this time food crops were not simply being produced to offset anxieties about famine among producers. The expansion of railways among other infrastructural changes continued to develop the export trade for foodstuffs and other cash crops such as tobacco.

Cultivators have found that potatoes, tobacco & c., are as profitable as poppy; and when a cultivator has once severed his connection with the Department [can] made a start in other business with the aid of advances from native bankers, who are not so pressing<sup>59</sup>

Chris Bayly has observed that larger cultivators chose, 'with the coming of the railway to move into much more lucrative grain production, leaving the difficult, costly and polluting drug to their poorer neighbours'.<sup>60</sup> The Bihar agency in 1895 certainly recognised that growing opium and using government loans was only one option open to producers

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<sup>58</sup> From E.H.C. Walsh Esq, offg, secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P., To the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, Calcutta, the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1896. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1894-1895* ( Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1896) P.4

<sup>59</sup> Ibid P. 8

<sup>60</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992). P. 290

so long as the interest is paid, for repayment of the loan as the Government, it is hard to get him back; but any deficit in the outturn of cane, potatoes, or even tobacco, is immediately followed by an upward tendency on the part of poppy cultivation, and our settlements are largely influenced even by the actual prospects of the ordinary Kharif crops, as was to some extent the case this year 1895.<sup>61</sup>

Historians have argued about the power of the Opium Department. Banaji argued the British government, ‘compels one part of the Indian ryots to engage in the poppy culture; entices another part into the same by dint of money advances’.<sup>62</sup> Metcalf concluded that ‘Poppy was especially attractive because the Opium Department gave out advances at times when the cultivators most needed cash’.<sup>63</sup> Kranton asserted that the Department was all powerful because of its position as a monopsony or single buyer.<sup>64</sup> However, the evidence here suggests that the Opium Department was far from omnipotent and decisions from when to sow seeds to how to water the plants and indeed whether to grow the crop at all were being taken within cultivating communities and often despite the wishes of the administrators.

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<sup>61</sup> From E.H.C. Walsh Esq, offg, secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P., To the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, Calcutta, the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1896. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1894-1895* ( Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1896) P. 8

<sup>62</sup> Banaji, ‘Seasons of Self-Delusion: Opium, Capitalism and the Financial Markets’ Ibid pp. 110

<sup>63</sup> T. R. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords, and the British Raj : Northern India in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). P. 311

<sup>64</sup> Kranton, A.V. Swamy, ‘Contracts, hold-up, and exports: Textiles and opium in colonial India’ *American Economic Review*, 98:3, (2008).



## Laws, enforcement and resistance

The Royal Opium Commission on the thirty seventh day of proceedings on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1894 at the College hall in Bankipur consulted the opinions of opium cultivators. Over the six volumes only three opium cultivators spoke, Tilangi, Imri Singh and Poonit Singh answering questions and claiming to represent themselves and ‘several other ryots’ through an interpreter.<sup>65</sup> They recounted that cultivators required a pair of bullocks and a ‘Dekhani plough’ before sowing. This was a cost which was not covered unlike advances for wells made officially available after 1874 but also seems to have been in practise before this. They also explained that coolies who worked on the poppies were not paid with government advances but rather with, ‘Three seers of grain and a seer of *satua*.’<sup>66</sup>

One of the key issues that came up was how far their participation in opium production was optional or whether they felt coerced into it.

11354. Who tells you that it is the order of Government? The zilladar and the Mohurris say to us that it is the order of the Government that we should cultivate poppy.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Report of the Royal Commission on Opium: Vol III Minutes of Evidence taken 3 to 27 January 1894*, (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895). P. 22

<sup>66</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Report of the Royal Commission on Opium: Vol III Minutes of Evidence taken 3 to 27 January 1894*, (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895). Ibid P. 22

<sup>67</sup> Ibid P. 22

A senior *Gumashta* or Indian officer would have had at least twenty-five police and or soldiers serving under him as ‘opium patrol officers’ known as *zilladars*.<sup>68</sup> *Mohurris* as mentioned earlier were another native supervisor usually employed at the village headman level for ongoing supervision. This testimony showed that these local enforcers were not presenting opium-growing as an option. In fact further evidence showed what would happen if the focus was not on the crop.

(*Poonit Singh.*) In my field half the crop was wheat and half was poppy. The zilladar intervened and came and uprooted the other crop of wheat and forced me to grow poppy.<sup>69</sup>

Such coercion is familiar from other periods. Emdad-ul Haq cites Adam Smith who believed the Ryot was also impoverished by the Government monopoly. His analysis described how coercion by agents impinged on cultivator freedoms, ‘a rich field of rice or other grain has been ploughed up; in order to make room for a plantation of poppies’.<sup>70</sup> This evidence is corroborated by Wright who examined the same period of East India Company rule. *Ryots* in the Benares region were confronted by frustrated opium agents who ploughed up peasants’ tobacco crops.<sup>71</sup> It seems that this policy continued under crown rule after 1857 through a combination of force and the new status or officialdom created by answering to zilladars representing the

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<sup>68</sup> J.F. Richards, P. 71

<sup>69</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Report of the Royal Commission on Opium: Vol III Minutes of Evidence taken 3 to 27 January 1894*, (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895). Ibid. P. 22

<sup>70</sup> M. Emdad-ul Haq, *Drugs in South Asia*, P. 21

<sup>71</sup> H. R. C. Wright, ‘The Emancipation of the Opium Cultivators in Benares.’ pp.450-451

Government of India. While the British officials of the Opium Department claimed that their policy was to offer the option of growing opium to local cultivator communities, it seems that they were often content to leave the transmission of this message to Indian intermediaries who left locals in no doubt as to what the real objectives were. Privately, those in the Opium Department had been acknowledging this amongst themselves for decades. C.F. Carnac of Benares in 1872 wrote to the Secretary of the Board of Revenue a quarter of a century before the Opium Commission's hearing to admit that

When I use the expression 'undue pressure', I mean that the wishes of Government to extend the cultivation to its utmost limits were well known to every officer in the Agency, and in order to conform to those wishes, undue efforts were made to secure the increase.<sup>72</sup>

It was little wonder that cultivators in the College Hall in 1894 were adamant that '(Interpreter) They all say that they wish that the opium should be stopped by the Government'.<sup>73</sup>

The opium department had the power to prosecute cultivators who failed to cultivate the land allotted to them, or as Banaji has stated 'peasants sowing less than the area

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<sup>72</sup> No. 335 dated 16th January 1872 From C.F. Carnac, Esq., Opium Agent of Benares, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department inclusive of the Operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium during the year 1870-71.* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent Government Printing, 1872.) P. 29

<sup>73</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Report of the Royal Opium Commission*, Vol III, P. 22

engaged for cultivation were liable to prosecution under Act 13 of 1857.<sup>74</sup> The use of these laws however was dependent on the attitudes of the official or opium agent presiding over the area. For example, A. Hopkins, Esq., Opium Agent, Bihar described how proceedings in the year 1895 were taken against 178 persons with 177 resulting in convictions.<sup>75</sup> However, he noted that despite this

Many of the Sub-Deputy Opium Agents [who] object to taking proceedings under section 10 of the Act XIII, because they imagine that such proceedings are not likely to promote the cultivation of poppy.<sup>76</sup>

Peter Robb has argued that competing village factions manipulated this law. They would pass on information to police that other cultivators were illicitly withholding their opium harvest.<sup>77</sup> Opium Agent Hopkins certainly believed that, 'Discretion must of course be used in proceeding with such cases'<sup>78</sup> adding that, 'the local conditions of the cultivation, as well as the classes of people dealt with, have to be considered.'<sup>79</sup> This policy also demonstrated a bias or willingness to prosecute higher caste and class groups in comparison to the cultivators themselves, 'To

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<sup>74</sup> J. Banaji, 'Seasons of Self-Delusion: Opium, Capitalism and the Financial Markets' *Historical Materialism-research in Critical Marxist Theory*, 21:2, (2013) P. 10

<sup>75</sup> No. 542, dated Bankipore, the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1895. From J.A. Hopkins, Esq., Opium Agent, Bihar, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1894-1895* ( Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1896) P. 7

<sup>76</sup> P. Robb, 'Hierarchy and Resources: peasant stratification in late nineteenth century Bihar' *Modern Asian Studies*, 13:1 (1974). P. 110

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid* P. 110

<sup>78</sup> No. 542, dated Bankipore, the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1895. From J.A. Hopkins, Esq., Opium Agent, Bihar, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P. *Report on the Administration of the Opium Department, inclusive of the operations of the Bihar and Benares Opium Agencies, During the Season 1894-1895* ( Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1896) Pg 5-6

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*

prosecute a fraudulent Brahman, Rajput, Gowala or Koiree can hardly do much harm but to deal with Sonthals and Paharias in the same way would probably be disastrous.<sup>80</sup> Clearly, while there was a law in place quite how it would be used was subject to a variety of forces and agendas.

The opium department also sought to grant licences close to the weighment stations in response to reductions. This was because they believed cultivators were not inclined to make the long journeys necessary to have their product valued. In 1905 the creation of opium godowns for visiting cultivators were completed at Chaubari and Aonla. Additionally more godowns or weighment stations in Sirathu and Chandausi were to be completed by the end of the financial year with ‘the erection of settlement centres is being pushed on to the extent that funds permit.’<sup>81</sup> Opium Agent Mr House justified these policies on the basis that cultivators were not prepared to travel as they had done previously,

The cultivator of the day thinks more of distance than his forefathers did. He also objects to being kept months waiting for the price of his produce. More weighment centres and accelerated weighments (with extension, where necessary, of existing godowns) are what we now need.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> No. 542, dated Bankipore, the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1895. From J.A. Hopkins, Esq., Opium Agent, Bihar, To- The Secretary to the Board of Revenue, L.P.

<sup>81</sup> *Report on the administration of the opium department during the season 1905-1906. From 1<sup>st</sup> November 1905 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 1906* (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot 1907) Asia Pacific & Africa IOR/V/24/3124, BL. P. 11

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid* P. 11

Cultivators were driving these decisions as more and more turned away from opium production. Attitudes at the time as to why this change occurred, such as C.F. Carnac discussed earlier, point to the introduction of the railway which allowed bulkier less risky crops to be transmitted for export. The Opium department taking stock of the changes in cultivation brought by the railway and crop substitution attempted to better facilitate the migration of cultivators. Mr House estimated that, ‘still 30 per cent. of our licences are between 20 and 40 miles from the places at which their opium is weighted,’<sup>83</sup> He believed that the construction of further gowdons was necessary, ‘it will be seen that much remains to be done, unless we are prepared to lose the ground that we have gained.’<sup>84</sup> Officials of the opium department favoured expanding construction of weighment centres. This policy was partly being driven by the attitudes of cultivators that found the process inconvenient and time consuming.

Producers could also resist opium policies more directly, and even violently. For example, in Assam tea planters cultivated their own private supply of opium for personal consumption. In 1860, when a ban was introduced on this cultivation, protests culminated in the death of the assistant commissioner a year later.<sup>85</sup> He was killed in Phulaguri 1861 in the district of Nowgong. The gazetteer for this region has provided the most detailed account of this event describing how the, ‘The attachment of the aboriginal tribes to opium led to a serious riot at Phulaguri in 1861, when the

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<sup>83</sup> *Report on the administration of the opium department during the season 1905-1906.* Ibid P. 11

<sup>84</sup> Ibid P. 11

<sup>85</sup> A. Wright, *Opium and Empire in Southeast Asia: Regulating Consumption in British Burma.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). P. 85

cultivation of the poppy was prohibited.<sup>86</sup> It continued, ‘*Mels* or village assemblies were held day after day to discuss the new and most obnoxious orders’ and noted that these were, ‘attended by large numbers of people.’<sup>87</sup> In the interest of preserving civil obedience the authorities took action and ‘the police endeavoured to disperse these meetings, and arrest the ringleaders, but found themselves powerless in the presence of such vastly superior numbers.’<sup>88</sup> On December 18<sup>th</sup> when,

One of the constables was assaulted as he was endeavouring to carry out this order and Lieutenant Singer, when coming to his assistance, was felled to the ground by a blow from a thick bamboo.<sup>89</sup>

The police in this case were overpowered by the crowd with the account describing how, ‘He was deserted by the police, who incontinently fled, though the firing of a single musket was subsequently enough to make the crowd fall back.’<sup>90</sup> The motives of the cultivators who struck the blows were characterised by the police following the event as,

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<sup>86</sup> B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Volume VI. Nowgong* (Calcutta: Printed by the City Press, 12, Bentinck Street. 1905.) Asian & African Studies Reading Room, OIH 915.416, BL, P. 57

<sup>87</sup> B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Volume VI. Nowgong* P. 58

<sup>88</sup> P. 58

<sup>89</sup> P. 58

<sup>90</sup> B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Volume VI. Nowgong* (Calcutta: Printed by the City Press, 12, Bentinck Street. 1905.) Asian & African Studies Reading Room, OIH 915.416, BL P. 58

cruelly at the instigation of the one of the ringleaders who said ‘the saheb did not come to redress our grievances but to put us in bonds; he is still alive, kill him’.<sup>91</sup>

When news of the death spread to the Deputy Commissioner he ordered, ‘the detachment of twenty-four sepoy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assam Light Infantry who were stationed in Nowgong’ to be despatched. He decided to stay and defend the treasury.<sup>92</sup> In Tezpur, Colonel Hopkison decided on a show of force and sent ‘fifty sepoy, and then proceeded by steamer to Gauhati to bring up eighty more’. A subsequent judicial commission concluded that ‘The whole occurrence seems to have been mismanaged, and to have been viewed by the local authorities with unnecessary alarm.’<sup>93</sup>

Ranajit Guha has warned against relying on colonial sources in seeking to interpret the agendas of colonised groups or ‘subalterns’ as he argues that such episodes are written by the coloniser in the ‘prose of counter-insurgency’, in which motives are attributed by the writers.<sup>94</sup> As such it is difficult to say for sure how far this series of events was really about opium or was simply the expression of wider grievances. It has been observed that the small peasant’s condition in Assam around 1870 was particularly tough as typically each was a, ‘rack-rent tenant’ indentured by debt

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<sup>91</sup>B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Volume VI. Nowgong* P.58

<sup>92</sup> Ibid P. 58

<sup>93</sup> Ibid P. 58

<sup>94</sup> R. Guha, ‘On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India’ in R. Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I: writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).



bondage, so these riots could have reflected wider tensions.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, it seems clear that the government's efforts to assert its control over all opium production in Assam backfired badly.

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<sup>95</sup> H. Derks, *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, Ca. 1600-1950* (Leiden: Brill; Biggleswade: Extenza Turpin, distributor, 2012). P. 101

## Conclusion

This chapter has considered what drove decisions and policies made by the Opium Department and others in the colonial government with an interest in opium production. It has shown that there was rarely a coherent set of decisions and policies that seem to have been consistently applied. Instead, what emerges is a picture of variation and contingency in the actions of officers. Often they seem often to have been content to stick with customary practices that they found in place on taking up office, and widespread programmes of innovation and intervention, such as the building of wells under the supervision of Dunbar Blyth, seem to have been exceptions rather than the norm. The comparison of the Benares and Bihar agencies on the issue of *Khurchan* is also important as it shows how policies could vary from place to place so that it seems difficult to speak of ‘British opium policy’ as a whole when there seem to have been such significant differences in approach.

The issue of *Khurchan* also shows how influential local intermediaries were in the operation of the system. Headmen, Gomashta, Mohurris and weighmen were among those Indians who made the opium system work in practice. This chapter has shown that they interpreted orders and twisted arms and could even prove to be corrupt, devising ever more ingenious ways of skimming off a slice of the harvest for themselves. The policy that was put in place back in the offices of the Opium Department was reliant on Indian agents to make it work.

Of course, what happened in practice also relied on local cultivators and producers. The chapter has certainly shown that the Opium Department could be forceful in enforcing opium production, with tales of crops being torn up and prosecutions instigated confirming the impression that the government's pursuit of opium revenues could be unrelenting and even brutal. However, the chapter has also shown that this was not always the case. While violent episodes of resistance such as the murder of the Assistant Commissioner in Assam were rare, they do draw the reader back to the agency of those in the fields and on the farms. It is clear that their decisions could be decisive in deciding how the opium system worked in practice, as the lure of other crops, a failure to cultivate allotted lands, and efforts to smuggle opium show that they were actively engaged in shaping the system rather than simply following orders. When seeking to answer the question of what was driving opium policy on the ground, it is clear that the producers were just as significant in shaping outcomes as British officers and their intermediaries.



## **Chapter three: Opium smuggling and the limits of empire in South Asia.**

## Introduction

I am in receipt of your note of the 23<sup>rd</sup> ultimo concerning opium.

The matter shall have my best consideration.

Meantime, as it is possible I may have to depose the Gaekwar within a few days, I write to ask whether you might not find the present conjunction favourable for inaugurating new opium arrangements with the Baroda State. For other suggestions, vide my report of the 7<sup>th</sup> instant to the Foreign Secretary.<sup>1</sup>

Written in 1875, the above extract is taken from a letter written by Lewis Pelly, at the time Governor General of Rajpootana and Chief Commissioner of Baroda, to William Muir, Secretary to the Government of India's Foreign Department. It shows how the management of opium in relations between the colonial administration and the princely states in south Asia became an important concern for British officers by the 1870s. It is useful for this chapter as it turns attention to the issue of opium smuggling. While the previous chapter explored the complexities of the system designed to manage producers and cultivators, this one considers the ways in which the government sought to enforce its monopoly on the supply of opium.

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<sup>1</sup> *Demi-official letter from Sir Lewis Pelly, K.C.S.I., to the Hon'ble Sir William Muir, K.C.S. I., - Dated Baroda, 9th January 1875. Subject: cultivation and sale of Opium in the Baroda Territories. Foreign Department, Revenue B. Proceedings. December 1875, Nos. 10/14, National Archives of India (NAI) P. 1*

The first section will look at the actions taken by imperial officers to catch and punish smugglers. It argues that their job was made increasingly difficult by the colonial state itself, which pursued economic policies that made smuggling easier and more lucrative. The second section will then look at relations with princely states and others on the borders of British territories on the issue of opium. It makes the argument that policies had to be improvised and each independent state presented particular complexities, and as such policies varied widely, so that Baroda came to be seen as a rogue state with the Prince as chief smuggler, Nepal was persuaded to impose a British opium monopoly while Oudh escaped it, and officers in Mani Kantha operated illegally and beyond their jurisdictions in pursuit of those they thought were moving opium around clandestinely.

## The state and the smugglers

As the nineteenth-century progressed the British colonial authorities continued to invest heavily in the most modern of communications and transportation technologies of the period, the telegraph and the railways.<sup>2</sup> Laura Bear argued that railways were imposed by the Government of India through the railway acts of 1854, 1871 and 1890. These acts did not allow for public protest at either the routes built or the rates charged for goods unlike in Britain.<sup>3</sup> Four thousand miles of track were laid by 1880 thanks to a government guarantee of five percent return for British investors.<sup>4</sup> These investment opportunities excluded Indians despite the guarantee being ensured by Indian taxation. The railways were as much strategic as they were economic, particularly in northern India where lines linked cities that had been at the centre of the conflicts of 1857.<sup>5</sup>

While railways, and telegraph system that ran alongside them, were designed to impose imperial authority and to link the colonial economy they were also put to use by the locals for their own purposes. One of these was opium smuggling. For example, in Jaipur in 1898 a circle of smugglers and associated agents were found to be communicating their plans via telegrams.<sup>6</sup> Officials in The Thuggee and Dacoity

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<sup>2</sup> I. Kerr, *Railways in Modern India*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> L. Bear, *Lines of the Nation: Indian Railway Workers, Bureaucracy, and the Intimate Historical Self* (Columbia University Press: West Sussex, 2007) P. 41

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* P. 83

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* P. 83

<sup>6</sup> *To Foreign Dept. U.O. C.S.B.U.O. No.457 dated 20/7/98 from (SD) A S.W. Subject: Supply to the T. and D. Departments of the originals of certain telegrams required in connection with the capture of opium in Jaipur.* Foreign Department, Internal-B. Proceedings. November 1898, no. 1-5, NAI. P.1



Department requested access to the contents of these telegrams through the Indian Telegraph Act 1885. The Foreign Secretary was consulted given their communications fell within the Native States. As one official noted, 'The haul of opium is the biggest ever made and the telegrams are necessary to prove this case.'<sup>7</sup> The smugglers themselves, Nandkishore Kalianbaksh and Harmukhrai Ramsahai, communicated the arrangements between the Kuchawan Road railway station and the Ramgarh Combined Post Office from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1898.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately this case did not record more details of the smugglers themselves. This probably resulted from the fact they were attempting to hide their activities from the authorities.

Mention of the post office in the above example also shows that this pillar of the colonial system could also be of use to opium smugglers. Police were alerted in 1878 to a large package of opium being sent to the Punjab from Nepal by post.<sup>9</sup> They intercepted it and found a delivery of untaxed drugs into India

The result was that one parcel containing 280 tollas was seized, and the cover of the other one was recovered proving conclusively that a new method of

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<sup>7</sup> *To Foreign Dept U.O. C.S.B. U.O. No. 459 d/21-7-98 from (SD) W.J.C. Subject: Supply to the T. and D. Departments of the originals of certain telegrams required in connection with the capture of opium in Jaipur.* Foreign Department, Internal-B. Proceedings. November 1898, no. 1-5. NAI. P. 3

<sup>8</sup> *Copy of a deferred State telegrams from the Extra Asst. Thagi. To Thagi, from R.H. Blaher dated 19th July 1898 Subject: Supply to the T. and D. Departments of the originals of certain telegrams required in connection with the capture of opium in Jaipur.* Government of India, Foreign Department, Internal-B. Proceedings. November 1898, NAI, no. 1-5, P. 17

<sup>9</sup> *From James Monro Esquire, Inspector General of Police L.P. To the Secretary to the Govt of Bengal Judicial Department. No. 8096. Office of the Inspector General of Police L.P. Fort William The 8th June 1881.* Indian Embassy Nepal, General-Branch, No., 13-G. Part II, 1872. NAI. P. 4

smuggling opium had been started. I carefully search in the post office records made by the District superintendent Chumparun [which] showed that their plan had been recently introduced by Punjabees smugglers.<sup>10</sup>

The Resident of Nepal believed the Thuggee and Dacoity department had crippled organised opium smuggling in 1875-1876 by dismantling a colony of Sikh bandits.

<sup>11</sup>This colony stretched over land on either side of the border with British India and Nepal. While a safe haven for those attempting to escape into the jurisdiction of Nepal it also stimulated trade in illicit opium. Cross-border migration during the winter for trade to the Terai and low hills of Nepal saw many bring back opium in small amounts for personal consumption.<sup>12</sup> However, the postal discovery suggested that the opportunities for larger-scale smuggling had been spotted and were being exploited.

A case from Ahmedabad in 1878, however, shows that those involved in moving contraband opium were not always migrants. John F. Richards has shown that the British authorities increasingly relied on trains to move licit opium around.<sup>13</sup> Train workers and a policeman exploited their combined knowledge of the trains and prevention services to their advantage

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<sup>10</sup> From James Monro Esquire, *Inspector General of Police L.P.* P. 4

<sup>11</sup> *To the Secretary of Bengal Govt. General Revenue Dept. from Girdlestone the Resident of Nepal, No. 173 of 16<sup>th</sup> July 1881.* Indian Embassy Nepal, General- Branch, No., 13-G. Part II, 1872. NAI. P.4

<sup>12</sup> Ibid P.4

<sup>13</sup> Richards, J. F. "The Indian Empire and Peasant Production of Opium in the Nineteenth Century." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1981, pp. 70

On the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> January a chest of opium, valued at Rs. 850, was stolen from a locked waggon standing in the Ahmedabad Station yard; suspicion fell upon the Railway employés. An Oilman, the Police Constable on duty, and a Pointsman were arrested on suspicion, the chest of opium was recovered buried in the ground some distance off, and it was found that the theft was committed by removing the nuts off screws and bars, thus opening the doors of the waggons, the chest was removed and the bars, &c., replaced so that there was no sign of anything having been tampered with.<sup>14</sup>

The culprits were given harsher punishments for their betrayal of the railway company and police. Whereas the standard sentencing fell between two to six months and a fine proportionate to the amount smuggled or stolen, the three men all received two years rigorous imprisonment.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Lestock Reid, Esq., Acting Commissioner, N.D Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway. Annual Report for 1879. Police Superintendent's Office, Bombay, 28th February 1880. Subject: From the Government of Bombay No. 8240 enclosure Forward copies of the Reports on the working of the Police on the B.B. and C.I. and the G.I.P Railway Lines for the year 1879 and the Resolution of this Government thereon. Government of India, Home Department, Police, Part B, Proceedings December 1880, No. 50-51. NAI P. 3*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid P. 3*

## **The Special Detective Agency for the Prevention of Opium Smuggling**

The Special Detective Agency for the Prevention of Opium Smuggling came to life in 1896 on an experimental basis attached to the Special Branch of the Thuggee and Dacoity department. The ranks of which originally had been stuffed full of bright young British men who were all entitled to high salaries. However it was soon found that in the words of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department's head Mr McCracken in 1900 that,

They were unsuited to the work that had to be done, and that it was absolutely necessary that the employees should be as far as possible, local men acquainted with the local conditions.<sup>16</sup>

The reasoning behind this was that they should only 'nominally' be attach to the Special Branch as the working of the agency was to be 'altogether separate from the ordinary operations of the Thagi and Dakaiti Department.' The autonomy of detectives from the start and 'obtaining suitable persons' had been a continual issue given, 'from the nature of their work they cannot be supervised very closely.'<sup>17</sup> In the first year Sardar Amrik Singh the Extra Assistant to the General Superintendent in charge saw 35 unsuitable detectives dismissed. The attitudes that prevailed in the department was that prevention of opium smuggling could not be undertaken by British officials. They simply could not blend in with local communities to trace smugglers movements. Similarly oversight of those local men selected was almost impossible without blowing their cover.

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<sup>16</sup> From Mr McCracken to W.J. Cunningham, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1900 *Foreign Department. Secret – I. Proceedings, February 1901, Nos. 6-13 R/1/1/258 (1901) BL P.2*

<sup>17</sup> p.2

The creation of the department had been approved by George Hamilton in the India office on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1896. Writing from London to the Viceroy Lord Bruce he approved the policy of using local detectives to provide surveillance, acquire intelligence, track and ultimately capture individuals involved in, 'systematic smuggling' he wrote,

I sanction your proposal to employ as an experiment for two years, a special detective agency for the prevention of opium smuggling, at a cost of Rs. 25,200 a year, inclusive of your travelling charges and other contingencies;<sup>18</sup>

George with great foresight as to the future problems of the detective agency added,

if the experiment is to succeed, it will be necessary not only to prevent the new agency from being a cause of friction with the Native States, but it will be desirable to obtain sympathy and co-operation of the Several Dabars.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, the experiment was eagerly awaited by the India office and Thuggi and Dacoity Department who to an extent were putting their trust in the local men to catch the professional smugglers in their midst. In terms of policy this shows that Government of India was initially willing to take risks and input resources in the mission to stem systematic smuggling.

However the experimental agency in 1900 ran into trouble with allegations of corruption and the India Office's worst fear of clashing with the Maharajas of

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<sup>18</sup> Revenue No. 47 (Confidential) To His Excellency The Right Honourable The Governor General of India in Council. India Office, London 30<sup>th</sup> April 1896. Opium. Employment of Detective Agency in Smuggling Cases of 1897 to 1898. R/2/725/106 P.5

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P.5

Princely State. The Officiating Agent to the Governor General in Central India Mr. C.S. Bayley wrote Sir William Cunningham, Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1900,<sup>20</sup>

I am sorry to have to trouble you with the accompanying papers. The First is a Letter from Sardar Amrik\* Singh which was sent to me by McCracken and, I believe shown by him to you. If the statements contained in it are true, a couple of rascals employed in the Opium Smuggling Detective Agency of the Thugi and Dakaiti Department have, among other acts of villany, been trying to get or possibly have got, a larger sum of money out of the local Maharaja of Panna as consideration for a title which they undertook to procure for him, and the Chief, who wants a title badly (Pritchard recommended him for one the other day, but I did not submit his name), fell into the trap and either promised to pay or paid.<sup>21</sup>

Captain C.H. Pritchard the Political Agent in Bundelkhand in Bayley's words, 'depreciated an enquiry on the ground that it would probably lead to no result other than the stirring up of much mud.'<sup>22</sup> This hinted at a larger issue with the detective agency which quickly came to light during the investigation.

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<sup>20</sup> 'Attempt of two subordinates of the Opium Smuggling Detective Agency to obtain money from the Maharaja of Panna on the pretence of procuring him a title from the Government of India.' *Foreign Department. Secret – I. Proceedings, February 1901, Nos. 6-13 R/1/1/258 (1901)* BL. P.

<sup>21</sup> From- The Hon'ble Mr. C.S. Bayley, Officiating Agent to the Governor General in Central India, To Sir William Cunningham, K.C.S.I., Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, Dated Indore, the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1900 in, *Foreign Department. Secret – I. Proceedings, February 1901, Nos. 6-13 R/1/1/258 (1901)* BL. P. 1

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* P. 1

The mud that would have placed Pritchard in a poor light specifically was his recommendation for the title on the Queen's Birthday Gazette of 1900. Pritchard elaborated in a previous communication to Bayley on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1900,

The Maharaja of Panna, Madho Singh, is *most* anxious to get a title "K.C.S.I." or "K.C.I.E.", or something. He has continually been begging me to recommend him for a title... This alleged fraud and bribery case to obtain a title for the Maharaja has descended upon me like a bolt from the blue! If it is a true bill, the Maharaja must be an abettor in the attempted bribery. He would never part with some thousands of rupees without knowing for what purpose it was being paid.<sup>23</sup>

The thieves at this stage were alleged to have extracted 15,000 rupees from the Maharaja which insinuated the latter party knew it was a bribe. Pritchard went on to be highly critical of the Opium Detective Agency and their methods arguing,

from what I saw of the Opium Detective Agency proceedings when I was in Ajmer and recently in Ajaigarh, I *suspect* that the opium Detective Agency has been blackmailing right and left... On the above considerations, personally, I should be inclined to do nothing at all in the case, because I feel we should obtain actual proof of nothing and probably kick up the mud and soil of the reputations of the possibly innocent parties to no purpose...<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> From Captain C.H. Pritchard, Political Agent in Bandelkhand to Mr C.S., Bayley, Officiating Agent to the Governor-General in Central India. Dated Nowgong, the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1900. BL. *Foreign Department. Secret – I. Proceedings, February 1901, Nos. 6-13 R/1/1/258 (1901) P. 1*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid* P. 2

Pritchard was probably too close to the event to notice he was more likely to be construed as a guilty party than an innocent one. His statements unveil he was probably more worried about his own reputation than the parties concerned if this story was to be recounted in public.

By comparison the Viceroy Curzon, as could be expected, took a more fitting hard-line view of the matter and sought to reprimand the The Thuggee and Dacoity Department having inherited the policy from the previous Viceroy Lord Bruce. Submitted in the proceedings on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1900 he viewed the matter of investigation as a necessary one,

Here is an allegation that certain officials of the Thagi and Dakaiti Department are engaged in a low and corrupt conspiracy. What has Mr McCracken as head of the Department to say to this? Ought he not to institute an investigation with a view of informing me whether the “certain scoundrels,” to whom Sir W. Cunningham refers, are or are not guilty of the alleged corruption? When he has ascertained the facts of this case, I can decide how to deal with the scoundrels – if their guilt be proved – and what to say to the Maharaj of Panna.<sup>25</sup>

This case much to the dismay of Pritchard and others was not let alone or allowed to lie in the mud. Similarly, Mr McCracken coming under fire attempted to claim the

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<sup>25</sup>May 1900 From Curzon to Cunningham Dated 20<sup>th</sup> May 1900, R/1/1/258 P.2



detective agency was more of an, 'experimental establishment' and not a formal part of his department.

This statement not a complete falsehood in itself prompted an energetic response from Curzon the next day on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May,

Mr Mc Cracken's Argument that these men are not "officials" of the Thagi and Dakaiti Department does not in the least affect the question. I am willing to adopt Mr. Bayley's phrase- himself a recent head of the Department- and to call them "a couple of rascals employed in the Opium Smuggling Detective Agency of the Thagi and Dakaiti Department"...<sup>26</sup>

He continued his tirade asserting,

whether they are officials or employees is mere hair-splitting...I want to get to the bottom of the case, which there is no reason whatever for hushing up, and I trust Mr McCracken to assist me in doing so.<sup>27</sup>

The hushing up in particular caused alarm to both Pritchard the Political Agent and the Foreign Department who saw potential for this investigation to damage relations with the local Maharajas. The Viceroy accordingly curbed his enthusiasm for justice directing his anger at the Thugee and Dacoity Department.

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<sup>26</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1900, From Curzon to Cunningham. R/1/1/258, P. 3

<sup>27</sup> Ibid P. 3

The Viceroy Curzon while eager to expose the villainy of the agency made allowances for the Maharaja and Foreign Department's dealings with the Princely States. He believed the confession submitted by one of the extorters Harnam Singh, would not implicate the Maharaja on the 24<sup>th</sup> May arguing,

Harnam Singh's so-called confession does not prove his guilt. It is very likely full of lies, both about himself and other parties.<sup>28</sup>

While his attitudes formed policy from the top-down he still had to work against different departments aiming to preserve their reputation. He forcefully wrote, 'Please obey my orders – which are to get to the bottom of this tangle of falsehood and corruption, whomever it implicates.'<sup>29</sup> In light of the former political considerations, regarding the involvement of the Maharaja, he was more lenient in this regard to avoid a scandal stating on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1900 to William Cunningham in the Foreign Department,

I have no desire "publicly to expose" or to "punish" the Maharaja of Panna, should he admit his own guilt, and am quite ready to give an engagement to that effect. But I cannot pledge myself not to let him know the opinion that I entertain of his conduct, should it turn out to have been as represented.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> May 1900, From Curzon to W.J. Cunningham. R/1/1/258, P. 3

<sup>29</sup> Ibid P. 3

<sup>30</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> July 1900, From Curzon to W.J. Cunningham. R/1/1/258, P.6

The highest levels of the Government of India were tainted by this event. The Thuggee and Dacoity Department's experiment in drug policing fell victim to bribery and corruption. When their detectives' proclivity to blackmail and extort their targets eventually came to light the agency fell into disrepute and never recovered. Having bitten off more than they could chew in the form of a local Maharaja, The Special Detective Agency for the Prevention of Opium Smuggling was retired a year later in 1901. According to the Sir H. A Stuart, K.C.V.O., C.S.I., Director of Criminal Intelligence his Excellency the Viceroy Curzon had remarked at the time, 'I am very glad that this dangerous and sometimes mischievous agency is going to disappear.'<sup>31</sup>

The above quote originated from The Central Provinces Excise Committee in 1905 which had considered a similar opium branch for the Criminal Intelligence Department. This was unsurprisingly quickly shut down by the Director of the aforementioned Department, H.A. Stuart on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the October 1905. This has to be seen in the light of the troublesome case above which occurred in the same province just five years earlier. Having been escalated to the level of the Viceroy Curzon any policy would still receive his scrutiny, and he would still be in office for another month. Which coincidentally covered the dates in question when the issue was reconsidered in 1905. No doubt this remained a troublesome legacy for Stuart to

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<sup>31</sup> H.A. Stuart, *Director of the Criminal Intelligence Department notes, Orders on chapter xi and xii on the report of the Central Provinces Excise committee From the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces No. 29-X, Dated 7th April Pro. No. 150. 1905 Foreign Department Internal B, Proceedings, August 1906, Nos. 541, 39 pages with Notes.*

manage stemming the enthusiasm of his Excise Colleagues. In response to the Excise Committee on this point he argued,

It seems to be questionable whether the Committee's proposal that the Criminal Intelligence Department or some other suitable agency should keep a register of opium smugglers and collect and distribute information as to their movements, as is done in the case of temple thieves and the like, is a feasible one.<sup>32</sup>

He recounted the colourful history of the earlier discussed department asserting the head smugglers had always evaded capture concluding a re-establishment of such an agency or department and their staff was deemed undesirable,

A special detective agency was employed for a somewhat similar purpose under the late Thagi and Dakaiti Department between 1896 and 1901, but failed fully to achieve its original object of noting the regular customers of illicit opium, ascertaining the quantities of the drug they took out, the persons to whom they distributed it, and generally what became of it. The agency checked for a time the contraband trade which was carried on by careless smugglers, and supplied some very useful information in regard to the methods and routes of smuggling, but in the words of its own head "scrupulous and cautious smugglers derided detection and arrest". When the agency was about to be abolished in 1901 a proposal to permanently employ

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<sup>32</sup> H.A. Stuart, Director of the Criminal Intelligence Department notes on Excise Committee P.7

certain members of it to gather information regarding the contraband trade carried on from the Native States in Central India and Rajputana was rejected as undesirable.<sup>33</sup>

No more evidence of a comparable replacement department appears to have been formed between the years 1857 and 1906. While general smuggling intelligence was still collected across the Central Intelligence Department, the Foreign Department and Excise department this was never truly organised into a dedicated body like the detective agency had originally intended. In this case the attitudes of officials towards the potential difficulty of supervising such a department and the reputational damage it could bring on the Government of India was deemed too great a cost.

The Central Intelligence Director also took a grand strategy view of the practicalities of controlling opium smuggling. He preferred allowing policy to develop in reaction to events rather than imposing top-down schemes or plans. The reasons for which were explicitly political as he wished to avoid anti-opium attacks which highlighted any scheming in the interest of revenue. He rejected further plans for state control of the Princely States on this basis arguing,

Mr. Todhunter's general predilection for State control, and I do not think it at all desirable that the Native States should be urged or "required" to make opium production a State monopoly so long as we can get control of the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid P.7

opium traffic by other means. Such a measure would, unless it came spontaneously from the States themselves, expose use to undesirable attacks at the hands of the anti-opiumists.<sup>34</sup>

What is crucial from this evidence is how attitudes of senior officials were formed or in this case intentionally stifled from forming policies towards opium. The rationale again was to preserve the Government of India's reputation and avoid 'undesirable attacks' from their critics. In the following section the expanding role of the Government of India in managing the opium traffic of the Princely States will receive a more complete analysis which is too large to consider briefly here.

The Central Intelligence Director Stuart had considered solutions to systemic smuggling but offered few tangible new policy suggestions for the Excise Committee. For example, smuggling by post and rail discussed in the first section. Whether he influenced the Committee in light of the above statement or intentionally stopped more policies developing is hard to determine. In terms of the smuggling cases that had resulted from postal searches he remarked,

Similar action might be taken, so far as the circumstance permit in respect of consignments through the post, which from some of the past reports would appear to be numerous, and the Postmaster- General might be invited to instruct his subordinates to enforce section 60 (24) of the Post Offices Act

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<sup>34</sup> H.A. Stuart, Director of the Criminal Intelligence Department notes on Excise Committee P.20

strictly in all cases of parcels suspected to contain contraband articles and to offer them liberal rewards for the detection of opium.<sup>35</sup>

He noted similar proposals had been made in by Sirdar Amrik Singh and Major Parsons in 1899 and 1902 respectively. The former official had been Extra Assistant to the General Superintendent in charge of the now disgraced Opium Smuggling Detective Agency. This perhaps affected Stuart's advice who opposed this policy deciding instead to support the testimony of Secretary Mr. McIntosh who argued,

It would be intolerable to have a system of wholesale examination of packages in transit by railway or post. Such a procedure would only be justified by very exceptional circumstances in special localities, as for example at Rangoon, to meet which we issued a notification under section 24 of the Post Office Act last year. Naturally our preventative officers are always asking for greater facilities; but they must learn to do their work without disturbing the whole carrying arrangements of the country. I would object very strongly to having my box of Sunday clothes 'probed with an examining rod' on the way up to Simla, and so I imagine would everybody else.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, whether Sunday clothes or smuggled opium of senior officials would have been disturbed on route to Simla, this was yet another example of ambitious opium policies that senior officials discouraged in the early 1900s. The legislation existed to effect these changes in policing but resources were not delivered to reward

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<sup>35</sup> H.A. Stuart, Director of the Criminal Intelligence Department notes on Excise Committee P.14

<sup>36</sup> Ibid P.14

postal workers for finding opium. There was variation in the allocation of resources for this aim between departments and regions. As discussed in chapter two in Bengal rewards were issued to those cultivators who informed the police of smugglers amongst their ranks. However, in the Central Provinces officials believed postal workers searching personal effects would have encroached upon relations with the Princely States and or British Officials themselves.

Such cases were straightforward examples of the ways in which the authorities tackled those caught moving opium around without state sanction. However, matters were not always so simple and the authorities could take a different view in more complex situations. One of these related to the place of opium on local traditions, particularly where these related to marriages. The exchange of opium between families and relatives at weddings had a long history in south Asia. For example, the Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency in 1901 noted that Hindu Rajputs in western India regularly included it in gift exchanges and during the ceremony itself, alongside various other luxuries like sugar and vermilion in religious ceremonies for Rajput brides and grooms had a lasting political implication.<sup>37</sup> Opium drinking was even used to bond the two families prior to setting the wedding date and during negotiations ‘sugar is ... distributed to friends and relations met at the house and the girls party is treated to opium-water kusumba.’<sup>38</sup> The exchange was then repeated at

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<sup>37</sup> *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency Volume IX Part 1. Gujarát Population: Hindus* (Bombay: printed at the Government Central Press 1901) P. 110

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid* P. 111



the future wife's village, 'on the next day the girl's party ask the boy's party to their lodgings to sip kusumba and distribute sugar to the guests.'<sup>39</sup>

Entries in the Gazetteers of the colonial period must be treated with some circumspection given their role in British efforts to fix identities and essentialise communities in the colonial period. However, this information certainly provides an insight into British responses in the following episode. In Kutch in 1858 the Political Agent wrote to the Collector in Ahmedabad as follows:

Relative to the detention of three persons belonging to Kutch with their property at the Verumguam village of Ghoria, in consequence it is alleged of some opium,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a Seer, being found in the possession of Kuree Mahomed, one of the number, intended there is little doubt for the consumption of the party and their friends ... and not with any view to contravene the prohibitory rules appertaining to the carrying above a given quantity of the drug into our territories, of which in this province people are generally ignorant, so under these circumstances I trust that His Highness request for the speedy release of his subjects now detained as above stated, may be complied with.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency Volume IX Part 1. Gujarát* P. 111

<sup>40</sup>No. 38 of 1858 From, the Acting Political agent Kutch to The collector of Ahmedabad 7<sup>th</sup> May 1858, *File 496 Opium*. IOR/R/2/18A B/65, P. 2. It is difficult to know how much opium was involved. The Government of India seer was about a kilo but there were significant variations across South Asia.

The Political Agent explained further that ‘The three persons when stopped at the village of Ghoria were returning from the Shrine of Becharajee, where they probably purchased the opium.’ The accused, Kuree Mahomed was en route to Surmnee in Jhalawar to re-join others in his party where they, ‘were deputed to escort a female from that neighbourhood who had been affianced to the son of one Dehsungjee, a maharaja of this province’.<sup>41</sup>

It seems that the colonial authorities in the Bombay Presidency had acted promptly to arrest a group who were moving about a kilogramme of opium in British territory. However, the cultural and political context shifted the meaning of this movement. It looks as if they were on a mission to secure opium from a religious site, The Shrine of Becharaji which is in Northern Gujarat. It is a temple dedicated to Bahuchar Mata, the patron goddess of local women folk who invoke ‘her’ intervention in domestic matters.<sup>42</sup> Once, secured, this special opium was to accompany the bride-to-be and her family once they set off to meet the family of her future husband, a prince in the royal household of Kutch. The position put the colonial authorities in an awkward position. After all, this was an illegal transaction in a revenue-generating product. However, it was linked to the cultural traditions of a local ruler. The compromise was reached by the Political Agent who out it to the Collector that ‘of course no request is made for the restoration of the opium to the party from whom it was taken but merely that the three persons in question may be permitted to proceed on their

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<sup>41</sup>No. 38 of 1858 From, the Acting Political agent Kutch to The collector of Ahmedabad 7<sup>th</sup> May 1858, *File 496 Opium*. IOR/R/2/18A B/65, P. 2.

<sup>42</sup>‘The temple of Bahuchar Mata’ <http://www.gujarattourism.com/destination/details/10/57>, date accessed 5/6/2018

way'.<sup>43</sup> The outcome of this altercation was officials became flexible when interpreting the Opium Acts, especially when the local Maharaja or family members were involved. In this instance they were allowed to proceed and while other wedding gifts were returned the parties request for the opium remained answered.

The colonial authorities were not always so sensitive to the incorporation of opium into local beliefs and customs. For example, the Inspector of Police for Thakurgaon, Baboo Mohim Chandra Ghose, documented three cases in January 1888 in which he claimed that religious robes were used as instruments of smuggling. The first case was Behari Das Brahmin of Itahi who occupied a temple in Nepal Terai, and who was arrested with three and a half seers of opium. He had 'disguised himself as a hermit in yellow robes'.<sup>44</sup> The Inspector recorded that the accused claimed, 'he had this quantity of opium as alms from Doma Bhakat'.<sup>45</sup> Given that the suspect lived in a temple and wore the dress of local medicants it does not seem so unlikely that he was indeed a hermit, and that he had received a supply of opium as a charitable gift from a patron. However the detective viewed this purely through the view of the Opium Acts and their enforcement, which viewed holiness as a method of disguise. For example, another man by the name of Lachman Das from Terai was arrested with seven and half seers of opium at Bhadreswar on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October and the police chief wrote that he was 'on his way to aforesaid mentioned Mohendra Haldar's place in French Chandernagore, [and had] guised himself as a saint with a few books tied

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<sup>43</sup> No. 38 of 1858 From, the Acting Political agent Kutch to The collector P.2

<sup>44</sup> From- Baboo Mohim Chandra Ghose, Inspector of Police, Thakurgaon, To- The Personal Assistant to the Inspector-General of Police, L.P. Thakurgaon, the 31st January 1888 (through the District Superintendent of Police, Dinagepore). *Financial Department Excise- No. 575 T-F. NAI*, P. 3

<sup>45</sup> Ibid P. 3

about his breast.<sup>46</sup> Such was the focus on intervening in movements of opium that contravened British laws that the Inspector seems not to have contemplated for a moment that the arrested were really holy men.

Similarly, the Excise Department in Bombay reported that religious disguises were being used to conceal the transport of illicit opium. In 1885 one case uncovered,

a third of 138 lbs. of illicit opium found concealed in baskets (Kávad) hung from each end of a bámbu carried on the shoulder of a person dressed as a mendicant who gave out that he was carrying holy water, jars of which formed the upper layer of the contents of the baskets. This seizure was effected in June last.<sup>47</sup>

However, the department noticed that its sales also leapt at the same time as in the years 1885-1886 there was a 2000lb increase in the districts of Kaira and Ahmedabad with Bombay increasing by 3000lbs. Officials of the department concluded that this was because

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<sup>46</sup> From- Baboo Mohim Chandra Ghose, Inspector of Police, Ibid P. 3

<sup>47</sup> From the Commisisoner of Customs, Salt, Opium and Ábkári, to the secretary to government, revenue Department, Bombay. Poona, 19th October 1885. *Report of the Administration of the Opium Department of the Bombay during the year 1885-1886*. (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent Government Printing, 1887) P.24

supply for illicit sales was stopped, and, partly, to the celebration of an unusually large number of marriages among the Hindus during the year 1885-86, being the result of the religious prohibition against the performance of nuptial ceremonies throughout the preceding year. <sup>48</sup>

It seems that 1885-6 was a boom time for opium suppliers, whether legal or illegal, as the festivities were unleashed across the region as a ban on weddings came to an end.

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<sup>48</sup> No. 5647, From J.G. Moore, Esquire, C.S. Acting commissioner of Customs, Salt, Opium and Ábkári To T.D. Mackenzie, Esquire C.S., Acting Chief Secretary to Government, Revenue Department Poona 18th October 1886 *Report of the Administration of the Opium Department of the Bombay during the year 1885-1886*. (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent Government Printing, 1887) P. 30

## **Drug diplomacy and the princely states**

The story above about the wedding party on their way to Kutch draws attention to opium policies and cross-border affairs. It is clear that transactions in the substance were often tangled up in relations between areas under the direct administration of the British and the many other territories around south Asia under the control of princes, Maharajahs and so on. What is equally as clear is that the policies adopted British officers varied greatly and were often improvised rather than constructed in line with a central directive or a set of widely agreed objectives.

Mahi Kantha was a collection of princely states in British India that included places like Vijaynagar and Idar, within the Gujarat Division of Bombay Presidency. Most of these states paid tribute to the Maharaja Gaekwad of Baroda during the nineteenth-century. At the beginning of the nineteenth-century the Maharajas recognized the suzerainty of the British who in turn guaranteed them local autonomy.<sup>49</sup> Between 1st October 1878 to 30th November 1881<sup>50</sup> one hundred and sixty-seven cases were under the Opium Act of 1878. Of these fifty-six were tried by the British Political officers there themselves, and the others were held by local chiefs directed under the same Act.<sup>51</sup> It transpired that all had no basis in law. It seems that the Government of India's Foreign Department had become uneasy about these prosecutions so they consulted the Finance Department for a view.

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<sup>49</sup> W. Lee-Warner, *The Native States Of India*, (1910).

<sup>50</sup> *From Bombay Government, No. 2622, dated 31st May 1882. Subject: Introduction of Opium Act into the Mahi Kantha Agency.* Foreign Department, Political A, Proceedings June 1882, Nos. 629-40, NAI. P. 5

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid* P. 5

The Political Agent has ... introduced the Act on his own authority, which he had no right to do so, and we are now asked to introduce it regularly. I would tell the Bombay Government that we cannot agree to the introduction of the Opium Act; that the prohibitions must be enforced through the Chiefs; that the Political Agent should not have taken on himself to issue the Notification on December 1878 without sanction of the Government; and I would draw the attention of the Bombay Government to the important question of the general political effect upon our relations with these States of the interference for the stringent enforcement of our revenue regulations which the system is gradually entailing upon us.<sup>52</sup>

The Foreign Department clearly felt that there were considerations more important than opium revenue in this context, and the idea that a zealous official had extended regulations into the territories of independent rulers unconstitutionally alarmed them for fear of the political repercussions. However, those involved seem to have decided that it might cause more trouble to draw attention to these proceedings than it would by simply leaving well alone. The Foreign Department seems to have concluded that the Opium Act should be introduced across the Mahi Kantha agency and that the previous prosecutions would have to stand. It replied to colleagues in Finance that ‘the Government of Bombay would evidently not like the convictions to be disturbed’ and neatly provided an explanation to cover the previous

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<sup>52</sup> To the Foreign Department unofficially, No. 4539. Reply from (Sd.) A.C.L. *Finance Department, Under-Secretary Dated the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1881. Foreign Department, Political A, Proceedings June 1882, Nos. 629-40, NAI. P. 3*

imprisonments. The Political Agent's actions should be considered, 'not so much *illegal* as irregular.'<sup>53</sup>

A similar case in the 1890s showed that policies remained complex. In 1892 two opium smugglers were caught on the Indian Midland Railway while passing through Bhopal.<sup>54</sup> The latter was a well-established princely state and one of the most important in South Asia.<sup>55</sup> The Magistrate, Mr. J. Innes, tried the first offender and sentenced him to a year's imprisonment and a fine of Rs.200 on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1896.<sup>56</sup> However, by the time the other offender came to trial the magistrate had done a little more reading; 'in the second case it having come to his notice that the Opium Act is not specified in the above mentioned notification, he has stayed proceeding and referred the matter for orders, admitting the accused to bail'. The notification in question was Foreign Department Notification No. 1829, so he stopped proceedings and contacted the department for clarification.<sup>57</sup> The reply he received suggested that he had unwittingly enforced regulations that were not applicable in Bhopal.

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<sup>53</sup> Reply to No. 2622, dated 31st May 1882. From Sd. J.W.R. dated the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1882. Subject: Introduction of Opium Act into the Mahi Kantha Agency. *Foreign Department, Political A, Proceedings June 1882, Nos. 629-40*, NAI. P. 6

<sup>54</sup> Copy of a telegram No. 616S,X,9 III, dated 8th November 1897 from the Inspector General of Police, North-Western Provinces and Oudh, to the Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh. Intl.B. Proceedings March 1898 no. 197, NAI. P. 4

<sup>55</sup> S. Khan, *The Begums of Bhopal: A Dynasty of Women Rulers in Raj India*, ( I. B.Tauris, London, 2000).

<sup>56</sup> Copy of a telegram No. 616S,X,9 III, dated 8th November 1897 from the Inspector General of Police, North-Western Provinces and Oudh, to the Secretary to the Government of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh. Intl.B. Proceedings March 1898 no. 197, NAI. P. 4

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid* P. 4.



These Acts have not been specially applied to railway lands in N. States and even when all the laws of an adjoining British District are applied to such lands we do not enforce the fiscal laws, as a matter of policy, although we have a perfect right to do so, if necessary when full jurisdiction is ceded by N. States ... Since then it has been ruled that British fiscal laws ought not as a matter of policy be applied to Railway lands in Native states over which we have acquired jurisdiction. This ruling covers both Excise and Opium Acts. <sup>58</sup>

This reply suggested that opium regulations came second to smooth relations with the local princely states. It seems that chasing and prosecuting smugglers along the railways of India threatened to disrupt peaceful relations with independent rulers. In these circumstances the Government of India's foreign policy came first.

The Government of India seemed reluctant to seek to impose tight opium controls on princes even where the latter seemed to be operating with a complete disregard for the British opium monopoly. For example, as early as 1875 one official in the Foreign Department wrote in internal correspondence that 'It is stated as an axiom throughout these papers that in the matter of smuggling, the Gaekwar of Baroda is the chief offender'.<sup>59</sup> The rulers of Baroda did not recognise the opium laws and

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<sup>58</sup> *Dairy No. 399 1897, To Foreign Department from the Govt. of the N.W.P and Oudh No. 1554 Dated the 6th 1897. Subject. Cases of opium smuggling on the Indian midland Railway in Bhopal territory. Foreign Department Internal-B, Proceedings. March 1898, No. 196/197, NAI. P.3*

<sup>59</sup> *From J.A.B., Register No. 296., dated the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1875, Subject: cultivation and sale of Opium in the Baroda Territories. Foreign Department, Revenue B. Proceedings. December 1875, Nos. 10/14, NAI. P. 5*

gave no signs of being inclined to do so. As a result, the Resident and Excise officials suggested enforcing an older treaty signed by the Chief's ancestors in 1820

The Baroda Government may fairly be called upon to act up to the provision of the Convention of 1820, and to devise such regulations, in respect of the cultivation of the poppy and the prevention of smuggling within its limits, as will be in accordance with the spirit of that Convention, and will enable it to control effectively the production and traffic of the drug within the territories under its administration.<sup>60</sup>

The Foreign Department argued that the policies were more likely to stoke disobedience and unpopularity than achieve their goal of protecting government revenue.

It must not be concealed that these arrangements will be very un-popular in these States, both to the Chiefs and the people.

The environment of untaxed opium is a privilege highly valued by the latter in all Native States, and the rise in the price of the drug from the adoption of the proposed measures will tell with serious hardship on many who have learned to consume it at a small cost.

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<sup>60</sup> Note on the manufacture of Opium in Baroda territory and the present practise regarding the traffic in and sale of the drug within its limits. From R.J. Meade, Colonel, Agent to the Governor General and Special Commissioner, Baroda. Dated the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1875, Subject: cultivation and sale of Opium in the Baroda Territories. *Foreign Department, Revenue B. Proceedings. December 1875*, Nos. 10/14, NAI. P. 14

Weighty objections also naturally suggest themselves to engagements of such a nature on the part of the Native Chiefs, and it cannot be denied that such engagements are but too apt to fall into abeyance and be therefore practically useless, or to become a subject of inconvenience and irritation if attempted to be enforced.<sup>61</sup>

Once again, the Foreign Department seemed disinclined to pursue policies in the princely states designed to protect opium revenues, for fear of the damage that might be done to successfully pursuing the larger strategic goal of maintaining peaceful relations with those living in those independent polities. In this particular case, the opium issue was quickly forgotten as the British intervened to unseat the Maharaja in Baroda and replace him with their preferred candidate.<sup>62</sup>

By contrast, in Jammu and Kashmir in 1900 the Resident was arguing for relaxed controls on opium rather than stricter imposition of them. A petition received from Kashgari traders in that year made the case.

I beg to state that in former times (*i.e.*, *twenty years ago*) Indian traders used to purchase, duty free, for importation into this country, opium grown in the

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<sup>61</sup> *Note on the manufacture of Opium in Baroda territory and the present practise regarding the traffic in and sale of the drug within its limits. From R.J. Meade, Colonel, Agent to the Governor General and Special Commissioner, Baroda. Dated the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1875, Subject: cultivation and sale of Opium in the Baroda Territories. Foreign Department, Revenue B. Proceedings. December 1875, Nos. 10/14, NAI. P. 14*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid* P. 1

Doda and Kishtwar Tahsils of the Jammu and Kashmir State ... Moreover, every dealer in opium has to incur some expense in obtaining a license; and the State officials give trouble, and interfere unnecessarily in the matter. Traders have in consequence ceased to import the drug.<sup>63</sup>

A table accompanied the petition which showed that those trying to sell Kashmiri opium in Central Asia were forced to adulterate their product the most in the market and to sell at a lower price than that produced elsewhere and traded in the region. It was explained that the Maharaja's strict enforcement of opium policies designed to restrict a flow of local opium into British Indian territories had in fact decimated the trade in the substance the other way, into Chinese Turkistan.<sup>64</sup> As the Resident concluded, 'the trade in Kashmir opium, formerly considerable, has been all but extinguished by Chinese competition'.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> From- Lieutenant- Colonel Sir Adelbert Talbot, K.C.I.E., Resident in Kashmir, To- The Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department. No. 7010, dated Sialkot, the 16th November 1900. P. 17

<sup>64</sup> From the Resident in Kashmir, No. 5472, dated the 20th (received 26th) August Pro. No. 24 1901. Forwards reports on the trade between India and Russian and Chinese Turkestan and Tibet for the year 1900-1901 Subject: Reports on the trade of India with Russian and Chinese Turkistan and Tibet for 1900-1901. Proposal to produce brick tea in India, which might compete in Tibet and Chinese Turkistan with the Chinese tea. *GOI. Foreign Department, Frontier-A. Proceedings, January 1902, Nos. 24-30. NAI. P. 16*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid* P. 15

Locality at which the opium is produced	Percentage of adulteration.	Per Liang (=3 1/8 Tola). In native currency.	Per Liang (=3 1/8 Tola). In Indian Currency.
China Proper	20 per cent	Tengas 3	Rs. S. P. 0 6 10
Ili	Ditto	Ditto	0 6 10
Karakul (Russian)	30 per cent	Tengas 2	0 4 6
Ushturfan	Ditto	Ditto	0 4 6
Badakhshan	20 per cent	Tengas 3	0 6 10
Kishtwar (Kashmir)	30 per cent	Tengas 2	0 4 6

*Table 1 Opium location and adulteration.*

So in 1900 the presiding Lieutenant Colonel Sir Adelbert found himself in the position of recommending that the Kashmiri authorities loosen their grip on the opium trade and exempt that bound for Chinese Turkistan from excise duties.<sup>66</sup> The correspondence on this matter was included in a set of discussions about how to better connect Indian goods with Central Asian markets, among which the idea of promoting 'brick-tea' there was mooted. Overall, it suggests that the economic goals of the Resident there to promote trade across the regions eastern borders far

<sup>66</sup> From- Lieutenant- Colonel Sir Adelbert Talbot, K.C.I.E., Resident in Kashmir, To- The Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department. No. 7010, dated Sialkot, the 16th November 1900. Subject Statistics of, and a report on, the trade of India, with Russian and Chinese Turkistan and Tibet for the year ending the 31st March 1900. *Foreign Department, Frontier- A, Proceedings January 1901, Nos. 32-34. NAI. P. 1*

outweighed any concerns he had to prevent opium production which might end up directed to markets in the south.

Perhaps most striking of all the arrangements put into place by the British authorities was that for Oudh. The annexation of the region by the East India Company in 1856 was at the heart of the uprising against British rule of 1857-8. Much of the fiercest fighting had taken place there, with sieges at Cawnpore and Lucknow regarded as atrocities by the British and it bore the brunt of reprisals under officers like General James Neill.<sup>67</sup> Even G.F Edmonstone, Secretary of the Foreign Department of the Government of India and one of the architects of the annexation of Oudh, felt compelled to write in *The Times* in 1858 that

We must admit that, under these circumstances, the hostilities which have been carried on in Oude have rather the character of legitimate war than that of rebellion, and that the people of Oude should rather be regarded with indulgent consideration than made the objects of a penalty exceeding in extent and in severity almost any which has been recorded in history as inflicted upon a subdued nation.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> H. Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture*, (Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> G. F. EDMONSTONE. "The Revolt Of Oude." *Times* [London, England] 8 May 1858: 9. The Times Digital Archive. Web. Date accessed, 1 Nov. 2016.  
URL [http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=ust\\_rath&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS151687848&type=multiPage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0](http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=ust_rath&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS151687848&type=multiPage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0)

As the British authorities began to assert themselves in the region the question arose of how to manage opium production there. It was not one that many were keen to answer. The imposition of a monopoly in the style of that in Bengal seemed like the obvious answer, but there seemed to be misgivings about it among those responsible for governing Oudh.

The modification in the Bengal system which the C.C. [Chief Commissioner] proposes gets rid only of the system of advances of Govt. money leaves untouched the other objectionable features of the system- e.g. its making the British Govt the monopolist and great supplier of the drug. It is this which always, array Exeter Hall against the Govt of India, & adds to the ranks of the anti-opium monopoly party many political economists who think little of any but the economical bearing of the question. Whether we agree in opinion with either party or not we cannot but expect that their united hostility is very troublesome and worth getting rid of, if it can be done without injury to the Revenue or to any other interest?<sup>69</sup>

In the discussion 'Exeter Hall' was a reference to the building on The Strand in London where the anti-slavery lobby had met in the 1830s and which had become the

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<sup>69</sup> No. 197 Opium in Oudh, Minute by the Honourable Mr H. B.E. Here considered in by the Presence of the Council dated 16th January 1860. Subject: Cultivation of opium and establishment of opium agencies in Oudh- minutes by the Gov. General and member of Council of the subject. Foreign department, Political Part A, Proceedings July 1860, No. 88-92, NAI. P. 1-4

meeting place for all sorts of philanthropists and ‘believers in human betterment’.<sup>70</sup> Officials at the Foreign Department knew that their dealings in the recently pacified province were being closely monitored by this group, and also by ‘many political economists’, a reference to the likes of J.S. Mill and the proponents of Utilitarianism.<sup>71</sup>

This was particularly the case because of wider British dealings in Asia. The Second Opium war with China rumbled on between 1856-1860. Officials at the Foreign Department made it clear that this was influencing decisions in India.

It seems to me that the current public opinion in England is very strongly set against the traffic in opium on the part of Government that the propriety of the system under late relations with China is at least questionable and is not likely to be asserted in a new treaty, and that the more direct administration of India by Her Majesty’s Government and consequent more direct action of English popular opinion on Indian affairs, is not likely to promote the continuance of this unpopular Government opium traffic.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> L. Cowie, ‘Exeter Hall’ in *History Today*, 18, 6 June 1968.

<sup>71</sup> M. Moir, D. Peers and L. Zastoupil (eds), *J.S. Mill's Encounter with India*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1998).

<sup>72</sup> No.20, Solicits the orders of Government on the subject of the cultivation and sale of opium. From Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Oudh, Dated 20th September 1858 Subject: The Oude Opium Question. Foreign Department. Revenue Department Political Consultation, 5 Nov 1858 No.207/210. NAI P. 16-17.



Of course, because of recent events in Oudh there seemed a hesitancy to stir up the countryside once more with new policies or agents. The Judicial Commissioner of Oudh, G. Campbell, articulated this as follows

I would suggest is that till a new imperial opium system is commenced we should keep things in Oude not very far from what they were and that we should not interfere with the cultivation- the import of Oudh opium into our other Provinces would be restrained as much as formerly, the British Frontier Halt line, such as it is still stands. Except that Oudh Opium would be bought at the fixed rate where offered to the Opium agencies already established.<sup>73</sup>

The outcome of all this discussion was that Oudh, despite becoming part of British India, found itself outside the monopoly system in operation across the rest of the territories. The province became an experiment in free-market opium production so that cultivators could produce if they wished without an opium agency breathing down their necks to ‘encourage’ planting and to estimate crops.<sup>74</sup> Oudh would be treated like many princely states, whereby producers simply paid excise duty to sell their produce in adjoining British territories. The recent conflict in north India, Britain’s ongoing wars with China over opium, and the watchful eyes of campaigners and political-economists back in London all drove this policy compromise in Oudh.

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<sup>73</sup> Solicits the orders of Government on the subject of the cultivation and sale of opium. Ibid. P. 20

<sup>74</sup> G. Campbell, *Judicial Commissioner Oudh. True copy for the secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Oudh Opium Question*. Subject: The Oude Opium Question. Foreign Department. Revenue B, Political Consultation, 5 Nov 1858 No.207/210. NAI. P.20



## Frontiers and foreign countries

Drug diplomacy did not just affect relations across the internal frontiers of British India. For example, efforts to persuade the King in Nepal to assert greater control over opium production there to prevent it being smuggled across his borders did not seem straightforward. When the issue arose the Resident in Nepal, Charles Edward Ridgway Girdlestone,<sup>75</sup> explained the diplomatic problem of resolving the opium question,

In Nipal the Durbar does not appear to have any direct interest in the cultivation manufacture or sale of opium. Consequently, the suppression of smuggling would not entail any direct loss to the revenues of the State unless by squeezing opium smugglers the Durbar gets something out of them for itself. That is not unlikely ... Unless we set about this as the paramount power, we must necessarily fall back upon the Darbar's co-operation, either by actual money payments, or by the grant of some reciprocal concession, which would probably in this case as the Resident suggests take the form of a promise to effectually prevent the smuggling of timber from Nipalese forests, about which the Durbar was lately rather keen. I doubt very much whether it would be possible to make any satisfactory bargain in the matter.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> \*Girdlestone was the British Resident in Nepal from 1872 to 1888, from his communications it seems he was frustrated by constantly explaining the independence of Nepal from British India to other officials.

<sup>76</sup> From the Resident of Nipal, Girdlestone. R.I., dated the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1890. Subject: Opium smuggling from Nepal into India. *Foreign Department, Secret-E. Proceedings June 1890*, Nos. 525-529, NAI. P. 2

Opium policy in this context was caught up in a wider calculation about broader issues of what was crossing the border. By the sound of it the British administration in north India had no great desire to prevent Nepalese wood from entering their territory, presumably as its value as a commodity in empire-building was high. The issue of illicit supplies of opium in this context raised the question of what it was worth to insist that the government in Nepal act to do something about it. It seems that it was not worth cash, or an intervention to prevent timber-smuggling.

Supplies from Afghanistan were larger and more regular and yet the Government of India found itself doing little more than monitor efforts at smuggling into its territories. In 1895, for example, a political diary recorded that the Amir at Peshawar was in the habit of regularly collecting opium at Kabul for sending to India.<sup>77</sup> Elsewhere there was evidence that efforts were being made in Afghanistan to reorganise production.

In Herat the Amir decreed that opium would be controlled by Government monopoly in 1896,

Thursday, the 26th November- The Amir last year decreed that all Herat opium was to be sold to Government. This year the crop averaged eight to ten seers to the jarib, and has been sold to Government. But the Governor has

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<sup>77</sup> From the Government of the Punjab No.51, Dated 23rd (received 25th) March 1897. Asks for instructions as to the disposal of the one-and-half maunds of opium imported without a license from Afghanistan and detained in the Peshawar Treasury since July 1895. Subject: Detention of opium belonging to the Amir at Peshawar since July 1895. *Foreign Department. Secret F. Proceedings October 1897, Nos. 232-237. NAI. P. 1*

given orders that one maund per jarib should be sold to Government, and his orders are being carried out with great harshness and severity, and are causing much distress and very great dissatisfaction among the people.<sup>78</sup>

Three years later the Kabul Agency recorded that smuggling of supplies into India was ongoing.

Opium is largely produced in Jalalabad district and sold here very cheaply. I have learnt that from the above district it is smuggled in considerable quantities to Peshawar and other parts of India for sale.<sup>79</sup>

This time the British tracked it and seized the consignment, only to find themselves stuck with it. In the end it was left in the treasury for two years, and a diplomatic solution to deal with future crops was suggested.

The deterioration of the opium is no concern of ours. The Afghan Agent is responsible; we are not. I think we may tell Punjab Government to let the opium remain as it is until the Afghan Agent again raises the question. We are not at all anxious to have the Amir's opium or to aid him in sending it to

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<sup>78</sup> Translation of Herat News-letter dated Thursday, the 26th November 1896. Subject: Herat News-letters Nos. 41 to 50 of 1896. *Foreign Department, Secret F. Proceedings. April 1897 Nos. 133-164.* NAI. P. 3

<sup>79</sup> No. 142, *Diaries D. No. 563 F. Diary of the Kabul Agency for the week which ended on the 5th November 1898.* Subject: Kabul Diaries for the months of November and December 1898. Foreign Department. Secret F. Proceedings January 1899, Nos. 142-150. NAI. P. 1

China; and the longer we can postpone taking action the better. Apart from the 112 maunds mentioned in the office note as collected at Kabul early last summer for sale in India, I read recently that the whole of the 1896 Kandahar opium crop had been sent to Kabul for despatch to India; and if a settlement of the question is to come with the Amir, we must be prepared for several hundred maunds of Afghan Opium coming down to India.<sup>80</sup>

The outcome was the offer of an opium pass to the Amir to legitimise the trade, on payment of tax on the consignment.<sup>81</sup> The Government of the Punjab confirmed this.

Yes. Foreign Department are, I presume, aware that we have no objection whatever to Afghan opium passing into consumption in India, provided it pays our taxes. In fact, it rather suits us to reduce the demands of Indian consumption of our opium production.<sup>82</sup>

Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi have demonstrated that Britain was one of a collection of Eastern and European opium regimes with varying levels of influence over the trade in Asia and their monitoring of the commerce in the

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<sup>80</sup> Reply to No.51, Dated 23rd (received 25th) March 1897, from Deputy Secretary, Foreign Department. Subject: Detention of opium belonging to the Amir at Peshawar since July 1895. *Foreign Department. Secret F. Proceedings October 1897*, Nos. 232-237. NAI. P. 1

<sup>81</sup> Reply to No.51, Dated 23rd (received 25th) March 1897, to the Foreign Department unofficially from J.W.[estland]. Finance Department. Dated the 15th April 1897. Subject: Detention of opium belonging to the Amir at Peshawar since July 1895. *Foreign Department. Secret F. Proceedings October 1897*, Nos. 232-237. NAI. P. 2

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid* P.2

substance stemmed in part from their economic interests.<sup>83</sup> However, there was also a political context for this. Following the Second Anglo-Afghan war between 1878 and 1880 the policy of non-interference in the country's internal rule limited British options on preventing opium production there. Nevertheless, ongoing anxieties about Russia's ambitions in Central Asia lead to extensive networks of clandestine surveillance in what has become known as the Great Game.<sup>84</sup> Yapp has argued that attitudes within the Government of India were born from Russophobic paranoia while others have argued that this paranoia was perpetuated by the British to legitimise their occupation of India by stoking a fear of invaders.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, a close watch was maintained in the region and opium regularly featured in reports, often entangled with the wider politics of the period.<sup>86</sup>

14<sup>th</sup> October 1899. Certain persons who have lately come from Kabul have started a rumour that His Highness the Amir has issued a proclamation to the effect that as the Persians have become effete and useless through their continual use of opium, and that as nearly all their frontier posts have fallen into the hands of the Russians, and the power of Islam has become weakened while the Kafirs are advancing from all directions, it is, therefore, incumbent

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<sup>83</sup> T. Brook, and B. T. Wakabayashi, *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 2000)

<sup>84</sup> P. Hopkirk. *The Great Game* (London, John Murray 2006) \*There are many accounts of the same name both contemporary and modern which focus on the geo-political competition between Britain and Russia in Central Asia.

<sup>85</sup> M. A. Yapp, 'British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India.' *Modern Asian Studies*, 21, (1987). pp 655

<sup>86</sup> Herat News-letter No.42, dated the 19th October 1899 from Khan Bahadur Mirza Khan Yakub Ali Khan, British News-writer. Subject: Herat News-letters Nos. 41 to 52 of 1899. *GOI, Foreign Department, Secret F, Proceedings February 1900*, Nos. 186-204, NAI. P. 2

on all Musalmans to unite together and prepare themselves for a Holy war against the Infidels.<sup>87</sup>

If these reports were true, it seems that opium was not simply viewed as a political and cultural by the British authorities at the end of the nineteenth-century.

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<sup>87</sup> Herat News-letter No.42, dated the 19th October 1899, P. 2



## **Conclusion**

In Amar Farooqui's study of Malwa opium in the period of East India Company rule he argued that smuggling was subversion. The producers of that state found ways to access the market for the substance in China by concealing transportation, building clandestine networks and exploiting their independence and existing trading relations. They defied the growing influence and monopolistic ambitions of the East India Company state to reformulate the economic and political relations in nineteenth-century Western and Central India to their advantage.

This chapter has considered the period after 1857 and the end of the East India Company and has shown that the British government in India that took over in 1858 continued to see smuggling as subversion and often worked hard to interdict what they regarded as illicit movements of opium. The first section showed that smugglers came in many forms and could even be found in the employment of the government itself. The policeman and railway workers who used their positions to steal and conceal opium from government consignments were punished harshly for their transgressions. However, it shows that policy towards those caught moving illicit supplies of the drug was not absolute or unbending. Local political and cultural considerations came into play to shape and mould the application of drugs regulations so that members of wedding parties, or of Maharaja's entourages, could escape the full force of the law in order to ease relations between the authorities and local communities and power-brokers.

The rather grandiose named Special Detective Agency for the Prevention Opium Smuggling also confirmed this need for autonomy between Foreign and Excise Department. The failed experiment in drug policing which lasted six years ended amongst accounts of bribery and corruption. This touched the highest level of state with the Viceroy taking a keen interest in resolving the case much to the dismay of department officials who would have preferred the case remain unearthed. The involvement of a Maharaja hoping to obtain an official title was also given leniency in comparison to the new agency's shortcomings. The larger departments such as the Thuggee and Dacoity Special Branch it was officially attached to was quick to disown the separate body when it came under attack. It had comprised of 'local' men equipped with the necessary knowledge and community links to survey and penetrate systematic smuggling rings. As a result they were equally difficult to keep tabs on which delivered more embarrassment than policy success for the Government of India.

Quite how varied policy was towards illicit movements of opium on the part of the colonial authorities becomes more apparent still when interactions between the Government of India and neighbouring states that produced or dealt with opium are considered. At one end of the spectrum was the Maharaja of Baroda in 1875, who was suspected of orchestrating opium smuggling across his borders into British India. He was deposed that year by British officers and his dealings in opium were an element in the correspondence which preceded the event. At the other end of the

spectrum was the Resident in Kashmir who was keen to encourage the local prince to relax controls on opium flows in his state as part of an effort to stimulate trade eastwards into Chinese Turkestan. In between these extremes there was a range of deals and arrangements made to take account of wider strategic considerations and local conditions. It is clear that when opium crossed borders, British policy was not simply driven by financial or excise considerations or by a determination to enforce the government's monopoly on opium trading in south Asia. Rather, in flowing across frontiers opium became a political and a foreign policy issue, and was shaped by the complex relations with the states on their borders formed by the British from 1858 onwards.



## **Chapter four: Religious and missionary attitudes**

## Introduction

Opium sits as a god, whose worshippers are on the increase, whose devotees give themselves wholly to its service.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will examine religious attitudes about opium and how they critiqued and partly drove the Government of India's policies. It will primarily focus on Quaker anti-opium publications and temperance material from India due to their tangible links with British MPs who questioned the Government of India's policies. The above quote alludes to the wider attitude among missionaries and religious societies that opium was replacing the role of religion and the Christian family. This chapter will analyse the attitudes and organisation of temperance movements, analysing their publications, connections to parliament and how they critiqued opium. It will also examine the concept of the Christian family with a focus on the baby doping 'scandal' mainly regarding child health and the protection of women. Britain had undergone an identical scandal in the early nineteenth century in which opium and soothing syrups became the subject of controversy in child poisoning cases. Patent remedies and soothing syrups however were excluded from its legal definition as a poison in 1868 in Britain but remained linked to the persecution of

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Huntly of Nusserabad, Rajputana writing to the United Presybertarian Magazine, Scotland. No date (ND) circa late 19<sup>th</sup> century given place in collection, Item 57, *Opium Pamphlets* (MS VOL 207) SOFA. P.2

women or mothers deemed responsible.<sup>2</sup> Finally this chapter will analyse the Government of India's response to these claims through civil surgeons, chemical examiners and the Royal Opium Commission. An element of the latter called upon Catholicism among other Christian denominations to support the GOI's opium policies as spiritually sound and counteract the moral critique of anti-opiumists.

Most of the analysis will primarily focus on the 1890s when the level of agitation and the number of publications produced by anti-opium societies was at its highest given the appointment of the Royal Opium Commission to investigate the opium question. It was also the period where responses from the Government of India via parliament on the question gained any traction. This was done largely through the Secretary of State responding to critics inspired by religious anti-opium pamphlets. As the first chapter has demonstrated it was not until the 1890s that any meaningful response or policy was formulated in response to the religious critics. Prior to this most policies discussed were an internal affair between the Secretary of State and Viceroy with announcements in parliament from 1860s to the 1890s largely surrounding the budget, The Royal Commission would open Indian policy to public debate.

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<sup>2</sup> V. Berridge, *Opium and the people*. P.110

## **Pamphlets, parliament and temperance.**

Before analysing the content and attitudes of religious pamphlets and missionaries it will help to examine the organisational structure of some of the anti-opium organisations that produced them. For instance, the Anti-Opium Urgency Committee in the run up to the Royal Opium Commission in 1893 spent money in both Britain and India to influence attitudes and policy in London. From 1<sup>st</sup> July 1892 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1894 it spent £432 on, ‘Literature, Pamphlets, Clerks, Folders, Messengers’ Wages, &c...’ its links with missionaries also facilitated spending on literature and travelling expenses of key speakers and leaders in India to Britain. For example it, ‘Remitted to India for Passages, Raju Naidu and Miss Soonderbai Powar 1892 and other work there...’ a total of £220. It also set aside £78 for ‘Return Journeys Raidu Naidu and Miss Powar, and incidental expenses of these delegates...’ In addition, these links with missionaries in India facilitated events and public meetings which gave accounts of the opium habit in India for an audience in London. These were encompassed by the £114 set aside for, ‘Expenses Public Meetings...’<sup>3</sup> There were financial and organisational links between these publications and missionaries in India but therein relied upon these links for first-hand testimony. For instance, the women’s organisation headed by Rachel B Braithwaite arranged over 350 public meetings in the United Kingdom from 1892 to 1894 which drew on second hand experience of India through their orators using the travel funds described above. This included individuals such as Miss Soonderbai

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<sup>3</sup> R. Braithwaite, Hon. Sec Balance Sheet. Anti-Opium Urgency Committee in Account with the Treasurer. From 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1892, to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1894. *Women’s Anti-Opium Committee of Urgency. Report from July 1892 to September 1894.* Opium Pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA. P.22



Powar who spoke on the opium question. Her speeches and writings will be analysed in this chapter. Speaking as a high caste Hindu who converted to Christianity she became involved in missionary work with her writings being published in numerous missionary testimonies. It is hard to estimate the circulation of these pamphlets but many were handed out at public meetings and were reflective of a significant religious and activist readership in Britain. However, the focus of this chapter will be on the content of these pamphlets. It will analyse religious attitudes concerning opium and how they sought to critique the policy of the Government of India. The larger Society for the Suppression of Opium established in 1874 was primarily focused on the export trade to China rather than activity within India. It has received attention within the existing historiography by Katherine Lodwick.<sup>4</sup> By comparison, the smaller sister societies such as the Anti-Opium Urgency Committee will receive more attention in this section given their focus on the Government of India's policies. Other publications such as the *Abkari* temperance journal of India and *anti-opium* news produced by Quaker missionaries will also be analysed which recounted speeches given at anti-opium meetings and gatherings in India and the UK.

Reformers in parliament had been influenced by missionary accounts of opium dens published by religious societies and temperance papers. Mr William Caine MP, having read a missionary account of a visit to the Bombay smoking dens asked the Secretary of State for India what actions had been taken to enact the resolution of 1891 that had sought to ban these establishments.

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<sup>4</sup> K. Lodwick, *Crusaders against opium*

I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for India if his attention has been called to a statement by Mr. Henry Varley, in *The Methodist Times* of 6th April, in which he states that he has visited some of the opium dens in the City of Bombay, and that in one were at least 130 men and a few women, and in a second about 90, and in a third about 40 men; and if he is aware that by a Resolution of the Government of India, No. 4033, 25th September, 1891, an Order was made, closing every opium smoking den in India, and if the Secretary of State will take whatever action is necessary to secure the enforcement of this Resolution throughout British India? <sup>5</sup>

Like many missionary articles and stories in the religious presses it is unclear whether Mr Henry Varley ever visited Bombay or is relying on second-hand testimony. Given the multitude of missionaries claiming to have visited opium dens the number of addicts cannot be relied upon as fact. Caine himself would later write a similar account of opium dens in the *abkari temperance journal*. Nevertheless, it was the belief in these stories by MPs like Caine who perpetuated them in his own publications that demonstrated a willingness among politicians to draw upon religious orators and evidence to bolster their arguments in parliament. The attitudes of William Caine and Samuel Smith formed the leadership of the Indian temperance movement. Caine was also member and President of various temperance societies such as the Baptist Total Abstinence Society. <sup>6</sup> His attitude towards opium was that as a vice it could only be remedied by abstinence and abolition of the trade.

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<sup>5</sup> HC Deb 25 April 1893 vol 11 cc1125-6 1125

<sup>6</sup> G. S. Woods, supplement Caine, William Sproston, *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 1912) online copy [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Caine,\\_William\\_Sproston\\_\(DNB12\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Caine,_William_Sproston_(DNB12)) date accessed 02/05/2018

Similarly, Baptist missionaries in Assam forwarded principles of self-improvement when addressing the opium question using a, 'vocabulary of temperance' which blamed the Assamese for lacking the moral virtues of the British.<sup>7</sup> Overall missionaries sought to change policies of the Government of India via parliament and religious organisations. This was also achieved through their links with political leaders in India who shared their view that opium consumption was a state led vice.

Missionaries and officials understood opium through the prism of vice which relied on stereotyping 'natives' as lazy. Syed Alatas argued that the British viewed opium smoking in The Federated Malay State as one of many 'native' vices such as gambling and cockfighting. This contributed to colonialists' attitude that opium use was part of their disinclination to work or laziness.<sup>8</sup> The 1893 edition of *Anti-Tobacco Journal* (1893) missionaries outlined how Indians were in a state of lethargy within opium dens, 'Scores and hundreds may easily be seen in those dens, men women and sometimes even children, smoking and loafing or dozing.'<sup>9</sup> In terms of the contrast the between London and Bombay it was stressing the sheer number of addicts. The vagueness on the number or 'scores and hundreds' of men makes the statement seem exaggerated along with the remark there were women and children in what was framed as a male domain. As sections one and two have discussed the use of women and children to stress 'shameful' acts of government were attempts to moralise and drive policy decisions. These stories of 'loafing'

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<sup>7</sup> J. Sharma, *Empire's garden Assam and the making of India* (Durham N.C. : Duke University Press, 2011) Ibid P. 156

<sup>8</sup> S.H. Alatas, *The Myth Of The Lazy Native A study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism* (Frank Cass: London, 1977). P. 46

<sup>9</sup> *Opium in London and Bombay. A shameful Contrast. The Anti-Tobacco Journal Jan. 1, 1893.* Item 46, Opium Pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA. P. 8

Indians were aimed at embarrassing excise shops where opium could be consumed on the premises. The reporter laid responsibility at the Government of India stating, 'Often have I been to see the crowds in the Government Opium smoking dens.' The article's author was unnamed and was no doubt another permutation of the opium den story which regularly featured in the abkari and other missionary presses. Protestant missionaries justified their criticisms against the lazy 'native' and government by their conception of a Christian work ethic which was also used to further their conversion efforts. Outside of cities like Bombay laziness and opium smoking were also critiqued by British 'plantation culture', a paradigm promoted by government officials and missionaries in regions such as Assam. For instance, Ved Baruah has argued that plantation culture in the late nineteenth century stereotyped the Assamese opium smoker or *Kania* as lazy was, 'a process that was intimately tied to tea capitalism and the demand for labour.'<sup>10</sup> Colonial officials were attempting to characterise resistance to settlement and drug use as due to an inherent disinclination to work. The Government of India rather than accept the missionary criticism of government excise shops focused on smokers as a group prone to vice or weaknesses of will. The opium department as a physical authority on the drug also took it upon itself to defend its use in writing.

The controversy around opium-smoking in Bombay was defended by the department in 1893 just in time for it to be submitted to the Royal Opium Commission. Despite the excise department being responsible for the sale of opium in India, the opium department weighed in on this debate focused on consumption. The opium department produced a comprehensive list of smokers procuring funds to take

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<sup>10</sup> V. P. Baruah, *Addicts, Peddlers, Reformers: A Social History of Opium in Assam, 1826–1947*, (Unpublished PhD thesis, Cardiff University, 2016) p. 1

photographs and collect testimonies. *A Short History of the Lives of Bombay Opium Smokers* (1893)<sup>11</sup> was penned by Opium Agent Rustom Pestanji Jehangir, who claimed,

I have been for years in Her Majesty's Opium Department, Bombay, and have had ample opportunities of forming an accurate opinion about the physical conditions of the opium consumers.<sup>12</sup>

He recorded 137 different smokers' income and amount spent on opium excluding a troop of Sikh soldiers he happened to pass in his endeavours. Numerous testimonies cited the positive effects of opium on pain such as long standing back injuries.<sup>13</sup> This had led to numerous users following medicinal use to adopt the habit of opium smoking. For a city the size of Bombay the percentage of opium smokers in the population or 'the scores' or 'hundreds' appears to be an exaggerated statement. Similarly, even a den with hundreds of attendees would still be a very low percentage of the population in Bombay. However, equally it must be realised that this publication was an explicit attempt by the Opium department official who attempted to stop reformers, 'sweeping from the face of the earth, one of the most valuable produce of India - Opium.'<sup>14</sup> Overall, the literature of the period much like the historiography remains trapped between these two positions pro-opium and anti-

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<sup>11</sup> R. P. Jehangir, *A Short History of the Lives of Bombay Opium Smokers*. (Bombay: J. B. Marzban, 1893) P.ix

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. ix

<sup>13</sup> Ibid P.ix \*this data was not compiled in a graph on a single page by the department. They instead listed the positive testimony of each smoker, their income, and how much they spent over the entirety of the book.

<sup>14</sup> R. P. Jehangir, *A Short History of the Lives of Bombay Opium Smokers*, Pg, ix

opium. Neither side recognise it was the conflict between their two sets of attitudes that produced policy despite the latter group within the GOI usually justifying their decisions to the other.

Missionary attitudes attempted to shame the Government of India through pamphlets that described the opium habit as a vice. Indian opium ‘drunkards’ joined the parade of signed petitions in this case addressed directly to Queen Victoria with the aid of missionary anti-opium societies. The idea of opium causing drunkenness resulted from temperance attitudes connecting the effects of alcohol and other drugs. Before it condemned the British opium shops it first described the wasting of their body and their families,

We the undersigned, very humbly state that we have become addicted to the Opium habit; and that the strength of it has mastered us. We in ourselves have not the power to get free from it. Through the habit of Opium we have become reduced to a state of utter poverty... Our bodily strength has been wasted away. It is not good, then, to be slaves of Opium.<sup>15</sup>

The ‘drunkards’ lack of will remains the centre of analysis describing themselves as ‘slaves’ becoming impoverished and ill-nourished due to a lack of ‘power’ to quit

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<sup>15</sup> *Does God Permit Great Britain to rule in India in order that she may make men like this? The humble petition of Opium drunkards in the city of Bombay.* Circa 1890 (no date, cover or publisher on this pamphlet, safe to assume society for the suppression of opium trade or anti-opium urgency committee was publisher given content), Item 47, Opium Pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA pp.2-3

the habit. C. Midgley has argued missionaries and advocates of the anti-opium movement were also connected organisationally with the anti-slavery movement which informed their attitudes and use of imagery when describing the opium habit. For instance Lydia Sturge was an abolitionist who headed the Freedmen's Aid Union which helped newly freed slaves with housing and education in 1866. The same activist was also an abstinence advocate and member of the SSOT.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the 'opium slaves' and their families were also characterised as victims to the government opium shops stating, 'The money which should have nourished our wives and children has gone to the Opium shop.'<sup>17</sup> This was part of the wider campaign by religious societies that attacked opium shops run by the Government of India. Just as with their campaigns aimed at protecting children and women the opium shop or den remained the target of their critique representing the physical embodiment of vice and British policy.

The response of the Secretary of State to missionary claims in 1893 was worded to exclude mention of the word 'den.' Prior to this period there was no response to this question on dens as opium had been primarily a revenue concern. This was because the opium question in parliament from the early 1860s had been defined by its role in the Indian budget, rather than this new opium question framed by religious attitudes and vice which drove the debate in the 1890s. Mr George Russell, The Under Secretary of State for India, who replied described the order of Government and its

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<sup>16</sup> C. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* p.188

<sup>17</sup> *The humble petition of Opium drunkards.* P.3

limitations which could not close private establishments used for opium consumption,

Yes, Sir; the Secretary of State for India has seen the statement referred to by my hon. Friend. The Orders of the 25th September, 1891, directed that in any future opium licence the vendor should be prohibited from permitting the consumption of opium on his premises in any form. The Secretary of State has asked the Government of India to consider whether the law should not be strengthened, so as to enable legal steps to be taken for suppressing private opium saloons.<sup>18</sup>

When the Secretary replied, the missionary terminology of ‘dens’ was replaced with the safer image of, ‘saloons.’<sup>19</sup> This did not carry the same connotations of moral depravity or laziness missionary publications had described in Bombay. The press and weekly magazines in London reflected these attitudes. Similarly, in popular culture Padwa argued that Arthur Conan Doyle portrayed opium dens in the ‘Man with The Twisted Lip’ as a location of decay for Britishness. In the story the main protagonist rents a room within an opium den to hide his professional begging from his family which also provided a conduit to the underworld of professional criminals and con artists of London.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the new safer term, ‘saloon’ shared etymological routes with pubs and alcohol. The attitudes revealed in the Secretary of State’s official announcements had changed through tension with missionaries and

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<sup>18</sup> HC Deb 25 April 1893 vol 11 cc1125-6

<sup>19</sup> Ibid cc. 1125

<sup>20</sup> M. Roth, ‘Victorian Highs Detection Drugs and Empire’ in J. F. Brodie, and M. Redfield (Eds.), *High Anxieties: Cultural Studies in Addiction* (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2002). & Padwa Social Poision pp. 57-59



temperance advocates who framed the issue in similar terms to the excise liquor traffic of India. Whether this official line extended to the GOI remains unclear as it appears to be a quirk of the Secretary of State and India Office who had regular communication with critics in parliament. However, it was the Government of India's policy efforts or failures that were also cross-examined by William Caine stating, 'Is not an Order of the Viceroy in Council itself sufficient? Is it not operative as part of the law of India?'<sup>21</sup> The Under Secretary of State conceded that the order was ineffective in its desired purpose and that they were advised, 'it is expedient to amend the law of India in order to secure the carrying out of the intentions of the Government.'<sup>22</sup> Overall the India office was partly being steered by missionary attitudes about vice who were critiquing the GOI. However, the Secretary of State was resistant to accept the vocabulary of critics which also framed the inertia on amendments or new policies aimed at regulating opium saloons. No doubt because he wanted to confirm with the viceroy the validity of said criticisms.

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<sup>21</sup> HC Deb 25 April 1893 vol 11 cc1125

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

## Temperance and The Indian National Congress

William Caine's asked 'probing' questions in relation to opium explored above in 1893.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, his continuing work acting as Treasurer and Hon. Secretary till 1901 of *Abkari* to supplement his income saw his relationship with Rev. T. Evans and the Indian National Congress grow. His contributions were of lasting significance to the debate on opium dens and the Royal Opium Commission. For example, Caine caused a small headache for Government in the Foreign and India Office when he announced in Parliament that the first two reports of the Royal Opium Commission were leaked to the Times newspaper.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, in 1892 it was Samuel who originally highlighted the leaked excise government memorandum in Parliament on government tolerance of private opium saloons. The controversy was around private saloons or dens was that they did not sell opium but were simply a room for consumption. Once the Government of India closed govt dens where consumption was not allowed on the premises they were accused of turning a blind eye to this private market. This memorandum will be discussed below when it was debated in the Indian National Congress. Caine's contributions to the temperance movement allowed him to continue being a vocal critic through the *Abkari* up until 1901. Similarly his letters to the India office on opium shops were listed in the Appendices of evidence submitted to the Royal Opium Commission and numerous witnesses cited Caine's articles published in nationalist newspapers such as *The*

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<sup>23</sup> J.H. Mills, *Cannabis Britannica And Empire, Trade, and Prohibition 1800-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) P.103.

<sup>24</sup> Home Office: Various Commissions: Records and Correspondence. Records of the Royal Commission on Opium: Proceedings, HO 73/102.

*Advocate* and *The Hindustani* as a source of evidence.<sup>25</sup> Caine published a series of letters from his travels in India in *Abkari* detailing his own experience of opium dens when he travelled to India in 1896.<sup>26</sup> This was an attempt to show how the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association had successfully forced a change in Government policy arguing shop numbers had reduced.<sup>27</sup>

Temperance missionary activity established organisational links between the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association and Indian National Congress to pressure the Government of India on two fronts. In 1892 Caine was named by official resolution of the Congress alongside M.P., Dadabhai Naoroji and other delegates in Britain with the power to, 'to guide and direct the operations and control the expenditure of the National Congress Agency in England.'<sup>28</sup> This was achieved by working alongside Rev. T. Evans who condemned the leaked excise memorandum on opium saloons in the Indian National Congress. As explained above this communication highlighted how the GOI was aware of private opium dens and did not seek to regulate them. Rev. T. Evans at the eighth meeting of the Indian National Congress in Allahabad on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 1892 who read and condemned this confidential communique in full,

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<sup>25</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 5: Appendices, together with correspondence on the subject of Opium with the Straits Settlements, China &c* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.233 and P.251

<sup>26</sup> Letters from India. By W.S. Caine Addressed to the editor of *The Alliance News*. Letter No. II. Gwalior, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1896. *Abkari. The Quarterly Organ of the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association*. Ed. Frederick Grubb. No. 28 April 1897. (London, 1899) P.39

<sup>27</sup> Opium dens in India. (reprinted from *The Madras Standard*.) *Abkari*. No.34 October 1898. P.130

<sup>28</sup> Resolution XIII. Report of the Eighth Indian National Congress, held at Allahabad, On the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1892. P.(I)

The cordial compliments of my friend and your friend and the friend of India -Mr. W.S. Caine-(*cheers*), to the members of this Congress, and especially to that portion of the assembly who are honest *water-drinkers*. (*Applause*)...

Now I ask is this not a shameful policy of shabby shuffling to try to evade the law in order to facilitate the sale of extra opium? Is such a condition worthy of the dignity of the British Government? (*Applause*). The *root* of the whole matter is the effort made to *increase the revenue*. But is it politic, is it expedient, is it just to replenish the revenue from the vice and the demoralization of the people? – yea, and to do so by resorting to ways and means that are mean and dishonourable?...<sup>29</sup>

W.S. Caine, S. Smith and Rev. T Evans enjoyed support within the Indian National Congress for their temperance activities. Where the Congress and Missionaries attitudes diverged was on the role of the British Parliament had to play in their fight against vice. There developed an oppositional element between some nationalists and missionaries that sought to reform the Government of India policies.

Missionaries possessed the funds and means to disseminate material in Britain which was aimed at a literate English audience. The pamphlet and petitions published by missionaries such as the ‘Petition of Opium Drunkards’ and ‘Fifty Medical Mens Opinion on the Opium Trade’ included above were part of the missionary approach

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<sup>29</sup> Report of the Eighth Indian National Congress, held at Allahabad, On the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1892. *Digital repository of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics* Date accessed 01/05/2016 URL: <http://dspace.gipe.ac.in/xmlui/handle/10973/17943>, P.70 and 71

to reform the Government of India via parliament. Rev. T. Evans argued that Indians should provide evidence to them to hold the Government of India accountable,

Let us then send forth floods of petitions to England to show the British public how the excise administration is conducted here. We have strong friends and patriots there in persons of Messrs. Caine, S. Smith, Schwaan and others (*Cheers.*) Supply them with shot and shell to destroy this citadel of iniquity, for the work must be done by the powerful and patriotic vote of the House of Commons- the palladium of English justice and fair-play. (*Loud applause*)...<sup>30</sup>

By comparison not all members of the Indian National Congress conformed to this colonial paradigm which sought to change attitudes in the metropole and therefore influence the policy of Government of India in the periphery. In response to the speech by Rev T. Evans Mr. Oudh Behari Lal reaffirmed the political call for home rule and the need to deal with moral issues such as opium in India rather than Britain,

Mr. President and Gentlemen, - I rise to support this resolution... Let it not be understood that we desire to make the people of India moral by means of

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<sup>30</sup> Resolution XIII. Report of the Eighth Indian National Congress, held at Allahabad, On the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1892. P.(I)

resolutions of the House of Commons ; that is impossible. They must be made moral by influences working at home. <sup>31</sup>

This was not unique to the opium question with British social reformers favouring a proxy approach of criticising GOI policy in parliament. Overall the attitudes of W.S. Caine S. Smith and Rev T. Evans all remained influential in Britain. However, where the Congress and missionaries attitudes diverged was on the role of the British Parliament had to play in their fight against vice in India. There developed an oppositional element between some nationalists such as Lal that sought wider objects of home rule to reform the GOI's policies on their own terms. However, given the resolution was passed at the Congress this was evidence that more of their members had still favoured pressuring the GOI via Britain in acknowledgement of where colonial power emanated from.

The temperance movement was linked to literate and organised nationalist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Religious attitudes towards opium became important to forging links with liberal reformers in the London metropole who supported the movement. Nicolas argued that in 1906 the Liberal government and British Committee in London were willing to entertain discussion with Indian nationalists on the anti-opium movement.<sup>32</sup> However

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<sup>31</sup> Report of the Eighth Indian National Congress, held at Allahabad, On the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1892. *Digital repository of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics* Date accessed 01/05/2016 URL: <http://dspace.gipe.ac.in/xmlui/handle/10973/17943>, P.71

<sup>32</sup> O. Nicholas, *The British left and India metropolitan anti-imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007).

nationalist reformers speeches and writings on home rule were dampened down when utilised and published as anti-opium evidence by missionaries. This was the case for at a meeting of the Representative Board of the Anti-Opium Societies held on the 5th December 1894, heads of the various anti-opium societies which included Rachel Braithwaite of the Anti-Opium Urgency Committee, proposed disseminating anti-opium literature at the upcoming meeting national congress meeting in Madras,

2. Mr. J.G Alexander proposed that a sum of money not exceeding 100 Rupees should be expended from the fund in India (referred to in the 3<sup>rd</sup> minute of the last Board meeting) for the printing and distribution of suitable anti-opium literature at the forthcoming national congress at Madras. The Proposed leaflets contained extracts from speeches by Mr. Naoroji M.P. on the evils connected with the use of opium and Mr Alexander advised that they should be sent out to the care of Mr. Raju Naidu to be printed in Madras.<sup>33</sup>

The attitude of missionary societies was that their activities should not endorse the political motives of the Congress which included self-determination and home rule. Nevertheless, home rule advocates such as Naoroji and Gokhale regarded the opium revenue of the latter half century to have tarnished Indian finances showing an area of agreement. The suffering of millions of Chinese consumers they believed to be

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<sup>33</sup> At a meeting of the Representative Board of the Anti-Opium Societies held the 5th December 1894. Present Mr Ellis. Mr. Maxwell, Miss Braithwaite, J.G. Alexander, B. Broomhall. M. Gregory. G.E. Mathieson. R.Scott. S.Southhall and J. Rowntree in the chair. *Anti-Opium Urgency Committee minutes and papers, sub-fonds* (TEMP MSS 150) 1892-1895 P.40

victims had tainted the forging of the Indian nation.<sup>34</sup> This provided a compelling first-hand critique for religious orators who were looking for Indian voices to support their attitude about opium in India. While the anti- opium society board was willing to expend 100 rupees to disseminate Naoroji's anti-opium pamphlets they re-affirmed that,

The Board heartily approved the suggestion though with the understanding that care should be taken that we are in no way committed to endorsing any political opinions of the Congress.<sup>35</sup>

Overall the temperance values and religious attitudes led to campaigning and linkages with nationalists who shared their views. This in turn created critiques within parliament that began to challenge the Government of India's policies.

The Board meetings of the Anti-Opium Societies also continued to focus on categorising opium as a poison in India. For example, in 1895 as a result of the Royal Opium Commission the board began to lick its wounds. It was in the process of sending affirmations of support to notable witnesses and MPs in Parliament. Before this could be done the Board had to define and re-state their policy objectives,

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<sup>34</sup> Nanda, B.R., *Gokhale, the Indian moderates and the British Raj* (Delhi : Oxford University Press 1998).

<sup>35</sup> At a meeting of the Representative Board of the Anti-Opium Societies held the 5th December 1894. Present Mr Ellis. Mr. Maxwell, Miss Braithwaite, J.G. Alexander, B. Broomhall. M. Gregory. G.E. Mathieson. R.Scott. S.Southhall and J. Rowntree in the chair. *Anti-Opium Urgency Committee minutes and papers, sub-fonds* (TEMP MSS 150) 1892-1895 P.40



4. In discussion on the future policy to be pursued by the anti-opium party. Mr. Maxwell expressed the hope that the claim should be clearly reaffirmed that what we ask is a Poisons Act of India on lines similar to that in force in this country and the suppression of the opium trade with China.<sup>36</sup>

As part of this reflective process members such as Dr Maxwell, a Presbyterian missionary with experience in China, signalled support for categorising opium as a poison in India. These attitudes were informed by missionary campaigns of Board members focused on India that were present at the meeting such as Rachel Braithwaite who had sought to revive the child doping scandal in India with Powar Soonderbai. As will soon be discussed, Samuel Smith also pressed in parliament for enforcement of the 1868 Pharmacy Act in India on the basis of protecting children categorising opium as a poison.<sup>37</sup> The broader anti-opium movement and Board had reaffirmed commitment to these views when looking how to respond to the result of the Royal Opium Commission. As such the tension with government was also hardening the views of anti-opium reformers who continued to push for the drug to be recognised as a poison.

These remained the only tangible victories in parliamentary proceedings until the motion on the opium trade was re-introduced in 1906 by another temperance reformer, Theodore Cooke Taylor. Having attended a congregational school in

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<sup>36</sup> At a meeting on the Representative Board of the Anti-Opium Societies held June 5 1895. Present:- Mr J. Rowntree, in the chair, Miss Braithwaite, Mr. Maxwell. Mesers Alexander, Gregory D. Matheson. and Dr Maxwell. *Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade minutes* (TEMP MSS 33/2) (1891-5/1897) P.2

<sup>37</sup> 'Opium pills for children.' House of Commons, December 07, February 1893 Vol 8, cc 658-9, Hansard.

Silcoates from the age of thirteen, Cooke was close to the northern heartland of the anti-opium movement. A teetotaler, he disapproved of vice in all forms which included smoking, gambling, alcohol and opium. The motion was introduced as a Private member's ballot which led to an agreement in the same year with China to jointly reduce cultivation over a period of ten years.<sup>38</sup> The debate showed signs of Indian Nationalism driving the attitudes of missionaries and temperance organisations. For example, Dr Rutherford the representative from Middlesex in support of the motion argued, 'if local option or any kind of Home Rule were granted to India, this mighty mischief-maker would be ruthlessly banished by the nation.'<sup>39</sup> Sir H. Cotton added that, 'The Secretary of State for India should also obtain the opinion of competent and experienced natives of India in regard to this matter.' These attitudes stemmed from activity in the Indian National Congress on basis that,

Educated opinion in India was strongly opposed to the opium trade, and he did not think the right hon. Gentleman would find among this section of the community any wish or desire that the nefarious traffic should be continued.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> D. T. Jenkins, 'Taylor, Theodore Cooke (1850–1952)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48334>, accessed 17 July 2017]

<sup>39</sup> 'The Opium Traffic.' *HC Deb* 30 May 1906 vol. 158 cc494-516

<sup>40</sup> *HC Deb* 30 May 1906 vol 158 cc494-516

The Secretary of State had been the missing element in frustrated missionary efforts to deliver the Government of India's opium reforms. 'Educated opinion in India', along with 'Local option' and 'Home Rule' forwarded by early nationalist reformers were now a concern of British MPs within parliamentary debate on the opium question. Now, however, during the 1906 debate on opium John Morley signalled he was not afraid of 'missionary madness' or 'puritanical philanthropy' as his predecessors had been.<sup>41</sup> Supporters of the bill urged the Secretary of State John Morley to listen to these dissenting voices. As explored above nationalists such as G.K. Gokhale and Dadabhai Naoroji MP, remained on the fringe of the missionary movements in India and struggled to change attitudes from within the British and colonial establishment. This was because anti-opium organisations were far more concerned with cherry picking and collating their views within a collage of other Indian voices from doctors, drunkards and doping mothers to bolster their argument for reform. This downplayed their demands for home rule and utilised their critiques of the GOI policy to bring opium into the spotlight.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

## **Child health, Women and the Christian family.**

Religious attitudes within colonial India framed the debate on infant poisoning by focusing on the role of government shops that sold opium. As the legal sale of excise opium was permitted by government license this placed the blame on the Government of India for not regulating the purchase of drugs. In 1891 the *Anti-Opium News*, a Quaker missionaries' newspaper published this position for wider dissemination with a picture titled, "The Stall For The Sale Of Raw Opium, In The Null Bazar, Bombay. Poison Officially Placed On The Level Of Food."<sup>42</sup> This was an attempt to show how the Government of India did not distinguish between the trade of food and drugs attempting to scandalise their current policy in comparison to Britain. Policy in Britain was very strict on the adulteration of food more so than their regulation of opium which was weakened following lobbying from the pharmaceutical industry. This suggests that missionaries were again misrepresenting the picture of opium use in Britain to fit their argument of Indian opium shops as out of control. Anti-opium news also published the shop limits of government stores stating, 'The Government-licensed stall keepers are allowed to sell as much as 10 tolas at a time.' More importantly this also shows how the missionaries were misrepresenting their evidence to blur the lines between Govt shops and opium sold generally for medical purposes. This number alone was meaningless until missionaries estimated how many people it would kill. They argued that, 'Ten tolas is 1,639 apothecaries' grains, sufficient to put to death 409 men, women and

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<sup>42</sup> The stall for the sale of raw opium, in the null bazar, Bombay. Poison Officially Placed on the Level of Food. From "*The Anti-Opium News*," for November 16th, 1891 (Dyer Brothers, Rose Street Corner, Paternoster Square, London, 1891) Item 48, Opium Pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA. P.4

children, who had never tasted the drug before.’ The publication was misrepresenting these figures on the basis that not every grain would be the cause of an overdose. However, they attempted to moralise the question of government opium shops by focusing on child health stating,

Some of the Opium is used for putting children to sleep to save their caretakers trouble. Sometimes the babies get an over-dose and die.<sup>43</sup>

Again this was a misrepresenting how medicinal opium was bought in India equating them to the dens where raw opium was used for opium smoking. Religious attitudes focused on child overdoses and the minimum amount of grains necessary to achieve this result. This framed the debate on Government shop limits as dangerous defining opium as a poison. They also argued that opium use was unhealthy stating, ‘in all cases it seriously injures the constitution of the child.’<sup>44</sup> Religious accounts held the belief that opium was injurious to the lives and health of children. They blamed the Government of India’s stalls and policies attempting to moralise the opium question around protecting children’s health rather than revenue.

The Anti-Opium Urgency Society also published petitions of Indian doctors to bolster their case on medical grounds. One petition addressed to the British House of

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<sup>43</sup> The stall for the sale of raw opium P.4

<sup>44</sup> Ibid pp.4-5

Commons in the 1890s was the, 'Fifty Indian Medical Men on the Opium Traffic.'<sup>45</sup>

The petition was led by practitioners Dr. R.N. Khory and Dr Atmaram Pandurang who articulated the dangers of opium pills being used on children in Bombay stating

That your petitioners also desire to draw your attention to the great harm which results from the practise of giving opium in the form of a small pill to children. This is done by parents in order to save themselves trouble, but the evils that spring from the practise are of a serious nature. Numerous cases of opium poisoning arise from it, many of which end fatally.<sup>46</sup>

This was different from the 'raw opium' of government shops and critiques the medicinal market for opium pills. The petition framed child doping as a time saving exercise rather than a therapy that benefited child, as had campaigners in the 'baby doping scandal' in Britain.<sup>47</sup> The medical men of Bombay also understood opium use as a form of vice. They described its effect on the family when the husband, 'rather than endure the physical torture caused by its discontinuance, a man will sell his wife and children to purchase the drug.'<sup>48</sup> The Anti-Opium Emergency Committee published these accounts within pamphlets and used petitions to speak for the 'native' voice to influence government. However, these publications conflated two separate issues and markets for opium. Mainly the raw opium used by

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<sup>45</sup> *Fifty Indian Medical Men on the Opium Traffic. Copy of a petition recently presented to Parliament, To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned members of the Medical Profession in the Bombay Presidency India, Dr.R.N. Khory and Dr Atmaram Pandurang. Item 29, Opium Pamphlets, (MS VOL 207) SOFA. P.1*

<sup>46</sup> *Fifty Indian Medical Men on the Opium Traffic. P.1*

<sup>47</sup> V. Berridge, *opium and the people*

<sup>48</sup> *Fifty Indian Medical Men on the Opium Traffic. P.1*

addicts and the pills used widely in India for symptoms of disease which were used and accepted by missionary doctors. To what extent missionaries helped organise the petitions is unclear but it was the societies budget which had allocated £432 for pamphlets and literature among other items which paid for the editing and publishing these anti-opium petitions.<sup>49</sup>

In parliament religious attitudes towards opium were supported by Liberal MPs who drove changes in child protection policy made by the Government of India. Mr Samuel Smith MP, brought forward the issue of children's opium pills in India. Samuel was a Presbyterian reformer who had been a campaigner for children's rights in Britain being a vocal advocate of The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act of 1889. Four years later he was the individual who brought the issue of children's Opium pills in India into the Commons,

the I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for India whether he is aware that an official notice has been posted at Bombay, to the effect that at present the right of selling children's (opium) pills has been given to the Bombay opium contractors, and such pills can be bought of all the Government opium shops in Bombay; whether he is aware that many Indian children are poisoned by the free use of opium; and whether the Government will consider the expediency of rescinding this regulation?<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> R. Braithwaite, Hon. Sec Balance Sheet. Anti-Opium Urgency Committee in Account with the Treasurer. From 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1892, to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1894. *Women's Anti-Opium Committee of Urgency. Report from July 1892 to September 1894*. Opium Pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA. P.22

<sup>50</sup>'Opium pills for children.' House of Commons, December 07, February 1893 Vol 8, cc 658-9, Hansard.

The Government response on the same day to this statement had been to reaffirm the reduction of shops from three hundred licenced and unlicensed shops to eleven in 1891.<sup>51</sup> His critics likened him to Jeremiah for numerous speeches in the House of Commons made on religious grounds around vice.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, on 30 April 1889 Smith had carried a motion against the Government of India to reduce the number of liquor licenses in India. Therefore, the call for further regulation on opium contractors was also part of his wider links to religious and temperance activities. His attitudes were also typical of the council's membership of the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade with fifteen out of the seventeen M.P.s being liberal politicians.<sup>53</sup> Overall the Government of India's policy reversal that reduced licences for opium pills had partly only been driven by religious attitudes on protection of children from poisoning. From the government's own numbers, it appears the no. of shops were already in decline. However it was reformers vigilance that continued to pose difficult questions for senior government officials providing a public critique of their policies.

Mr Samuel Smith who had brought the issue of child opium pills to Parliament had also been influenced by religious attitudes regarding a women's responsibility for children. In parliament, he publicly opposed extending the franchise to English women on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1891 arguing, 'Women cannot undertake this without destroying their domestic life...the Bible gives to men the place of authority and

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<sup>51</sup> 'Opium pills for children.' pp. 658-9

<sup>52</sup> G. Norgate, *Smith Samuel: Dictionary of National Biography 1912 supplement available at [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Smith, Samuel \(DNB12\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Smith,_Samuel_(DNB12))* date accessed 07/05/2018

<sup>53</sup> J. B. Brown, 'Politics of the Poppy: The Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, 1874-1916' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 8:3 (1973), pp. 101



power.<sup>54</sup> He believed that Christianity elevated the condition of women with a household by fulfilling their roles as mother and wife. He claimed that both 'Mahomedan' and 'Hindoo' religions had failed to elevate women demonstrating that, 'the superiority of our civilisation is indisputable.'<sup>55</sup> These views were not widely publicised in India's temperance literature such as the *Abkari* only his anti-opium views in parliament gained mention. Whether this would have detracted from his audience shows more willingness on the part of missionaries to tailor their publications for their audience. This informed his critique of Indian working women and the Government of India's policies contrasting their efforts with England,

Such (opium) pills are largely used by native women employed in cotton factories for the purpose of quieting their children; whether he is aware that the sale for a similar purpose in this country of "soothing syrups," containing preparations of opium, is universally reprehended by the medical profession, and that, under the British Pharmacy Act, such sales can only be effected by registered druggists, and that such syrups must be labelled "poison,"<sup>56</sup>

Samuel fundamentally misrepresented the 1868 Pharmacy Act since patent medicine such as 'soothing syrups' did not come under this legislation in Britain. However he mirrored religious and missionary attitudes that believed the issue lay 'largely' with working factory women. As an advocate of legislation to protect children he framed

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<sup>54</sup> Lewis. J., *Women's Source Library Vol. 5, Before the Vote was Won: Arguments for and against Women's Suffrage 1864-1896* (Routledge: London, 2001). P.426

<sup>55</sup> Ibid P.430.

<sup>56</sup> 'Children's Opium Pills in Bombay.' HC Deb 08 June 1893 vol 13, Hansard, cc525-6,

opium poisonings around working women as negligent mothers. However, when he confronted the Secretary of State for India on regulation of opium pills his views were also characteristic of Samuel's personal religious views on a women's exclusion from politics and their domestic role in the home. To an extent this questioning of official policy was a mixture of pressure from anti-opium campaigns and entrenched religious beliefs surrounding the role of the women. The underpinnings of Samuel's arguments and missionary publicists were questionable at best. Both equated medicinal opium pills to raw opium used for smoking and claimed the British Pharmacy Act regulated soothing syrups. The argument that opium pills posed a harm to children while true neglected the broadly accepted medicinal market used in India by missionaries and government officials alike.

Missionary attitudes concerning opium were to an extent based on criticisms of mothers and wet-nurses. This was another area of hypocrisy in the group who skated over their supposed mission of saving the 'native' or oppressed women. Women's missionary groups instead formed critiques that saw an Indian woman's role as a mother being within the home rather than mills and factories. This was under the auspices of the Women's Anti-Opium Committee of Urgency, a 'splinter group' of the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade established in 1874.<sup>57</sup> It was headed by Rachel Barclay Braithwaite and sought abolition of the opium trade but its activities were focused on social ills in India.<sup>58</sup> The committee attempted to mobilise or use women's voices against opium and its impact on children. For instance, in a

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<sup>57</sup> J. W. Gerritsen, *The Control of Fuddle and Flash: A sociological History of the regulation of alcohol and opiates* (Brill: Boston, 2000) P.76

<sup>58</sup> Anti-Opium Urgency Committee minutes and papers, sub-fonds (TEMP MSS 150) 1892-1895 (1892 – 1895) \*Rachel is named as the Hon. Secretary throughout.

petition from twenty-six women from Western India addressed to the women of England, they stated

some of us have painfully witnessed with our own eyes how it acts upon the little ones in India when it has been administered to them by their own mothers, who dose their children and leave them behind in their homes while they go earn their livelihood in the mills and factories. And again and again we have heard how the *Ayahs* (nurses) give opium doses to the little babies when they are inclined to be troublesome, as all children are, and of the numerous cases of fatality caused by a reckless handling of this deadly poison.<sup>59</sup>

These petitions were re-printed within missionary headquarters in Camden Road, London. One protestor who signed the petition was Miss H. Soonderbai Powar who became a central figure in her own right of the anti-opium movement in both India and Britain. From the publications it appears she was a convert to Christianity having been an upper caste Hindu. Cynically the religious societies used her voice and face as a poster to promote conversion as much as to critique opium. Soonderbai travelled across Britain in 1888-1889 picketing British constituencies on the Indian opium question. Anagol describes Soonderbai's politics as based on 'social justice'

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<sup>59</sup> *To the Christian women of England From Women of Western India (Bombay). Bombay, May 18th, 1891*

*Reprinted for the "Women's Anti-Opium Urgency League" 312, Camden Road London. N. Item 20. Opium pamphlets and circulars prepared by Rachel Barclay Braithwaite 1857- 1920\* hereafter abbreviated to, Opium pamphlets (MS VOL 207) Quakers Library, Society of Friends Archive, London. P.1 \* hereafter abbreviated to, SOFA.*

and, ‘probably the only Indian women to take an openly confrontational stance with the imperial government over the opium issue.’<sup>60</sup> Her campaign acted as a driver of missionary campaigns and MPs that pressured the Government of India via the British parliament. For instance, anti-opium meetings attended by Liberal MPs in London organised by the Women’s Anti Opium Urgency Committee had paid for Soonderbai’s travel to and from India which provided the society with the a valuable speaker with first-hand accounts of opium to relay to MPs.<sup>61</sup> They had sought to moralise the opium question by critiquing the actions of mothers and wet-nurses as, ‘caused by a reckless handling of this deadly poison.’<sup>62</sup>

Women’s missionary attitudes surrounding wet-nurses were also disseminated by related temperance societies in Britain. Powar Soonderbai in 1894 had just returned from a second trip to Britain. Upon leaving there was an account published describing the death of her niece from opium poisoning in *The Anti-Tobacco Journal*.<sup>63</sup> The editor of the journal Frances Emma Reynolds, had taken over from her father in 1872 following his death facilitating more connections with women’s temperance societies such as the Women’s Anti-Opium Urgency Committee.<sup>64</sup> The

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<sup>60</sup> P. Anagol, *The Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920* (Ashgate: Hampshire, 2005) P.52 also see Soonderbai H. Powar, *An Indian woman’s impeachment of the opium crime of the British government: a plea for justice for her country people* (LSE Selected Pamphlets, 1892)

<sup>61</sup> R. Braithwaite, Hon. Sec Balance Sheet. Anti-Opium Urgency Committee in Account with the Treasurer. From 1st July, 1892, to 30th September, 1894. Women’s Anti-Opium Committee of Urgency. Report from July 1892 to September 1894. Opium Pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA.

\*Soonderbai was the only named person that spoke on the opium question included within the annual balance sheet and for which travel was provided to the UK.

<sup>62</sup> *To the Christian women of England From Women of Western India (Bombay)*. P.1

<sup>63</sup> *Death of Miss Soonderbai Powar’s Little Niece through the Opium. Feb 1, 1894. The Anti- Tobacco Journal. June 1 1893*, item 48, Opium pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA P.1

<sup>64</sup> J. S. Blocker, D.M. Fahey, I. R. Tyrrell (eds.) *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopaedia, Volume 1* (ABC-CLIO: California, 2003) P.364

published account described graphically how the child's body was poisoned by opium,

The poor child was overdosed; the whole day she would not take milk; would not open her eyes. In the evening her lips began to get blue.<sup>65</sup>

This event provided a rationale for Soonderbai's campaigning in Britain having had a personal connection to the baby doping scandal with her niece. The doctor had uncovered the nurse responsible for sedating the child, 'the nurse was dismissed at once who could not tell a lie before the doctor.'<sup>66</sup> She was from an upper-class background whose family could afford a nurse and doctor. In terms of class it was the servants and wet-nurses of India receiving the blame for infant overdoses, which significantly contributed to missionaries' attitudes that opium was a poison. Soonderbai's niece and the 1891 petition stressed the stereotype of the female poisoner and how, 'the child did not die a *natural* death, but she was poisoned.' Furthermore, the role of the woman as wife and mother remained at the centre of missionary critique of the sale of opium in India. When finishing this account, she described how there were, 'millions of broken-hearted women shedding bitter tears for their husbands and sons, who are entangled in the Government Opium net,'<sup>67</sup> As stated above the number of addicts were not in their millions and was again conflating two issues of smoking and medicinal use. As a missionary reformer, her

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<sup>65</sup> *Death of Miss Soonderbai Powar's Little Niece* (MS VOL 207) P.1

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>67</sup> *Death of Miss Soonderbai Powar's Little Niece* (MS VOL 207) P. 1

critique of the opium trade was based both on her family's experience of wet-nurses involved in poisonings and missionary conceptions of motherhood. Both voices were used to criticise wet-nurses and the, 'Government Opium Net' hoping to instigate a change in policy by the Government of India. This approach attempted to muddy the difference between the market for intoxicants and medicine. This argument re-appeared across pamphlets, petitions and speeches in parliament. The government while reducing the no. of opium shops for addicts routinely ignored this latter attempt by religious publications to marry the two issues. The reason being both missionary and colonial doctor alike recognised its medicinal value.

Missionary attitudes towards women who stayed at home were regarded as neglected by their opium addicted husbands. Forbes has argued that the, 'Respectable Indian women.' were understood among missionaries as those women who were isolated within the *zenana*.<sup>68</sup> This separated them from the religious critique of factory and mill workers who were guilty of doping their children to enter the public sphere. Soonderbai chanced upon a meeting with these, 'respectable' women who described the impact of their husbands' opium habit. However missionaries also described the same *zenana* as sexually deviant harping back to conception of the oriental harem where women were 'living a life of idleness and lasciviousness...'<sup>69</sup> This contrasting image between the sexually deviant and respectable women again shows a willingness among religious commentators to the bend the evidence to fit their

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<sup>68</sup> Forbes. G, 'Medical careers and health care for Indian women: patterns of control', *Women's History Review*, 3:4, (1994) pp, 518

<sup>69</sup> S. Sehrawat, 'Zenana Medical Care, The Dufferin Fund, the Colonial State, and Female Medical Experts' in *Colonial Medical Care in North India: Gender, State, and Society, c. 1830-1920* pp. 102-103

argument. At a gathering in Lucknow on the 6th October 1891 a group of women described how opium was impoverishing their families,

One woman said that her brother has a wife and four children to support. He earns two annas (threepence) a day. He spends one anna in opium, leaving one anna for food for five people. They have one poor meal a day. The wife and children are weak and pale without enough food. Another woman said that families like the above could be found by thousands, and that no human being could describe their sufferings.<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, from the above account the income of the brother was very low suggesting his wife would not have lived in a zenana. This account criticised the Government of India stating, 'We will thank the Government to take the sword and kill the wives and children of Opium smokers, so as to rid us of the agony we suffer'<sup>71</sup> However, these female only meetings were described by the editor of *The Anti-Tobacco Journal* as 'rare.' The inconsistent details suggest editors influenced this account to arrive at a petition delivered by 'respectable' women rather than from a group of women they considered deviant. Within the context of the general ban by Queen Victoria of *sati* in 1861 and the Female Infanticide Prevention Act 1870, both had partly resulted from missionary attitudes politicising Indian men's 'savage' treatment

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<sup>70</sup> 'The story of the Poppy.' *The Anti-Tobacco Journal*. Dec. 1 1891, item 45, Opium Pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA. P.5

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

of women.<sup>72</sup> Similarly the female voice has remained conspicuously absent and appropriated by early historians of colonial India. Spivak contended that the subaltern voice was hidden beneath the layered chauvinism of the period that sought to protect women from various dangers such as *Sati*.<sup>73</sup> Within the context of larger missionary efforts in India the opium habit was portrayed as another way in which women were oppressed by their husbands. Given the effectiveness of influencing policy on the Government of India for both *sati* and infanticide it was not surprising missionary views attempted to marry opium to the protection of women.

Religious attitudes also contended that a women's domestic duties were also disrupted by intoxication and the opium habit. Missionary sermons like those by Rev. F. W. Clarke in London used medical publications to support their message quoting from the *Calcutta Medical Record* in 1892. There is no evidence he visited India himself and his sermon relied on second-hand medical testimony from an article in the *Indian Medical Gazette* which also gained mention in the *Calcutta Medical Record*. He associated the disturbance of domestic duties with poverty brought on by the opium habit describing a case where,

Every possible thing has been sold, the family possess nothing, and are clothed in filthy rags. I have seen the woman trying to bake some bread with the dough in her hand, while her head sank lower and lower, until we were

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<sup>72</sup> R. D. Bhatnagar, R. Dube, *Female Infanticide in India: A Feminist Cultural History* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 2005) P.162

<sup>73</sup> G. Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?'



afraid she would fall into the fire. Sometimes with a wee babe in her arms she has been roused by its cries for a short time, but not long enough to do anything for its comfort. The father sits nodding on the damp floor. They have a pretty little girl who is sent out to get opium for these heartless parents, and poor child herself is beginning to use it.<sup>74</sup>

To reiterate Rev. T. Clark appears to have embellished these anecdotal stories as part of his sermon by outstretching the second-hand accounts. He used this story to argue that basic requirements of motherhood were distorted in this account remarking on her inability to prepare bread and provide clean clothing. Similarly, the sermon stressed how the female child was introduced into unnatural spaces outside the home where opium was purchased. This again conflated the issue of addiction and children being drugged. During the colonial era, the religious concept of domesticity and a women's role was being defined by British male ideals such as the 'respectable Indian women' and, 'The Angel in the House.'<sup>75</sup> Religious attitudes that viewed opium as disruptive to family life were influenced by their conception of a submissive women's duties in the home.

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<sup>74</sup> A Sermon Upon The Indian Opium Question, Preached at Zion Chapel, Frome, On Sunday, January 31st, 1892, By the Pastor, Rev. F. W. Clarke, B.A. Item 21, Opium Pamphlets (MS VOL 207) SOFA. P.2-3

<sup>75</sup> Forbes., 'Medical careers and health care' p. 518

## **Civil surgeons, Chemical examiners and Catholicism: The Government of India's response to religious critiques.**

This section will examine three groups within British India who influenced the pro-opium stance that government maintained. These partly answered or rebuked the claims that opium poisoned children, was a danger to women both as mothers and as a means of infanticide and finally was impediment to the spread of the Christian family. The Government pro-opium stance was never formally organised in the way anti-opium societies were, but numerous publications on child health and witnesses called before the Royal Opium Commission displayed the official attitudes of government on these difficult topics. Equally the GOI sourced unlikely allies such as some senior figures in the Catholic Church who supported the existing government policy and contested the view that opium was hindering conversions to Christianity.

Firstly, religious attitudes towards opium as a poison contrasted with medical use recommended by Government of India's senior officials. Edward Birch Professor of the Calcutta medical school having previously been a Superintendent of the Calcutta General Hospital recommended the use of raw opium grains, laudanum and opium pills for a range of child ailments. Opium was to be used to restore, "tranquillity" to the body. Convulsions, movements and other physical expenditures were viewed as stopping the natural nourishment of the body that came from rest, "Rest represents nourishment indirectly, in that through its instrumentality a certain quantity of body substance which would otherwise be expended is conserved..."<sup>76</sup> In order to obtain

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<sup>76</sup>E.A Birch, *The management and medical treatment of children in India*, (Calcutta, Thacker Spint and co, Third edition 1895.) Wellcome Library P.179

this state, the medical use of opiates and other sedatives were recommended artificially inducing this resting state when faced with fever.

To attain tranquillity with greater certainty, it is often advisable to employ certain medicines, notably chloral, the bromide of potassium, sulphonal (*see Sedatives*), and opium (*see Opiates*).<sup>77</sup>

This was common practise in medical circles in Britain and was no doubt a reflection of his clinical training in the UK as well. In several medical conditions he recommended it to treat children in India who suffered from, “Delirium and inability to sleep” the body could expect opium in the form of, ‘a single drop of laudanum for every year of age completed. Never more in twenty-four hours’.<sup>78</sup> This is a very low dose which shows the reality of medical use in India by doctors rather than general soporific dosing described by missionaries. Missionaries doctors trained in Britain would have also followed similar patterns of treatment showing an area of agreement overlooked by the anti-opium literature. Opium while acting as a sedative was also utilised as a painkiller for Rheumatic Fever in young children. After wrapping the affected joints in cotton wool and the affected limbs being placed in comfortable positions, it was recommended, ‘Small doses of opium should be given to relieve the pain (*see Opium*)’.<sup>79</sup> The drug was valued by government clinicians for

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<sup>77</sup> E.A Birch, *The management and medical treatment of children in India* P.198

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid* P.198

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid* pp.235-236

facilitating rest and restoring ‘tranquillity’ to the body. Religious claims that they posed a danger of poisoning to children however were also acknowledged.

Following the baby doping scandal in Britain and continuing religious criticism Birch condemned the use of patent medicines in India stating,

Godfrey’s Cordial or Dalby’s Carminative should never be permitted within a nursery. They and other preparations of the same class, contain opium.<sup>80</sup>

Birch claimed in India that 15,000 children were killed, ‘every year by soothing-syrups and other similar preparations.’<sup>81</sup> Opium was viewed as a medicine to colonial doctors like Birch Edwards, however they regarded patent remedies as dangerous, similar to many doctors in Europe and Britain not permitting them within nurseries. These medical attitudes mirrored religious publications that highlighted how patent remedies could be poisonous to children. However government doctors continued its use for a range of child ailments to induce sleep in fever and to alleviate the symptoms of rheumatic fever. This was another area of agreement, omitted by the anti-opium publications, given numerous missionary doctors had also been trained in Britain who favoured prescribing opium in small doses for a range of ailments.

As part of the wider missionary and social reformers campaign to protect children the Government of India had sought these groups out as possible collaborators when

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<sup>80</sup> E.A Birch, *The management and medical treatment of children in India* P.435

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid* P.435

attempting to prosecute incidents of female infanticide. This response framed opium as a poison and cause of female infant mortality. The Female Infanticide Prevention Act, 1870 gave an institutional incentive to the Government of India to investigate this specific type of criminal poisoning rather than accidental overdoses explored above.<sup>82</sup> Importantly it was still investigated before this watershed. D. Grey has argued that missionaries had influence in this process because, ‘For much of the nineteenth century, missionaries continued to dominate the production of ethnographic accounts of India...’ The belief in their experience with female and community groups and their accounts of tribes’ ‘barbarism’ towards women and children carried weight with government officials.<sup>83</sup> Importantly, the Act allowed for the enforcement of birth, and mortality registers under police directed census. However, collection of mortality statistics by the GOI on this phenomenon predated this event. Perwez had argued that this model of the crime itself was based on officials and missionaries who had both published accounts of female infanticide from the early nineteenth century.<sup>84</sup>

For instance, in the same year as the Infanticide Prevention Act, Dr Norman Chevers published a manual of medical jurisprudence for India detailing infanticide cases recorded by government that were perpetrated with the use of opium.<sup>85</sup> These statistics pre-dated the legislation of 1870 and provide a contrasting story to

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<sup>82</sup> N. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* P.173

<sup>83</sup> Grey, D.J.R., ‘Gender, Religion, and Infanticide in Colonial India, 1870—1906’ *Victorian Review* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Fall 2011), p.107

<sup>84</sup> M.S. Perwez, *Death before Birth : Negotiating Reproduction, Female Infanticide and Sex Selective Abortion in Tamil Nadu, South India* (Unpublished PhD thesis: Edinburgh Research Archive, 2009) P.149 \*discussion of colonial India argues missionaries partly drove the initial policy of suppressing infanticide through their literature which was a source of information for British officials.

<sup>85</sup> N, Chevers, *A manual of medical jurisprudence for India : including the outline of a history of crime against the person in India* (London: Calcutta, 1870) Collection: Vice President's Rm. Reference number: - Cb 7.18, The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh library.

missionary accounts. The statistical aggregation of post-mortem examinations revealed fifty-four cases of poisonings from opium between 1854 and 1870 that were submitted to the Calcutta Chemical Examiner.<sup>86</sup> Of these there were only three confirmed cases of infanticide in which opium was found in the stomachs of children by the Government Chemical Examiners record.<sup>87</sup> The enumeration posed a disproportionately smaller threat to child life than imagined by religious orators. Chevers noted some officials in the Bengal presidency conducted the Government of India's policy enthusiastically to say the least,

The determination of government to stamp out the crime is now so generally recognized that all the authorities in the proclaimed districts are on the alert, and the zeal of the police occasionally out-runs discretion. In one instance (Partabgarh) when a female child dies in the house of a Thakur its seems to be presumed to be a case of infanticide ; in another (Shahjahanpur) the bodies of all female children of suspected tribes are sent for dissection...<sup>88</sup>

Suspicious cases of infant deaths involving opium were sometimes referred to as the '*Thakur disease*' given the, 'frequency of which their female children are said to die of it.' This assertion was made by Dr Harris in the Shahjahanpur return for April 1872 who further stated, 'In analysing the symptoms it appears to me that death most probably resulted from unnatural causes such as purgatives and opium combined...'<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> N, Chevers, *A manual of medical jurisprudence for India* P.228

<sup>87</sup> R. Harvey, *Report on the medico-legal returns received from the civil surgeons in the Bengal Presidency, 1870-2.* (Calcutta Central Press Co., 5, Council House Street, 1876) Shelf Ref: 23-3-f-43, Royal College of Physicians Library. P.263-264

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid* P.315

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid* P. 316

Overall while opium was used as a poison in infanticide cases its use was not as widespread as missionaries and religious critiques had asserted.

Certainly, religious attitudes concerning suppression of female infanticide were dampened by data collected by the Chemical examiner in Calcutta. Policy makers having responded found that the number of recorded poisonings had increased but child and female infanticide cases remained low. From the returns of the Chemical Examiners based in Calcutta all opium poisoning cases including adults grew from 194 in 1870 to 230 in 1871 and again to 288 in 1872.<sup>90</sup> The Government of India's Chemical Examiners understood the incidence rate of infanticide to be very low, with opium resulting in more poisonings amongst adults who made up most of these cases. The medico-legal reports also brought to light the problem of identical post-mortem results of homicides and accidental overdoses perpetrated with opium. For instance, Harvey from the Govt. Chemical Examiners remarked in thirty alleged cases, "Three possible cases were in children, but the circumstances are not detailed, and it is impossible to say murder was intended."<sup>91</sup> The data had also begun to point towards the similarity of child fatalities caused by accidental means rather than accepting the claims of religious and political campaigns against female infanticide.

For instance, senior surgeons began to push against the enthusiasm of the policy. Major Patrick Hehir was a Lecturer of Pathology at the Hyderabad Medical School

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<sup>90</sup> R. Harvey, Report on the medico-legal returns received from the civil surgeons in the Bengal Presidency, 1870-2. (Calcutta Central Press Co., 5, Council House Street, 1876) Shelf Ref: 23-3-f-43, Royal College of Physicians Library. P.263-264

<sup>91</sup> Ibid P.264

and served in both field and permanent military hospitals.<sup>92</sup> In 1892, he argued alongside his colleague Gribble that the issue of child opium poisonings was minor and one shared by England and India. This was distinct from earlier religious attitudes which framed child poisonings as a foreign and 'barbaric' form of infanticide. In this government publication, the two countries infant mortality results were enumerated alongside each other showing that infanticide was not unique to India. In England during 1876- 80 the report found two cases of infanticide stating, 'two only out of whole number were cases of murder, and in both the victims were infants.'<sup>93</sup> As a result, government officials in India shifted their focus to opium poisonings resulting from patent remedies stating. 'A very large proportion of the deaths occur amongst infants from the use of "Soothing syrups," "Infants' Preservers," etc.'<sup>94</sup> This was based on previous year's figures from the Chemical examiners department arguing that a number of infanticide cases were probably accidental,

In the Bengal Medico-Legal Reports for the three years ending 1872, Harvey gives no fewer than 30 cases of alleged infanticide by poisoning, and states that the greater number of these were probably by opium. But opium poisoning as above remarked occasionally occurs in children from the ignorant use of the drug. Hehir mentions a case that recently came under his observation in which an infant of two months old, suffering from a bad form

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<sup>92</sup> J.D.B Gribble and P. B., Hehir, *Outlines of medical Jurisprudence for India*. (Madras: Higginbotham, 1892) Ref no: .b20410566. Wellcome Library. P.469

<sup>93</sup> P. B Hehir, *Patrick Outlines of medical Jurisprudence for India*. (Madras: Higginbotham, 1892) Ref no: .b20410566. Wellcome Library. Ibid P.469

<sup>94</sup> Ibid P.469



of bronchitis, had one grain of opium administered to it by its mother to relieve the cough. The infant died. Both parents were devotedly attached to this their only son, who was heir to a vast property.<sup>95</sup>

The Chemical Examiners official views on infanticide as prevalent had changed. Their position was now based on the view that Indian parents were ‘occasionally ignorant’ of the dangers of using opium as a child medicine. Overall, Government policy was to an extent initially influenced by religious attitudes and publications which highlighted both cases of female infanticide and accidental poisonings. On the other hand, Chemical Examiners and doctors such as Hehir asserted, ‘infanticide by poisoning with opium [as] is not a very common crime in India.’<sup>96</sup> This was the official government response to the religious campaigns to protect women and children which critiqued opium. It is important to note that not every case would have been seen by the Chemical examiners and it was the conflict between the two groups

Women were scrutinised by some colonial officials who blamed opium for their shortcomings as carers of their children. This was much in the same way religious attitudes critiqued mothers’ actions and viewed the habit as injurious. Similarly, the role of *ayahs* (wet nurses) in India were scrutinised to exclude those candidates with habits deemed injurious or contaminating the breast milk. The medical selection of a wet nurse in this context reduced the female body to their capacity to provide

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<sup>95</sup> P. B Hehir, *Patrick Outlines of medical Jurisprudence for India* P.469-470

<sup>96</sup> P.470

nourishing milk regularly to the child which was also common in Britain.<sup>97</sup> Birch, the same Doctor who viewed opium as a useful medicine, viewed opium in this context as an impurity if not a display of poor character on the wet nurses part,

(4) Let particular enquiry be made as to whether the woman is in the habit of smoking ganjah or opium; should either be the case she should be rejected.

(5) Under inspection, the breasts should be emptied by her own child, or artificially, and the woman directed to present herself again after the lapse of a few hours, in order to ascertain whether she really possesses a sufficient supply for nourishment, and that she has not attempted fraud by having permitted a large accumulation.<sup>98</sup>

The selection of *ayah* candidates by colonials was described as easier than selection in England and could reduce to a minimum, ‘the much- discussed disadvantages connected with this class of servants...’<sup>99</sup> Similarly, the wet nurse was tasked with providing breast milk with, ‘sufficient supply for nourishment.’ In this context opium was viewed as an impurity. Following the 1857 rebellion Indian *ayahs* could also face racial attack from Anglo-Indians who believed their ‘native’ milk could damage the character of English children.<sup>100</sup> The opium habit was viewed as disrupting both processes changing the female body medically and hindering their

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<sup>97</sup> E. A. Birch, *The management and medical treatment of children in India* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1895) reference number: b21500241, Wellcome Library. P.50

<sup>98</sup> Ibid P.50

<sup>99</sup> E.A. Birch, *The management and medical treatment of children in India*, Ibid P.49

<sup>100</sup> R. Parama; G. Inderpal; C. Kaplan, R., Wiegman, *Alimentary Tracts : Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.) P.15

physical care for the child. How far this official government advice stretched out beyond urban and military districts is questionable given how few European doctors there were outside these areas. This scrutiny and advice was intended to aid the decision of the Memsahibs who selected *ayahs*, again further removing the decision from Government influence. Nevertheless, attitudes and policy in these areas were advised by British doctors. They had scrutinised opium and other drugs use among wet-nurses and advised rejection of unfit candidates. As such Government policy while only an official office line surrounding women and wet-nurses were informed by colonial medical guides that viewed opium as a contaminant.

The Royal Opium Commission had been influenced by the attitudes of government officials that blamed women and or mothers for opium poisonings. Assistant Surgeon Mohamed Osman Sahib Bahadur, when asked what his experience of the effect of giving opium to infants replied,

I have known instances in which opium was commenced so early as 40 days after birth. The purpose of which it is given to infants to secure calmness and sleep...With injudicious mothers especially in the poverty-stricken class, the use of opium to infants has been ruinous.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>*Royal Opium Commission, Volume 4: Minutes of evidence taken 29 January to 22 February 1894* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.244-245

As Berridge argued that when middle class doctors in Britain reported on the child doping scandal, their focus was on working class mothers with little mention of the issue beyond the lower classes.<sup>102</sup> A similar pattern emerged within the medical profession in colonial settings with Osman's testimony focusing on the, 'poverty-stricken class.' This framed the issue as mothers evading domestic responsibilities rather than a result of government policy on opium regulation. For instance, Surgeon Osman argued that 'injudicious mothers' used opium to, 'allow themselves to attend to their ordinary avocations and still more foolishly to allow themselves rest and time for useless chits-chats...'<sup>103</sup> Rather than accept their domestic duties they were framed as needlessly leaving the home, 'to attend festivals, the quantity of opium usually given by them is of soporific dose and sometimes even more to produce deep sleep.'<sup>104</sup> Overall officials such as Osman supported the Government's view of opium poisoning as a criticism of mothers rather than missionaries criticism which blamed policy. However this view was also surprising given the lack of evidence from the Chemical Examiners department that a doping scandal existed.

This was embodied by, The Royal Opium Commission's final report, which pointed to the high-birth rate to legitimise government policy as healthy. Cynically, so long as the birth rate remained high they argued that the impact of opium on infants' health and poisoning was minimal. The report touched upon *balagoli* or 'children's pills' in relation to infant mortality but again dismissed this evidence as, 'A few witnesses, chiefly missionaries, stated before us that they believed this practise to be

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<sup>102</sup> V. Berridge, *Opium and the People: Opiate Use and Drug Control Policy in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England* (London: Free Association Books, 1999). P.103

<sup>103</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 4: Minutes of evidence taken 29 January to 22 February 1894* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) Ibid P.625

<sup>104</sup> Ibid P.625

productive of great infant mortality...'<sup>105</sup>The report fed into the belief that caring parents would not intentionally harm their own children with Sir W. Roberts having examined the whole of the evidence on this point stated,

‘It is impossible to believe that this custom should have been handed down for many centuries amongst a people whose fondness for their children is well known, if it were as injurious as some witnesses seem to think...’<sup>106</sup>

This was supported by their own evidence which was more accurate than missionary claims that conflated both addiction and doping cases. The Royal Opium Commission showed how British officials attitudes characterised infant sedation as widespread in India with low risk of poisoning. For instance, the incumbent Residency Surgeon of Indore, Lieut.-Colonel D.F. Keegan in 1894 estimated the prevalence of infant sedation in Malwa at a much higher rate at 80 or 90 percent among the infants of Malwa. This was a Princely State that was a major producer of the drug stating, ‘In my experience this practise of giving opium to children in Malwa exercises no injurious effects on their health.’<sup>107</sup> He equated this to the poppy leaf tea of Norfolk which was also given as a medicinal to children in Britain. The Report attempted to present opium administration as safe, describing poisonings as rare. As discussed earlier, the minority of cases from the Calcutta Chemical

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<sup>105</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 6: Part I The Report with annexures* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.16

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid* P.16

<sup>107</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 4: Minutes of evidence taken 29 January to 22 February 1894* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.90-91

examiners from 1870-1892 confirmed that opium poisonings had occurred in insignificant numbers. By comparison, Winther argued that in England when infant poisoning rates from opium between 1837-38 were published in parliament this prompted a public health reaction and path to regulation.<sup>108</sup> The Royal Opium Commission as an investigative inquiry argued against the missionaries' claim disproving the existence of a doping scandal. The final report used the birth rate as a healthy alternative arguing, 'It does not prejudicially affect the birth-rate, which in India averages 42 per thousand, as against 31.4 per thousand for the United Kingdom.'<sup>109</sup> This downplayed the missionary categorisation of the drug as a poison used on children. Instead the report commenting on the birth-rate accepting the missionary conception of opium use as a vice or habit arguing, 'It must be remembered that the opium-habit is, in the main, a habit of middle life and advancing years, and is not often practised in youth and manhood.'<sup>110</sup> This was an area of policy compromise with missionary attitudes which conceded the need to act on government opium dens. However, they rejected their exaggerated claims on child health and the existence of a doping scandal.

The underlying critique put forward by Quakers, Methodist, and Baptist publications had been that opium hindered the creation of Christian families in India, either by endangering the children, distorting the traditional role of the mother or creating an absent and addicted father. This critique at its core argued that opium was a

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<sup>108</sup> P. Winther, *Anglo-European Science and the Rhetoric of Empire : Malaria, Opium, and British Rule in India, 1756-1895* (Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003). P.42

<sup>109</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 6: Part I The Report with annexures* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.93

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid* P.108

hindrance to the spread of Christianity. The Government response to this wider message was to discredit this assertion with expert witnesses from the Catholic church. For example, Mr Ralph Kershaw, Superintendent of the Baroda State was in the rare position of having followed multiple Christian denominations central to the debate stating he, ‘was in connexion with the Free Church of Scotland...the Baptist Church,...the Methodist Church, and I am at the present time a Roman Catholic.’<sup>111</sup> When asked by the commission, ‘I suppose, therefore you would disapprove of the practise of giving opium to healthy children?’ He stated that his current religious affiliation with the Catholic Church did not explicitly condone or condemn its use,

the people who give it to their children know what is best. I do not disapprove of a custom that improves the health of the children; I cannot say that I disapprove of it. It is given as a medicine: it is not given as anything else.<sup>112</sup>

The commission also found it prudent to probe whether previous churches had influenced his belief on this topic asking, ‘did any of these churches make it a matter of discipline that their converts should not take any opium?’<sup>113</sup> His reply was that there was no strict rule stating, ‘I never heard of such a thing as opium discipline. There used to be discipline about drink...’<sup>114</sup> While Ralph’s attitudes were valuable

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<sup>111</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 4: Minutes of evidence taken 29 January to 22 February 1894* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.121

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid* P.121

<sup>113</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 4: Minutes of evidence taken 29 January to 22 February 1894* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.121

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*

evidence to the government case that opium could be a useful medicine for children and not a poison he was not free from government influence. He was also an official from the Princely State Baroda known for its large amount of opium smuggling. Like Lieutenant Colonel Keegan this region was similar to the opium producing regions in England, which informed his understanding, having seen the drug adopted as a home remedy. To support the Government of India's policy the commission searched further called forth more influential and independent men of the cloth to bolster their moral case.

The Catholic missionaries of India supported the current opium policy of government which was submitted in written evidence to the commission. The Archdeacon of Calcutta, Welbore Macarthy, wrote a letter to the Opium Commission President Lord Brassey in which he called for a preservation of liberty on medical grounds,

While admitting that there are evils arising from the abuse of opium, we are of opinion that they are not sufficiently great to justify us in restricting the liberty which all men should be permitted to exercise in such matters, medical testimony seeming to show that opium used in moderation is in this country harmless and under certain conditions of life distinctly beneficial... the system adopted by the Government in regard to the production and



distribution of the drug is on the whole less liable to abuse than any other could be devised.<sup>115</sup>

The medical caveats or justifications surrounding this statement were surmised as, ‘the climate, conditions of life etc. in India are so entirely different from those prevailing in England.’ With this qualification it was believed that, ‘the question assumes in this country a totally different aspect.’<sup>116</sup> Overall the Government of India had found an ecclesiastical sponsor willing to refute the case made against it on religious grounds. These attitudes were then incorporated into the final report alongside other willing dissenters and denominations.

Another letter sent by the Archbishop Welbore went a step further to dispel that not only was opium a useful medicine in India but that it had not impeded the Christian mission. On the 28th December 1893 addressing both Viceroy and Secretary of the State he argued that,

As representing a church that has lasted longer than any other in India. where it has made more converts and employs more Missionaries than all the other Christian sects put together, I can conscientiously affirm that, to the best of

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<sup>115</sup> Appendix XXV, [Received From the Bishop of Calcutta.] To the Right Honourable Lord Brassey, President of the Opium Commission P.438

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

my knowledge, not a single case has fallen under my observation in which the use of opium has stood in the way of conversion to Christianity.<sup>117</sup>

With this statement he undersigned on behalf of his clergy and converts in India which unfortunately dwarfed the combined efforts of many other Christian denominations with anti-opium leanings. Whether his followers all shared his opinion was another matter the important aspect for government was that it appeared to legitimise their position against missionary pressure. These two letters were ultimately quoted in the Final Report of the Royal Opium Commission. Similarly, other denominations who did not renounce opium were included in this section, such as, The Rev. H. Lorbeer. A missionary of the German Lutheran Church in Ghazipur, he maintained that all his converts had been opium cultivators. This allowed the report to state,

Impressed as we are with the views quoted above we feel our duty to expressed the opinion that neither the use of opium nor the Government connexion with it, is any material hinderance to missionary effort.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Appendix XXVI, Received from the secretary to the Government of India, Finance and commerce department. Dated 28th December 1893. From- The Most Revd. Dr.P. Gorthals, S.J. Archbishop of Calcutta, To-His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council., *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 2: Minutes of Evidence taken 18 November to 29 December 1893* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.438

<sup>118</sup>*Royal Opium Commission, Volume 6: Part I The Report with annexures* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.22

This was a major region for poppy cultivation and one of the Government's two sites for opium producing Factories. Like the testimony above it appears there was a medical familiarity with opium in these regions. However, evidence was also conveniently selected to defend government opium strongholds. Collectively their expert spiritual attitudes shielded the Government of India's policies. The Final Report acknowledged that more than half of the religious and missionary witnesses brought before the commission were from the anti-opium denominations who favoured prohibition.<sup>119</sup> Instead of caving to this position the commission sided with the Catholic and Lutheran witnesses who supported the GOI's policy decisions. Diköter and Mills both argued the Catholic Church displayed a tolerance towards drugs such as cannabis and opium unlike their Protestant and Baptist counterparts.<sup>120</sup> This evidence builds on the historiography showing how religious attitudes in India were interpreted by the Royal Opium Commission and senior GOI officials. In this sense written letters emanating from the Catholic hierarchy sent to the Commission, Viceroy and Secretary of State acted more as a seal of religious approval, rather than moulding government policy.

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<sup>119</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 6: Part I The Report with annexures* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.93

<sup>120</sup> F. Diköter, L. Laamann, and Xun Zhou, *Narcotic Culture: A Social History of Opiates in Modern China* (Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council, 2004). And J.H. Mills, *Cannabis Britannica And Empire, Trade, and Prohibition 1800-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, protestant religious attitudes viewed opium as a poison and vice. This view was initially formed by protestant missionary campaigns aimed at protecting children and women within different medical and social contexts but expanded to anti-opium commentators in Britain. Children were said to be at risk from poisoning and missionaries also took a hostile attitude towards opium's effect on motherhood. Female missionary and religious organisations regularly invoked Indian mothers' and wives' testimonies via pamphlets and petitions. These voices were used to promote the spread of Christianity which critiqued the Government of India's failures to combat vice and protect families. Opium when viewed as a source of vice fitted within broader temperance and missionary attitudes about drugs typical of the era. When all three campaigns converged, it could influence the Government of India both directly through pamphlet campaigning in parliament but also through health and religious norms of the period. However, while government opium shops in India were regulated in 1891, opium as a substance was not comprehensively regulated as a poison. This power was withheld at the discretion of the Governor General which he could enact via notification in the Gazette of India under the 'Other Poisons' clause of the 1904 Poisons Act.<sup>121</sup> Had it been regulated under the British Pharmacy Act this would not have resulted in the banning of soothing syrups as missionaries claimed, given under this legislation they were still legal in Britain. Overall then the attitudes of religious commentators about opium and its impact on the family were

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<sup>121</sup>*A collection of the acts passed by the Governor General of India in council in the year, 1904.* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India. 1905.) \*see 'other poisons' clause 6.(2) Laws. I. General Collections, BL P.3

only partly driving the Government of India's policies. The Royal Opium Commission dismissed missionary attitudes as 'exaggerations.' This was true especially of missionaries who had framed the debate on Indian nurses and mothers use of soothing syrups. Ex-medical officials from the Government of India's and the commission condemned the action of some mothers as either intentional or ignorant given opium was still regarded as a useful child medicinal. This downplayed the danger of the free-availability and excise sale of opium, a policy forwarded by the Government of India. Missionary attitudes were not the judge in deciding policy but were driving the opium question into controversial areas such as child health, protection of women and vice to stoke difficult debate. These debates were sometimes far removed from reality which built upon second-hand evidence for those commentators who never visited India. Similarly following editing, they muddied even simple distinctions. For example, attempting to blur the use of raw opium by adults for intoxication and medicinal opium pills administered to children. While government unpicked the anti-opium argument, their moral guilt sought a religious authority to justify their own use of evidence. They found allies in the Catholic and Lutheran churches displaying a similar willingness to arrange the evidence to support their pro-opium position. The thesis has hopefully shown that it was this continual need to validate and answer the nuances found between religious and government disagreements that drove policy decisions.

## **Chapter five: Medical attitudes**

## Introduction

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 be practically be enforced. The medical and quasi-medical uses of the drug are so intermixed it is impossible to draw a definite line between them.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will explore the way in which medical attitudes towards opium influenced the policies of the Government of India. As the above quote represents the gap between policy and practise was already quite large in India where British officials had failed to introduce regulation in a meaningful way outside institutions. Many of these institutions were also not run in line with medical attitudes, principals or ideas. The chapter's will be split into five main themes, including epidemics and emergencies, medicine, regulation, and institutional relationship with vice. Opium use crossed all these spheres which informed how the drug was categorised. In the first instance, within the context of recurring epidemic outbreaks, the drug was dispensed as an emergency relief measure. The pharmakon had always regarded opium as both cure and poison which informed the discussion on responsible firms and Indian doctors that provided the drug. In institutional contexts, such as plague camps, migrant ships, lock hospitals, prisons and asylums opium was defined by

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<sup>1</sup> *Royal Opium Commission, Volume 6: Part I The Report with annexures* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.93

different attitudes and policy towards the substance as a medicinal comfort and sedative. Finally, these attitudes within competing institutional contexts provided a setting where opium was defined as part of the Indian diet and its wider relation to the environment. Overall the reason these three areas are important is because the Royal Opium Commission 1893-95 had called on medical authorities and attitudes from within colonial institutions to describe the Indian diet and opium use as healthy. These official figures and voices were used to legitimise opium use to parliament and hence allowed the Asian opium trade to continue unhindered. Understanding the drivers of these attitudes and policies will explain the Government of India's decision to protect the opium trade. Similarly, it will uncover what contradictions in terms and attitudes about opium existed between institutions established in British India. This will answer the question of how medical attitudes about opium were driving policies of the Government of India from 1857 to 1906.



## **Epidemics and emergencies.**

The elusive pathology of cholera spawned numerous theories and attitudes towards opium treatments within Colonial India. Duffin has argued that European practitioners in the early nineteenth century turned to opiate mixtures including both raw opium and laudanum to reduce pain or induce sleep.<sup>2</sup> When combined with various forms of bloodletting such as phlebotomy this interventionist style of therapy was known as, ‘drastic’ or ‘heroic’ a disparaging term to describe overtreatment.<sup>3</sup> During the interlude from the mid to late nineteenth century, opiates had continued proliferate within competing humoral treatments for cholera in British India. For example, English physician, Dr George Johnson argued that the pathology of cholera induced sickness and diarrhoea as a natural reaction to poisoning of the blood, where the body attempted to expel the injurious bile.<sup>4</sup> Dr Waring of the Indian Medical Service concurred describing how, ‘in India treatment of diarrhoea choleric by astringents and opiates was found to be of great importance and highly successful;’<sup>5</sup> Civil Surgeons adhered to galenic theories and treatment plans during an outbreak of cholera at Lucknow in 1867, which endorsed the use of opiates among other poisonous substances such as calomel. For example, British surgeon H.M. Cannon, writing to the British Medical Journal argued that, ‘Dr George Johnson has given us

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<sup>2</sup> J. Duffin, *History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction* (University of Toronto: Buffalo Toronto, 1999)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid P.101

<sup>4</sup> ‘Cholera Debate at the Medico-Chirurgical Society’ in *The Medical Times and Gazette, Volume 1, April 27, 1867* (London; Published by John Churchill and Sons, 1867) P.445

<sup>5</sup> Ibid P.445

the true key to the pathology of cholera...'<sup>6</sup> the significance of this quote is that it shows practitioners in India were adhering to humoral explanations of the pathology of cholera which endorsed opiate mixtures as treatment. During the outbreak H.H. Cannon presided over treatment in military hospitals of the IMS and Asylums. Patients were split between those who received stimulants and purgative treatment plans,

in one of those hospitals there were 27 cases of cholera treated on the stimulating plan; that is, brandy and opium, assafoetida, and ammonia, given liberally. Of the 27 cases, 23 or 24 died. In the other regiment, the men, on being admitted to the hospital, were given a calomel purgative guarded by opium, followed by iced water or soda water in reasonable quantities, and beef-tea. Of the 21 cases thus treated, 16 or 17 recovered.<sup>7</sup>

'Guarding' was a concept of protecting the body from the more purgative aspects of other treatments. Administering opium was widely known to induce constipation and was used to stop loss of fluids. Similarly, having presided over the treatment of four women in an asylum he claimed that the calomel, opium and soda water combination was effective against cholera based on the four patients' survival.<sup>8</sup> Humoral theories on the cause of bilious expulsion could not conclude on whether the loss of fluids

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<sup>6</sup> 'Cholera theories and practice.' Correspondence, H.M. Cannon, M.B. Lond, Surgeon-Major Bengal Army, Civil Surgeon of Lucknow, on leave. 14, St. Jame's Square, May 1868, in *The British Medical Journal*, May 16, 1868. P.494

<sup>7</sup> 'Cholera theories and practice.' P.494

<sup>8</sup> Ibid P.494

was induced naturally by the body or unnatural de-hydration that formed part of the pathology of cholera. David Arnold has argued that the Government of India and India office would in the future resist the Pacini and Koch's discovery of *Vibrio cholerae* as the cause of cholera following a medical commission sent to Calcutta in 1884.<sup>9</sup> Prior to this watershed discovery Dhrub Kumar Singh argued that in the early nineteenth century India western heroic medicine, 'entailed use of stimulants and opiates- the former to restore confidence and the latter to prevent vomiting and purging.' As seen above by the mid-century in 1868 doctors were beginning to reject the stimulant treatment plans given whilst maintaining the use of opium. Policies and treatment plans of military hospitals and asylums were directed by the use by civil surgeons and of opium mixtures following in the heroic tradition of medicine that relied on, 'confounding permutations of various drugs.'<sup>10</sup>

Medical attitudes also viewed opium as antagonistic to the health of vital organs. During an outbreak of pneumonic plague within Bombay in 1899, cases were observed by doctors whose prognosis they observed was being exacerbated by an unhealthy respiratory system at the outset. M. N. Disana, Honorary Medical Officer, at Khatri Mahomedan and Kolsa Moholla Mahomedan Plague Hospital, suspected drugs of habit whether tobacco, alcohol or opium which he included in his report to the Municipal Commissioner of Bombay,

In my observation I have found that in most pneumonic cases the respiratory system was not healthy before. There had been Catarrh or Bronchitis or

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<sup>9</sup> D. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth*, P.194

<sup>10</sup> D. K. Singh Cholera, 'Heroic Therapies, and Rise of Homoeopathy in Nineteenth-century India' in D. Kumar and R. S. Basu (Eds.) *Medical Encounters in British India* (Oxford, 2013) pp. 130-131

Emphysema or Tuberculosis, or the patient was a drunkard, a hard smoker, a pan and tobacco chewer or an opium-eater.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, the health of the bodily organs could adjust treatment plans for plague to include or exclude use of opiates. Disana recommended that, in cases where the patient's heart was showing signs of failure, the treatment of symptoms such as painful buboes or swelling of lymph nodes should exclude use of opium. During the Bombay plague epidemic he stated that in, 'those cases where the heart shows symptoms of failure from the very beginning, the quantity of opium is [was] lessened and sometimes omitted.'<sup>12</sup> The risk to the heart could exclude Extract of Opium but Disana continued use of other powerful plant origin drugs such as extract of belladonna, and cannabis.<sup>13</sup> The drugs detailed in the recipe resembled the ingredients of a tincture of belladonna & opium a common and standard medication for the period. However, in comparison to use of leeches Disana believed opium based treatments were superior for treating plague buboes which, 'succeeded well in lessening pain, as well as in bringing about uninterrupted, speedy suppuration.'<sup>14</sup>

During the Bombay plague outbreak of 1896-97 opium was also used as a medicine on pregnant mothers which contrasted with the exaggerated religious claims that

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<sup>11</sup> M. N. Disana, 'Notes on the Symptoms, Character and Treatment of the Disease. (From experience obtained in this and other Hospitals in my charge, as well as private practice).' in *Report of the Municipal Commissioner on the Plague in Bombay for the year ending 31st May 1899. Part I. General Administration. Vol I* (Bombay: Printed at The "Times Of India" Steam Press. 1899) India Papers Collection. IP/14/PC.3, National Library of Scotland (NLS) P.346

<sup>12</sup> M. N. Disana, 'Notes on the Symptoms, Character and Treatment of the Disease.' P.350

<sup>13</sup> \*List of treatments included for plague buboes included, 'Ext. Belladonna. Ext. Opii. a, a 3 l. Ext. Cannabis Ind. Red Lead (Plumbi Oxidum). Hydrarg Oxidi Rubri. M. ft Pasta. a. a 3 zgs.' P.349

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. P.349

condemned mothers use of the drug. As stated earlier Missionaries agreed and accepted opium was a medicine in face of epidemics and in numerous other medicinal context given they both received their medical training in Britain which adopted standard pharmaceutical recipes. In a series of cases government surgeons sought to assess and treat pregnant mothers' symptoms as they succumbed to plague,

Abortion took place in one case on the first day of attack; mother 4 months pregnant. In two others abortion came on during the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, and in the remaining case on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the attack, the mothers being 6 months pregnant. In one 6 months case the mother's temperature and general condition were favourable for recovery, but, in spite of opium in large doses, miscarriage came on and precipitated a fatal issue.<sup>15</sup>

The second woman, six months pregnant had received opium to treat the symptoms of plague. In this case the use of opium was not categorised as a source of poisoning but rather a lifesaving medicine as detailed in the quote above to be given in 'large doses' by colonial doctors. The actual amount of this 'large' dose is not recorded in the case notes and it cannot be confirmed exactly how much the patient received. Nevertheless, this illustrates how attitudes within the Government of India and missionaries had recognised opium's use as a medicine for pregnant mothers as it was used in South Asia. This view and policy contrasted with exaggerated religious views and claims around mothers and wet nurses especially found in pamphlets.

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<sup>15</sup> Gatacre W. F., *Report on the Bubonic Plague in Bombay 1896-97, with plans*. Vol 1 (Bombay: Printed at The "Times Of India" Steam Press, 1897) Shelf mark ref: IP/32/PC.3, The India Papers Collection, National Library of Scotland. P.66

The Government of India favoured the provision of opium pills and patent medicines as a form of medical relief when responding to outbreaks of epidemic disease. David Arnold has estimated that over twenty-three million people died from cholera in British India between 1865 and 1947.<sup>16</sup> In response the Government of India's used dispensaries to provide emergency provision of medicines. For example, during an outbreak of cholera at Bombay in 1900 it was reported that during the third week of July, 'measures had been taken to give free medicine to those attacked by Cholera.' The Government of India to reduce the mortality from cholera provided patent remedies from dispensaries, 'The medicine used was Dr. Leith's Cholera Mix-ture, of two kinds-with and without opium.'<sup>17</sup> Reports received from District Officers described how, 'this mixture was efficacious, especially when taken in the early stages of the attack.'<sup>18</sup> The continuing preference for patent based medicines had originated in *Bombay Govt Gazette*, 1845, and was sold and distributed as 'Government mixture'. For example, one Civil Surgeon during the 1861 Cholera outbreak in Agra described how,

I prefer the pill, as being an efficacious remedy, convenient for distribution, keeping well, easily distributed, and not likely to do harm if taken when required. The Natives have confidence in them, and have used several lakhs

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<sup>16</sup> D. Arnold, 'Cholera and colonialism in British India', *Past & present*, No. 113 (Nov., 1986), pp. 120 this figure should be taken with a pinch of salt given Arnold argued, 'As the collection of vital statistics in India did not begin in earnest until the mid- 1860s, it is impossible to arrive at an accurate figure for the number of deaths caused by the disease..'

<sup>17</sup> Review of the Public Health and course of the Epidemic during the year.' in *Report of the Municipal Commissioner on the Plague in Bombay for the year ending 31st may 1901. Part II.- Hospitals (Public & Private). Vol III* (Bombay: printed at the "Advocate of India" press., 1902) India Papers Collection IP/14/PC.3, NLS Ibid P.28

<sup>18</sup> Ibid P.28

of them during the epidemics, and the European soldiers take them with confidence. They are composed of one part Opium, two parts Black pepper and three parts Assafoetida, made into pills of 5 grains each.<sup>19</sup>

In this context, medical attitudes believed mixtures of opium to be ‘efficacious’ checking the rapid loss of fluids in the earliest stages of the disease. Policy had also been informed by patients’ preference for cholera mixtures and pills who expressed ‘confidence’ in their use.<sup>20</sup> David Arnold argued that British doctors borrowed from *Vaid* and *Hakims* recipes for cholera mixtures and pills contributing to their popularity, with over 140,000 of these being manufactured and issued at dispensaries at Agra during the 1856 epidemic alone.<sup>21</sup> Overall, the Government of India’s policies were partly being driven in response to epidemic disease. However, these policies were also a product of demand for opium mixtures as much as a continued belief in opium retaining a legitimate medicinal use.

Infectious diseases shared symptoms with cholera including mild and severe diarrhoea which further drove policy towards use of opium mixtures issued by the Government of India. As seen above this pattern continued from the 1850s to the 1880s. Epidemic diseases that displayed these symptoms were initially treated by colonial surgeons using vegetable products with astringent or non-purgative qualities such as gum acacia and opium to slow dehydration. At the Karáchi hills station

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<sup>19</sup> *The second and third sections of the report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the cholera epidemic of 1861 in northern India: with an account of the epidemic by the President of the Commission.* (Calcutta : Cutter 1864) Asia, Pacific & Africa DRT Digital Store V 6740, British Library (BL) P.121

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* P.121

<sup>21</sup> D. Arnold, ‘Cholera and colonialism in British India’ P.133

during an outbreak of enteric fever in 1882 Thomas Blurton aged 21 was one of several colonial soldiers who was treated with opium mixtures,

This man came to hospital on the evening of the 22nd, complaining of feeling very weak and with slight diarrhoea ; the temperature was found to be 103 but no urgent symptoms showed themselves ; he had ol. ricini, mucilage, gum acac. and opium in small doses which arrested the purging of the bowels...<sup>22</sup>

As seen in this account British military cantonments used opium in mixtures to arrest diarrhoea and loss of fluids in the early stages of disease. Susan E. Chaplin has argued that preferential treatment of soldiers formed part of the two-tiered health policies of the GOI that strove to protect military personnel at the expense of Indian civilians. Similarly to combat typhoid, sanitation officials separated soldiers for treatment while using indigenous labour for manual refuse removal of the cantonment.<sup>23</sup> Overall, the continued use of opium by civil surgeons in response to plague, cholera, and especially symptoms such as diarrhoea was widely established in colonial institutions. This resorted to enclavism policies and treatment plans to maintain the health of Government personnel.

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<sup>22</sup> 'Case Regimental No. 2075. Name.-Thomas Blurton. Age last birth-day.-21 years. Completed years of service-2 years 5 months. Station.-Karchi. Time on Station.-7 months.' In *Report on enteric fever* (1883) IP/13/SB.6 NLS P.130

<sup>23</sup> S. E. Chaplin 'Cities, sewers and poverty: India's politics of sanitation' in *Environment and Urbanization* (April 1,) 1999. pp. 149-150



The military response to plague outbreaks was also framed by institutional responses and attitudes towards opium's worth as a medicinal comfort and sedative. The British instigated military control of movement during plague epidemics. David Arnold also demonstrated how this policy produced violent resistance when inspection camps disrupted religious beliefs and reaffirmed British dominance over Indian bodies.<sup>24</sup> The Bombay plague outbreak of 1896 and 1897 saw opiates used by both colonial elites and Indian camp residents. Misunderstanding of plague's point of transmission allowed fleas carrying bubonic plague on rats to move easily between these man-made lines and camps.<sup>25</sup> However, for those living in the camps these measures formed the backbone of a highly-controlled existence and attitudes of officials. The source of food and medicine was a, 'A Bania's shop [which] was provided at each camp, and free rations were in most cases given to the inmates.' Camp dwellers were given an allowance of four annas for a man and three annas for a woman which could be used to purchase food and drugs at the *Bania* shop with, 'Liquor and opium were supplied to those who were accustomed to them.'<sup>26</sup> The bania shop policy was designed to stop travel to local markets which provided drugs to users who required them. Under, 'Instructions for Treatment Segregation, Disinfection, &c.' the instructions for treatment detailed how, 'sedatives at night if required, bromide of potassium, chloral or opium.'<sup>27</sup> Inducing sleep and containing individuals within the camp was important to officials. For instance, having undergone the disinfection and segregation process, opium was used as a medicinal

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<sup>24</sup> D.Arnold, 'Touching the Body: Perspectives on the Indian Plague, 1896-1900' in R. Guha, G. C. Spivak Selected Subaltern Studies, P.391

<sup>25</sup> W. H McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Penguin history, London 1979)

<sup>26</sup>M. E. Couchman, (ed.) *Account of Plague Administration in The Bombay Presidency From September 1896 till May 1897*. (Bombay: Printed At The Government Central Press, 1897.) India Papers Collection, IP/13/PC.4 P.127 Ibid P.127

<sup>27</sup> Ibid P.48

comfort and sedative at the treatment stage. Within this context opium treatments formed part of the final stage of the Government of India's institutional plague measures which were used to maintain and treat the camp population.

Quarantine procedures and medicines used on migrant ships formed another branch of institutional policies under the Government of India. Scales of medicine allowed for a dedicated ship's doctor and store of medicine in the instance of a quarantine to treat the ships passengers, similar to the list of medicines and supplies issued to plague camps. However, ship surgeons such as Dr Palmer and Dr Grant in India were far more concerned with the overall diet and health of indentured migrants being sent abroad arguing for an additional spend of £1 per adult.<sup>28</sup> The 'coolies' in the eyes of colonialists were recorded simply as bodies with measured levels of consumption being the result of carefully economised galleys and limited stores. When these adjusted scales of diet and medicine were debated in July 1870, doctors were striving to improve the quality of the migrant's bodies and capacity for labour,

looking to the advantage that may be expected from the arrival of the coolies in good physical condition and in sound health, ready for immediate work, the small additional expenditure may well be borne by the colonies...The scale of medicines has been framed at the instance of experienced surgeons

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<sup>28</sup> No. 2473, dated 19th July 1870. From- the Hon'ble A. Eden Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal, To- E.C. Bayley, Esq., C.S.I., Secretary to the Government of India. Revised scales of diet, medicines and medical comforts for emigrant vessels proposed by the Officiating Protector of Emigrants in substitution of the old scale under Section 63 of Act XIII. Of 1864. *Home Department Proceedings, Government of India, September 3, 1870. Sanitary.* India Office Records and Private Papers, Reference: IOR/P/434/45

of emigrant ships, and in drawing it up Dr. Grant has been guided by the opinion of those gentlemen,...<sup>29</sup>

These scales of medicine which included tinctures of opium, patent remedies such as ‘Jeremie's Opiate’<sup>30</sup> and cholera pills were now the responsibility of the Medical Inspector of Emigrants and ships surgeons to meet pre-determined standards. ‘Confirmed opium-eaters’ would also be catered for in these situations similar to plague camps which required extra supplies.<sup>31</sup> The role of the emigrant medical inspector and ships surgeon’s as responsible for drugs, had been consolidated with the passage of Act No. XIII. of 1864.<sup>32</sup> While Visram provides a good explanation of the act and the impact for emigrants he did not expand on the wider implications for the act controlling medicines on ships. In the Madras Presidency, the duties of the Emigrant Medical Inspector included that, ‘Every Emigrant ship must be provided with a qualified European or Native Surgeon, and medicines and stores as per schedule annexed.’ In this institutional context opiates were part of a, ‘desire to secure the most useful drugs for emigrants without increasing the cost.’<sup>33</sup> Dr Palmer suggested using, ‘One of the chief druggist firms of Calcutta’ because, ‘they [were]

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<sup>29</sup> No. 2473, dated 19th July 1870. From- the Hon’ble A. Eden Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal, To- E.C. Bayley, Esq., C.S.I., Secretary to the Government of India. Ibid P.937

<sup>30</sup> W. R. Cornish (ed) *A Code of Medical and Sanitary Regulations for the Guidance of Medical Officers serving in the Madras Presidency. Indian Medical Department. Vol. li.* (Madras: Printed By H. Morgan, At The Government Press. 1870.) IP/25/MB.4 P.170

<sup>31</sup> No. 2473, dated 19th July 1870. From- the Hon’ble A. Eden Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal, To- E.C. Bayley, Esq., C.S.I., Secretary to the Government of India. Revised scales of diet, medicines and medical comforts for emigrant vessels proposed by the Officiating Protector of Emigrants in substitution of the old scale under Section 63 of Act XIII. Of 1864. \* on the final page of the list of medicines instructions for ‘confirmed opium eaters’ are given to increase scales accordingly.

<sup>32</sup> R. Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (Routledge New York, 1986) P.228 \*provides good explanation of act and implication for emigrant, however not on the wider medical implications of the act for controlling medicines on ships.

<sup>33</sup> No. 2473, dated 19th July 1870. From- the Hon’ble A. Eden Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal, To- E.C. Bayley, Esq., C.S.I., Secretary to the Government of India. P.938

are prepared to supply medicine on the new scale at a cost not exceeding the total amount now paid for those of the existing scale.’ Similarly, they did not carry substantial amounts of the drug for medical purposes only increasing their stores by 1 ounce per 100 Emigrants for opium and two ounces for tincture of opium. Given the duration of the trips this was a very small amount. Medical attitudes on ships were not problematising addiction in health terms beyond the practicalities of cost and storage for catering to migrants.

THE MEDICINES.				
Proportion of Medicines necessary for a Ship carrying Emigrants to Mauritius or Réunion. (50 per cent. to be added for ships proceeding to Natal or Queensland.)				
Names of Medicines.	For 100 Men.	For 200 Men.	For 300 Men.	For 400 Men.
Opium	One ounce	Two ounces	Three ounces	Four ounces.
Dover's Powder	One ounce	One ounce and half	Two ounces	Three ounces.
Jeremie's Opiate	One small oz. phial	Two ounces phial	Two ounces phial	Two oz. phial.
Tincture of Opium	Four ounces	Six ounces	Eight ounces	Twelve ounces. <sup>34</sup>

Table 2 Scale of Medicine from Ship carrying emigrants.

<sup>34</sup> W. R. Cornish (ed) *A Code of Medical and Sanitary Regulations for the Guidance of Medical Officers serving in the Madras Presidency. Indian Medical Department. Vol. II.* (Madras: Printed By H. Morgan, At The Government Press. 1870.) IP/25/MB.4 P.172



## Medicines, mixtures and colonial attitudes

Ayurveda in colonial India remained a popular system of medicine that relied extensively on therapeutics and tonic preparations of drugs and plants. R. Niranjana Devi argued that the materia medica of the system incorporated opiates into their preparations having been introduced into South Asia by Arabian and Islamic medicine as early as 10<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>35</sup> Revivalist Hindu publications in the late nineteenth century also recorded opium as a traditional Ayurveda remedy. For example, the Society for the Resuscitation of Indian Literature published in 1899 detailed the 'Hindu Materia Medica' This explained how, 'The simple vegetable medicines are procured from bark, roots, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, juices, gums and wood of plants.'<sup>36</sup> Early Hindu physicians believed there was one remedy for each disease. Nobin Chundra Pal, outlined in his book different forms of the poppy and opium such as seeds and grains for their corresponding ailments. Preparation number fifteen reads, "Papaver Somniferum... - Opium restrains purging in incipient cholera." As discussed colonial medicine at the time had borrowed from these recipes for their Government mixtures viewing as it as a panacea. Uniquely, the Ayurveda's system of one remedy for one disease had described how the seeds cured a different ailment, 'Papaver Somniferum... – Seeds cure elephantiasis'<sup>37</sup> For, 'Fever Intermittent' Ayurveda recommended, '34. Opium. Dose one grain in agues.'<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> R. Niranjana Devi, *Medicine in South India* (Eswar Press the science and technology publishers: Chennai, 2006) P.45-46

<sup>36</sup> *Ayurveda or the system or the Hindu System of Medical Science* (Calcutta: Society for the Resuscitation of Indian literature, 1899) P.73-74

<sup>37</sup> N. C. Pal, *The Indian Herbalist or the Indigenous Remedies for the Prevailing Diseases of India*. (Calcutta: Printed at the East India Press, 1873) Ibid P.9

<sup>38</sup> Ibid p.26

Opium was to Ayurvedic medicine and revivalists like Nabin part of their belief that they could individually categorise diseases to be, 'efficiently and cheaply treated by the employment of native drugs.'<sup>39</sup> Roy Porter argued that specialised healers such as *Vaidyas* and religious orders made Indian medicine selectively adoptive of medicinal preparations to increase their influence. He described the Ayurvedic pharmacopoeias as predominantly herbal, making use of ointments and massage among other therapies and noting, "opium too was brought in apparently from Islamic sources to relieve dysentery."<sup>40</sup> The ongoing influence of *Vaidyas* and tonic treatments was based on drugs and multiple preparations such as seeds and grains to meet a range of patients' needs. Overall revivalist attitudes of *Vaidyas* and *Hakims* still possessed medical influence within South Asian society recommending different parts of the poppy plant and opium remedies. Similarly, the use of traditional opium mixtures utilised in times of epidemics was probably more a reflection of these practitioners than government policy.

Traditional Indian medicines also made their way into British spheres of medicine through botanical survey and chemical examination. Although discounted for most of the century, The Central Indigenous Drugs Commission from 1896 to 1899 started to itemise medical preparations used in Unani and Ayurvedic medicines. These were to be rationalised into the British pharmacopeia already being used by colonial institutions.<sup>41</sup> For example, alternative opium preparations such as 'Malwa oil' were uncovered. Factory workers at the Patna and Ghazipore used it for medicinal

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<sup>39</sup> N. C. Pal, *The Indian Herbalist* P.(ii)

<sup>40</sup> R. Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (Fontana Press, London, 1999) P.138

<sup>41</sup> Report of the Proceedings of the Central Indigenous drugs Committee for India Vol 1, *From 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1896 to Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> July 1899 at which Proceedings of the Eleventh Meeting were confirmed*. (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, India. 1899)

purposes, but commercially it had previously been, 'utilised at the Ghazipore Factory for pitch-boiling purposes in the place of common oil.' Mr G.M. Gregory the Officiating Factory Superintendent Benares Opium Agency believed it had demonstrable medicinal benefits.<sup>42</sup> On the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1898, he submitted evidence to the committee answering to the Board of the Revenue that,

At the Patna Factory, it is still used for that purpose. According to native ideas the oil was supposed to possess valuable medical properties as an embrocation or liniment. Analysis has shown the oil, which has been in prolonged admixture with opium has certainly carried away from the opium a small portion of Narcotine. Morphia has not been traceable while the density and odour of the oil points undoubtedly to the belief that a very appreciable quantity of the soluble resinous constituents of opium has also been withdrawn.<sup>43</sup>

The aroma of the oil led to the belief that it had absorbed some the active properties of the drug which factory workers readily rubbed on after a day's work for aches and pains. The Inspector General of Civil Hospitals for the North-Western Provinces having issued a circular brought the item to the attention of all Civil Surgeons in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh.

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<sup>42</sup> 'Appendix XXXV. C. Extract from a Note by Mr G. M. Gregory, Officiating Factory Superintendent; Benares Opium Agency,- dated the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1898.' In *Report of the Proceedings of the Central Indigenous drugs Committee*, P.198-99

<sup>43</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Central Indigenous drugs Committee for India Vol 1 P.199*



Following the circular, policy endorsed selling the medicine at dispensaries. It was sold at Rs. 5 per tin of 10lbs for the filtered oil, including packing charges.<sup>44</sup> Despite the Ghazipore Factory issuing 309 ½ lb of this oil to other dispensaries it was not included in the British pharmacopeia and excluded by the Central Indigenous Drugs Commission. The sentiment of loss and aversion to indigenous medicine was summed up by Mr. G. M Gregory,

We were practically wasting a substance containing medical properties which the Medical Department are now eager to buy up and utilise at their hospitals.<sup>45</sup>

David Arnold has argued there was a preference for standardised western medicines within the Commission which was fuelled by the racial arrogance of senior medical officials within the IMS.<sup>46</sup> The proceedings of the Central Drugs Commission from 1896-1899 and its rejection of Malwa oil seem to confirm this pattern for official policy orders which discredited 'native ideas.'<sup>47</sup> After all, they were trained in a period when indigenous medicines were described as folk medicine. Nevertheless, Sudhir Kakar has argued that Indian healing traditions were informed by the *public* idiom or communities beliefs which informed how sickness was treated.<sup>48</sup> This suggests the opinions of civil surgeons on a commission had little effect on the

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<sup>44</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Central Indigenous drugs Committee for India Vol 1* P.199

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid* P.199

<sup>46</sup> D. Arnold, *The New Cambridge History of India III.5 Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008). P.181

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid* P.199

<sup>48</sup> S. Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry Into India and Its Healing Traditions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Kindle edition, 1982) Loc. 699

factory workers' attitudes. Similarly, in practise numerous civil hospitals had already adopted Malwa oil as an embrocation showing how medical attitudes were not a uniform voice but rather a profession of conflicting opinions that informed policy.

## Regulation

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Government of India had also considered the question of further medical regulation of opium shops. This partly resulted from claims by religious groups explored in the previous chapter. Government believed the Quakers publication the *Friend of China* had exaggerated the large number of shops and provided, 'highly coloured accounts of what is alleged to have been seen and heard in visits to shops...' The Government disputed the medical impact of shops and saloons on statistical grounds stating shop numbers were too small to be significant. In 1889-90 there, was according to official figures, 936 shops licensed for opium smoking which worked out as roughly one shop to 197,000 inhabitants, 'being at the rate of (say) three or four shops for such a town as Liverpool or Glasgow.'<sup>49</sup> However the Commissioner of Excise in the Central Provinces by comparison took a more realistic view of the failures in supervision of said shops stating,

It has been brought to my notice by the Deputy Commissioner of Wardha that the rules contained in the Excise Manual as to temporary licenses are sometimes misunderstood or misapplied. Under cover of a temporary license granted for a weekly bazar, the licensee keeps his retail shop open daily (and not merely on bazar days) in the villages in which the weekly bazar is held.

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<sup>49</sup> Letter from the Government of India. Finance and Commerce Department. Separate Revenue. Opium. To the Secretary of State for India. Consumption of Opium In India. *Presented To Both Houses Of Parliament By Command Of Her Majesty* (London: Printed for Her Majesty's Stationary office by Eyre and Sporriswoode. Printers to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1892). P.3

The Opium or Excise Manual was designed to aid officials in enforcing the rules set by the 1857 and the 1878 Opium Acts. The number of so called ‘temporary’ shops which required a separate license were harder to estimate and supervise given, ‘The difficulty is that it is not always possible to maintain such a watch as to make sure that licensee of a “temporary” shop sells only on bazar days.’<sup>50</sup> Policy it appears in practise was not a strict following of the rules of the Opium Manual and practical attitudes had determined their application in bazars given they could not always be supervised. The influence of excise officials’ attitudes appears a reflection of their limited numbers which was also seen with opium agents in rural areas discussed in chapter two.

More evidence of disregard for government policy is found in the legal rules for opium’s use by medical practitioners in the Punjab. This was theoretically operating on a license system under monopoly of the Government of India. Under Rule 55 of the Opium Rules of 1889 the possession of opium by medical practitioners was regarded as illicit without a license issued by a Deputy Excise Commissioner. However in practise, ‘owing principally to overlooking of the rule, medical practitioners carried on business in perhaps a majority of cases without licences.’<sup>51</sup>

On this subject the Excise Commissioner for the Punjab wrote in 1897 that,

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<sup>50</sup> Appendix C. From L.K. Laurie, Esq., Officiating Commissioner of Excise, Central Provinces, to all Deputy Commissioners, Central Provinces. Circular No. 2981, dated 7th December 1881. in *Consumption of Opium In India. Presented To Both Houses Of Parliament By Command Of Her Majesty* (London: Printed for Her Majesty’s Stationary office by Eyre and Sporriswoode. Printers to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1892). P.26

<sup>51</sup> Punjab Excise Department. *Punjab excise manual, Part II: opium. 1903.* (Lahore: The Civil And Military Gazette Press, 1903.) India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/V/27/323/119, British Library, P.7

if it could be assumed that every person setting up practise as a medical practitioner may be relied on not to sell opium [or] preparations of opium for other than medical purposes, there would be no necessity for insisting on such persons taking out licences \*\*; but the number of private medical practitioners is, I believe, increasing year by year, and from an Excise point of view it is becoming more and more necessary to retain in hand means of controlling and supervising their vend of opium.<sup>52</sup>

The drive to regulate or ‘retain in hand means of control’ had stemmed from the Excise Department which enforced the Opium Laws necessary to protect the Government monopoly of the trade. Kumar hinted at the suppressing effect of this policy on Ayurveda and Unani practitioners reliant on government dispensaries for their own opium recipes.<sup>53</sup> As previous evidence has shown indigenous medicine readily adopted opium as an active ingredient for their recipes. However, the absence of licenses held by the ‘majority’ of practitioners was accepted by the Excise department who trusted their use would be for medical purposes.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, traditional based cholera pills were also supplied by the Government of India during cholera outbreaks in 1861 and 1902. The emergency response to curb the spread of epidemics and mortality often superseded the excise legal rule book which was not always informative of medical attitudes and policy in practise within dispensaries.

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<sup>52</sup> Punjab Excise Department. *Punjab excise manual, Part II: opium. 1903.* (Lahore: The Civil And Military Gazette Press, 1903.) India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/V/27/323/119, British Library, P.7

<sup>53</sup> Kumar A., ‘The Indian Drug Industry under the Raj, 1860- 1920’ in Pati, B., Harrison, M. (ed.) *Health, Medicine and Empire Perspectives on Colonial India* (New Delhi: Longman, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> *Punjab excise manual, Part II: opium. 1903.* P.7

The purchasing limits placed on traditional Indian medical practitioners was also partly informed by the medical profession who were responsible for oversight of dispensaries, hospitals and medico-legal issues. The Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals for the Punjab during 1897 was concerned by practitioners who did not hold a diploma or certificate from either an Indian or British institution which he described as, ‘Kavirajis and Hakims: all men of these classes make up their own medicines including them, as a rule, in the fee they charge for advice.’ In reference to the Excise rules he believed they should also possess a licence,

I would advise that every “medical practitioner,” no matter what his grade or standing, qualified or unqualified, should, if he keeps a shop for the sale of drugs, or, if he dispense his own medicines, be compelled to hold a licence for opium.<sup>55</sup>

The Inspector General being responsible for the inspection of dispensaries informed the Excise Department’s understanding of indigenous doctors and pharmacists in the Punjab. This policy was on a regional basis as the Indian Medical Service seconded personnel for civil administration in which each province was controlled by an Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals. While answering to local governments, they also received orders from a Director-General placed within the head office of central governments.<sup>56</sup> Overall regional medical attitudes converged with Excise officials’

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<sup>55</sup> Punjab Excise Department. *Punjab excise manual, Part II: opium. 1903.* P.8

<sup>56</sup> Sir H. Verney Lovett, K.C.S.I, ‘The development of the services, 1858-1918’ in H. H. Dodwell (ed.), *Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume V* (Cambridge University Press, 1932) P.365

views suggesting Kavirajis and Hakims be held accountable to the same dispensary rules as the civil administration.

The purchase limits placed on practitioners and chemist shops were also jointly established by a combination of the regional Inspector General of Civil Hospitals and Excise officials. Rule 54 of the Opium Rules which had been in operation since 1857 and amended in 1889 oversaw the limits of opiate medical preparations. In practise these limits were set by the Inspector General and supervised by Deputy Excise Commissioners. This possession limit was set at Half a sér or 1 lb which contained 7,680 grains. 1 grain was taken by the Inspector-General in the Punjab as an average dose of opium adding,

(As to) the maximum quantity of opium which a practitioner may keep, I should say that half a sér is ample for the requirements of anyone who does not keep a regular chemist's shop.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to this they were allowed under the rules, '1 Imperial pint laudanum or tincture of opium, 2 oz. extract of opium., ¼ Imperial pint wine of opium...4 oz. confection opium, and 4 oz. compounded powder opium.' The Inspector thought, 'This ought to cover any private practitioner's expenditure of opium, either pure or in the form of tinctures...'<sup>58</sup> The supply of opium was usually obtained from local government vendors or medical depot in the province while some of the speciality products such as 'powdered opium'. 'salts of morphia' and 'liquor *opii*' were imported from Europe. Official medical attitudes regarded native practitioners needs

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<sup>57</sup> Punjab Excise Department. *Punjab excise manual, Part II: opium. 1903. P.8*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* P.8

and production as operating within these limits stating, ‘In the case of Hakims and petty druggists, therefore, the minimum of stock mentioned in Rule 54 would probably not require to be exceeded.’<sup>59</sup> Enquires had been made to the larger European firms operating in India which informed policy and the schedule of drugs that were allowed under a medical license for opium. As such the attitudes of Ayurvedic and Unani pharmacists were not informing the policy of the Government of India in comparison to their European counterparts.

The Finance and Commerce Department of the Government of India distinguished clearly between, ‘Respectable firms of chemists’ and ‘Hakims and petty druggists.’<sup>60</sup> This was achieved through the creation of separate instructions for the enforcement of the Opium Rules in the Punjab aimed at traditional practitioners given that the, ‘majority’ had not applied for a license. These additional instructions were approved by the Punjab Financial Commissioner in 1889 on the basis that, ‘As very few Hakims and not all chemists have taken out licences in the past, some instructions for the enforcement of the rules are needed...’ this made the licence subject to an annual renewal for Hakims and less respectable pharmaceutical firms,

The following have been approved by the Financial Commissioner:- ... (iii).

As the rules do not fix a period of currency for licenses of this kind the Deputy Commissioner should use his discretion in different cases.

Respectable firms of chemists may be granted standing licenses, but the licenses granted to Hakims and petty druggists in no well establishing line of

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<sup>59</sup> Punjab Excise Department. *Punjab excise manual, Part II: opium. 1903* P.8

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* pp.8-9



practise of business, may be advantageously be made subject to annual renewal.<sup>61</sup>

The Financial Commissioner's final approval had been informed largely by the attitudes of the Excise Commissioner and the Inspector General for the Punjab. This regional policy discouraged standing licences for traditional Indian practitioners in comparison to the civil dispensaries and European chemists. The final report of the Royal Opium Commission published in 1895 mirrored these hostile attitudes toward traditional practitioners concluding there was a, 'Want of druggists.' arguing, 'it would be impossible, except in the large towns, to find persons to whom the sale for medicinal purpose could be entrusted.'<sup>62</sup> Outside of large towns Amar Farooqui argued the Commission believed opium was a household remedy where families prescribed the use of opium without the use of specialised doctors.<sup>63</sup> The report disparaged indigenous druggists who did not practise Western medicine noting that, 'the present regulations authorise the issue of druggist's and doctor's licenses, and these are granted to hakims and vaidu practising eastern systems of medicine.' bemoaning that in Bengal 'alone' 1,264 passes were granted in 1892-93.<sup>64</sup> The Royal Opium Commission reflected typical British medical attitudes that distrusted traditional practitioners and their remedies whilst simultaneously praising the benefits of opium. On the one hand, medical officials discouraged the granting of

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<sup>61</sup> Punjab Excise Department. *Punjab excise manual*, P.9

<sup>62</sup> *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Opium. Vol. VI. Part I. The Report. With Annexures* (London: Printed for her Majesty's Stationary Office By Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895) P.64

<sup>63</sup> A. Farooqui, 'Opium as a Household Remedy in Nineteenth-Century Western India?' in Biswamoy Pati and Mark Harrison (eds), *The Social History of Health and Medicine in Colonial India* (London: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>64</sup> *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Opium. Vol. VI. Part I. The Report. With Annexures* (London: Printed for her Majesty's Stationary Office By Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895) Ibid P.147

standing opium licenses to Hakims and petty druggists. On the other, revenue officials and commission still favoured the vend sale of drugs in the absence of a unified medical profession.

## **Institutions, hygiene and vice**

Similar scales of medicine existed within the British Indian Army used by surgeons. However, attitudes within the military also favoured continuing the use of opium as a ration. During the Duffla expedition in 1874 into the Naga Hills, soldiers were given a choice of extra rations. These ranged from rum, tea, and sugar but could also expect, 'One ounce of tobacco and one dram of opium was allowed daily to any man paying for the same.'<sup>65</sup> The reason military attitudes condoned opium use was to facilitate those men habituated to their use, 'As stimulants these were of great value; men accustomed to their use would have failed entirely without them during the exposure and hard work.'<sup>66</sup> The Bengal Army issued drugs to soldiers but officials appear to have clashed with Indian soldiers on what was considered a reasonable dram,

There was some confusion about the " dram" of opium. It was decided that it should mean three ruttees, the ordinary dose of an opium eater, one ruttee being four grains of hospital scale. The dose seemed large. The Civil Officer gave his opium out at one rupee's weight (1 tola or 180 grains) for six days' consumption.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Medical and Sanitary Report of the Native Army of Bengal. for the Year 1874. Indian Medical Service.* (Calcutta: Office of The Superintendent Of Government Printing. 1876.) India Papers Collection, IP/6/AF.3, NLS P.237

<sup>66</sup> *Medical and Sanitary Report of the Native Army of Bengal. for the Year 1874 P.237*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid P.237*

Rations were being issued in large doses in light of the opium eaters' higher demands but were not viewed as contributing to overdoses which were tolerated for their small numbers. Opium caused a small number of fatalities in the military on a year on year basis which did not alter medical attitudes or policy focused on treating epidemic disease. For example, in the Meerut Division in 1875 under causes of mortality a surgeon reported, '1 to opium poisoning...'<sup>68</sup> Other cases in the Punjab Frontier Force in 1877 and Northern Bengal Army in 1889 believed that suicide was the intent of the soldier to end their life noting, '1 from self-poisoning by opium.'<sup>69</sup> and, 'The only other death occurred from opium poisoning, believed to have been suicidal, or the result of an overdose taken by the man himself.'<sup>70</sup> However, the view that opium was a necessary ration rather than a poison informed policy in the military. Military attitudes valued opium as a ration and medicine rather than adjusting policy to address poisonings or suicide. The low numbers of opium poisonings forced no change in policy and were dwarfed in comparison to mortality from epidemic disease. Considering this the military cannot be blamed for providing opium which was already freely available during epidemics from dispensaries.

The health of soldiers was the primary concern of the IMS. As such, another area of concern was to control the use of prostitutes in and around cantonments. Surgeons from the Bareilly lock-hospital in 1877 believed unregistered prostitutes used by soldiers were the primary source of venereal disease stating, 'From all this it is seen

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<sup>68</sup> Medical and sanitary report of the native army of bengal for The Year 1875. (Calcutta: Office of the superintendent of government printing. 1877.) IP/6/AF.3, NLS P.109

<sup>69</sup> Medical and sanitary report on the native army of Bombay for The Year 1879. (Calcutta: Office of the superintendent of government printing. 1880) IP/13/AF3, NLS P.4

<sup>70</sup> Medical and sanitary report of the native army of Bengal for The Year 1877 (Calcutta: Office of the superintendent of government printing. 1878.) IP/6/AF.3, NLS P.142

that I attribute most of the disease contracted to unregistered women,...<sup>71</sup> The policy aimed at controlling brothels surrounding the cantonments and city but was theoretically to cover a five-mile radius around Bareilly.<sup>72</sup> These attitudes saw the Government of India attempt to control women found in urban spaces regularly occupied by soldiers. However, for those women who were registered by the Government, the use of opium and other drugs was viewed as a marker of their ill-health and low class,

6. *Registration.*—Registration is inefficient. The classes on the register are the lowest of the low, chiefly old, ugly, broken-down hags, deformed and seared by disease, and dragging on a miserable existence by the aid of opium, bhang, and liquor.<sup>73</sup>

Lock hospitals in India created institutions where women suspected of being prostitutes were forcibly imprisoned to check the spread of venereal disease. However, Erica Wald argued that the Contagious Disease Act of 1868 passed by the Government of India was based on, “European understandings of “prostitution”, observers, having nothing to compare their practises to, began to paint them as

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<sup>71</sup> Fifth annual report of the working of the lock-hospitals in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh for the year 1878. (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces and Oudh Government Press. 1879) IP/30/HG.4, NLS, P.18

<sup>72</sup> Ibid P.18

<sup>73</sup> *Fifth annual report of the working of the lock-hospitals in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh for the year 1878.* (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces and Oudh Government Press. 1879) IP/30/HG.4, NLS, P.18

‘immoral’ and “unchaste””<sup>74</sup> Because of the policy registered women became dehumanised in a similar fashion to their illicit counterparts. As the evidence shows their use of drugs like opium contributed to institutionalisation of attitudes that women who used opium recreationally were, ‘the lowest of the low’ and a hence a threat to soldiers’ health.

Attitudes of sanitary and military officials held that underlying health issues were symptomatic of the Indian environment and the habits of the indigenous peoples. *The Royal Commission on Sanitary State of the Army in India* (1863) displayed how attitudes of civil surgeons formed an enclave position that contrasted the civil consumption of drugs as part of this environment and diet as separate from the ‘cleanly’ behaviour of troops,

The troops are cleanly, but the dirty habits of the civil population, their addiction to spirits and fermented liquor, opium eating, and consumption of semi-putrid fish, only makes it wonderful that the mortality is not ten-fold what it is...As a general rule, the abuse of opium, which is too common, is a great predisposing cause, not only of premature decay of the vital powers, but of the development of disease among the natives.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> E. Wald, *Vice in the Barracks: Medicine, the Military and the Making of Colonial India, 1780-1868* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) P.45 and 46

<sup>75</sup> *Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army in India. Vol. II. Appendix. Reports From Stations in India and its dependencies occupied by British and By Native Troops. Reports of Inspectors-General of Hospitals. Reports on Stations in Ceylon.* (London: Printed by George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode Printers to the Queen most Excellent Majesty. For the Majesty’s Stationary Office. 1863.) P.515

Officials and sanitary reformers such as Florence Nightingale strove between 1864 and 1869 to improve the sanitary condition of the barracks in India. Jharna Gourlay argued that barracks banned contraband sale of alcohol and objectionable foods while reducing rations of liquor issued to troops.<sup>76</sup> Opium, spirit drinking and bhang use was regarded by sanitary officials' as part of an unhealthy indigenous diet which exacerbated mortality. Within this context medical attitudes provided a public health rationale for policies aimed at changing the indigenous diet and checking the spread of disease among colonial troops.

This enclave position viewed these habits as part of the in-sanitary environment. From 1870 to 1879, these responsibilities fell to newly formed Sanitary Departments created for each province, aimed at delivering the recommendation of the report.<sup>77</sup> Dwellings of the local population were viewed as overcrowded, poorly ventilated and opium eating became another situational factor listed which could be mitigated,

The native population is decidedly unhealthy, but chiefly from causes which can be mitigated or removed, such as jungle, marshy and swampy ground, small, cramped, damp, and unventilated dwellings, defective clothing, bad food and water, shelter-ing cattle, sheep, and goats under the same roofs as themselves, neglected cesspools, middens, exuviae of men and animals, absences of drainage, opium eating, spirit drinking, & c. <sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> J. Gourlay, *Florence Nightingale and the Health of the Raj* (Routledge: London, 2017) P. 257-259

<sup>77</sup> M. U. Mustaq, 'Public Health in British India: A Brief Account of the History of Medical Services and Disease Prevention in Colonial India', *Indian J Community Med.* 2009 Jan; 34(1): 6–14.

<sup>78</sup> *Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army in India. Vol. I*, (London: Printed by George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode Printers to the Queen most Excellent Majesty. For the Majesty's Stationary Office. 1863.) P.456

Municipal administration and councils had led these policy changes after 1863 attempting to move soldiers into 'protected havens' with superior drainage among other infrastructural changes.<sup>79</sup> Consequently in terms of military policy interventions opium eating but also spirit drinking of the population, while viewed as. 'decidedly unhealthy,' were not interfered with and soldiers still received rations alongside other drugs. Instead soldiers were moved and environments changed to combat ill health.

These policies were based on a combination of medical attitudes based on sanitary and entrenched miasma theories which placed increasing emphasis on cleaning the environment. The commission while believing sanitary police should focus on cleaning cantonments, also labelled opium under 'Causes' of epidemic disease in Nagpore. This framed intoxication as an issue of the wider environment that required cleansing,

Bazaars cleansed by sweepers. "A sanitary police to prevent nuisance would be of great use." Population at Nagpore unhealthy. Severe epidemics of cholera, biliary remittent fever, and small-pox often occur and prove fatal to large numbers of inhabitants. Intermittent fever and dysentery also common. Causes: defective ventilation, insufficient drainage, over-crowding, want of cleanliness, drunkenness, and the use of bhang and opium.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> N. Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India* (Cambridge: Cambridge studies in Indian history and society, 2001) P.71

<sup>80</sup> *Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army in India. Vol I. P.457*



The Military Cantonments Act of 1864, had allowed the creation of sanitary police and use of cantonment sweepers. Mark Harrison argued that the use of sweepers as a policy was based on miasma theory to justify the cleaning of jungle or forest debris to stop unhealthy vapours accumulating. However, ‘the use of bhang and opium’ while listed as a cause of disease was not targeted by military sanitary police or later civil equivalents. Overall, cleaning or removing waste was a policy easily achieved by sanitary police in comparison to changing the dietary habits and attitudes of neighbouring areas which was not pursued. As discussed earlier the opium acts and their policing fell under the jurisdiction of excise officials and civil police.

However, within criminal institutional contexts officials had attempted to change or restrict the Indian diet. Inspectors also viewed opium as a ‘vice’ with detrimental effects on diet and health. Clare Anderson argued that following the pacification of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 the Government of India underwent a penal crisis.<sup>81</sup> This was largely due to both the destruction of jails by rebels and remaining institutions being used as emergency military bases in the North-West Provinces. The Report on the Condition of Jails in Lower Provinces of Bengal published in 1858 unveiled not only the condition of available jails but also how opium consumption was viewed by penal and medical officials. There was an area of agreement on the use of intoxicants which viewed recreational opium use as a ‘vice’ comparable to alcohol consumption. For example, F.J. Mouat, Inspector of Jails,

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<sup>81</sup> C. Anderson, *The Indian Uprising of 1857-8: prisons, prisoners, and rebellion* (London: Anthem Press 2007)

L.P. commented on an experiment in Assam where opium eaters were placed in solitary confinement and deprived of the drug,

3. The result of the experiment was that the victims of the vice passed through a stage of great mental prostration and misery, without the development of any signs of nervous irritability, such as are exhibited in Delirium Tremens. They soon rallied from this state, their digestive powers increased, and they, in every case, ultimately and rapidly improved in health.<sup>82</sup>

These experiments led him to believe, ‘the continuance of opium as an indulgence, on the mere presumption of its necessity, should cease.’<sup>83</sup> However, he conceded that, ‘4. If any prisoner absolutely needs opium, he should become an inmate of the hospital, until he is cured...’<sup>84</sup> Mouat described how the cure for opium in prisons was, ‘to wean rapidly from the habit,’ using, ‘small and suitable doses, of the fetid Spirit of Ammonia.’ Anderson argued that, ‘Mouat’s simultaneous attempt to discontinue opium allowances for addicts was more successful.’<sup>85</sup> However, official policy was formed by a medical board which presided over the medical administration of prisons. The response of the Magistrate R.N. Shore was, ‘I am not

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<sup>82</sup> Appendix, Opium in Jails No. 2486, To The Magistrate of Cuttack. Dated Fort William, the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1857. From F.J. Mouat, Inspector of Jails, L.P. in *Report on the Jails of the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency, for 1857-58* (Calcutta: Printed at the Alipore Jail Press, 1858) P.lvx

<sup>83</sup> Ibid P.lvx

<sup>84</sup> To The Magistrate of Cuttack. Dated Fort William, the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1857. From F.J. Mouat, Inspector of Jails, L.P Ibid P.lvx

<sup>85</sup> C. Anderson, *The Indian Uprising of 1857-8: prisons, prisoners, and rebellion* (London: Anthem Press 2007) P.76

prepared to question the propriety of the order. It is a medical question on which I do not feel competent to offer an opinion...<sup>86</sup> However he did not agree with the, ‘comparison made by Dr. Cox of the case of the opium eater, with that of the drunkard.’<sup>87</sup> As a result, medical attitudes of civil surgeons could partly influence Government prisons’ policies being viewed as ‘competent’ by their official penal counterparts who were not convinced of dealing with opium on a similar basis to alcohol.

Medical attitudes had framed opium use not as a sickness but an indulgence following their experiments on prisoners. Dr. Cox wrote to the magistrate in Cuttack comparing the opium habit to the use of alcohol not requiring special medical attention. He favoured discontinuing the supply of opium to inmates not considering the individuals ‘*sick*’ or in need of medical attention,

3. On investigation the subject I find that it has been *merely a custom* with my predecessors to supply the drug in question, to those prisoners, who seemed to have been previously addicted to its use. In these cases the former Medical Officers were not acting under *authority*, nor did they receive any positive *order* regarding the administration of this drug. On these grounds, I

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<sup>86</sup> From the Magistrate of Cuttack, R.N. Shore, To the Inspector of Jails, L.P. Fort William, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1857, *Report on the Jails of the lower provinces of the Bengal Presidency, for 1857-58*, P.lxvi

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid* P.lxvi

thought it advisable to discontinue its use unless you authorise me to do otherwise, as those men do not come under the head of “*sick*.”<sup>88</sup>

When consulting the medical regulations of the Bengal Service, there was no official policy or allowance for the treatment of these individuals who had been dealt with *de facto* rather than through order or law. As such the change in policy was recommended based on medical attitudes categorising opium as a vice no different from alcohol. For example, Dr Cox argued, ‘It would in my opinion be tantamount to a man addicted to liquor demanding his dram daily on the same score...’<sup>89</sup> Overall medical attitudes could direct policy in practice, in some cases, within the Government of India’s prisons. In this instance the magistrate deferred to the medical expertise of Dr. Cox to offer ‘competent’ judgment on opium-eaters’ condition.<sup>90</sup>

Other prison officials, however, attempted to argue that opium was a food. This was framed as part of a healthy diet which staved off hunger among the poverty-stricken classes. For example, Surgeon-Major J. Anderson, M.B., Civil Surgeon of Bareilly and Superintendent of the District Jail and Asylum at Bareilly argued before the Royal Opium Commission that opium, ‘disorders the man’s stomach;..’ When asked to elaborate he explained, ‘14241. Do you mean gastric symptoms, vomiting, or

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<sup>88</sup> No.2, To the Magistrate of Cuttack from J.A. Cox M.D. Official Civil Surgeon, Cuttack, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1857 *Report on the Jails of the lower provinces of the Bengal Presidency, for 1857-58*, P.lxvi-lxvii

<sup>89</sup> Ibid P.lxvi

<sup>90</sup> From the Magistrate of Cuttack, R.N. Shore, To the Inspector of Jails, L.P. Fort William, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1857, *Report on the Jails of the lower provinces of the Bengal Presidency, for 1857-58*, P.lxvi

want of appetite? – Want of appetite and loss of digestive power.’<sup>91</sup> However rather than view opium as detrimental to the user’s diet the Surgeon Major argued those without food should make an ‘investment’ in opium to stave off their hunger,

14267. I am speaking of the case of a man who is regularly day by day and year by year miserably poor and ill-fed: would he do well to spend a portion of his scanty pittance on opium?- I think it would be about the best investment he could make, if he had not enough food to eat, to buy a pice worth of opium and eat it.<sup>92</sup>

The Final Report of the Commission when discussing the use of opium as a food concluded that, ‘opium ameliorated the lot of the underfed man, and enabled him to live longer and better with a scanty diet.’ Adding that, ‘This latter view seems to be largely held by medical men in India;...’<sup>93</sup> Within this context and the focus period of crown rule there were a total of seven famines between 1857 and 1906 on greater and lesser scales.<sup>94</sup> Liberal agitators of the anti-opium movement had also been investigating the causes and impact of opium on famine which became a centrepiece of discussion. The 1876-8 Madras famine alone, covering Bombay, Hyderabad and

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<sup>91</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Volume 3: Minutes of Evidence taken 3 to 27 January 1894* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.115

<sup>92</sup> Ibid P.115

<sup>93</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Volume 6: Part I The Report with annexures* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.105

<sup>94</sup> D. Arnold, ‘Famine Consciousness and Peasant Action: Madras 1876-8’ in R. Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies III: writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994). P.68-9

Mysore, was estimated by D. Arnold to have taken 5.25 million lives.<sup>95</sup> When inside the Jail officials had presumed prisoners received an adequate diet. However ascribing a nutritional value to opium for the ill-fed outside these institutions was duplicitous given Medical attitudes within penal institutions had also previously attempted to prohibit its use in jails. When asked to consider its wider prohibition across British India they praised its use as stifling hunger among those without food to eat. When the final report of the Royal Opium Commission was compiled it appears the attitudes of Jail superintendents were considered among the more informed medical accounts for their first-hand experience managing the Indian diet. In terms of policy this showed a willingness to attribute nutritional value to opium as part of a healthy diet despite discord with sanitary officials regarding it as a source of mortality.

Colonial attitudes towards opium were harsher within jails when classed as contraband items of inmates. This was partly because of policies aimed at curbing the corruption of guards who could easily procure these items. For example, a superintendent of the Silchar jail complained in 1840 of a growth in smuggling by prison guards stating his staff provided a range of substances from opium to tobacco.<sup>96</sup> During the proceedings of the Royal Opium Commission in Calcutta in 1893, rumours of mistreatment of prisoners for possessing contraband opium was given by witnesses such as Munshi Rahmat Ali a tea-planter from Nowgong Assam. He believed those who went without opium would die of withdrawal and prisoners had found ways around the restrictive policy,

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<sup>95</sup> D. Arnold, 'Famine Consciousness and Peasant Action' Ibid P.68- 69

<sup>96</sup> G. Cederlöf, *Founding an empire on India's north-eastern frontiers, 1790-1840 climate, commerce, polity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014)

10377. Are you aware that prisoners have to go without opium? I have heard of it, but I know of instances in which opium-eaters have taken opium illicitly in the jail and have now and then been flogged.

10378. They have taken it illegally? - Illegally or secretly.<sup>97</sup>

The prohibition of opium in prisons remained a difficult task. Inmates were taking the brunt of physical punishment despite the same guards also providing a source of illicit drugs. Other witnesses used the restrictive policies of prisons to promote the attitude that opium could be prohibited safely. For example, Mohunt Kesho Ram Roy, a religious teacher who had formerly been in government service, and member of the Benares Total Abstinence Society argued that following a riot in Benares in 1891, ‘hundreds of opium-eaters and the consumers of other drugs were caught by the police and sent to jail...’ Advocating prohibition of the drug, he argued they had safely withdrawn from opium when they, ‘remained there some of them for two or three months without any sort of intoxicants.’ The Society had obtained pledge cards from supposedly 50,000 abstainers and pointed towards the colonial prison experience as a rationale for extending opium prohibition.<sup>98</sup> Overall, institutional attitudes and policies within the Government of India’s prisons could be informed by viewing opium as a prohibited or contraband substance.

However, this was not a uniform policy with views of prison officials varying over different regions. For example, in a high-profile poisoning case of a Colonel in

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<sup>97</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Volume 2: Minutes of Evidence taken 18 November to 29 December 1893* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.302.

<sup>98</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Volume 2: Minutes of Evidence taken 18 November to 29 December 1893* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) Ibid P.85

Baroda, four suspects were confined in the compound of the Residency. Capt. J.H. Jackson Assistant Resident for Baroda, wrote to Col Sir Lewis Pelly in 1875 regarding the treatment of these prisoners which were recorded in minute detail. This included describing the room size and observation of inmates' food. One inmate, Salim, attracted more attention than the other three for complaining about both his tobacco and opium,

Salim once complained about his tobacco not being good and on several occasions about clean clothes not being supplied him. This was the fault of his relative who brought him his supplies...He never complained about his food or water. I once had to reprimand him for abusing the policeman on attendance about his opium supply.<sup>99</sup>

The prisoners' families were allowed to deliver food and tobacco via a policeman stationed at the gate of the residency with items also undergoing thorough inspection for notes. This included items like tobacco and opium which for Salim were obviously very important to his sense of well-being having pressed the policeman responsible for delivering these items. Cederlöf argued that more generally prisoners could also easily acquire drugs themselves as they could visit outside markets. Officials of larger prisons rather than supply these items allowed inmates this

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<sup>99</sup> From Capt. J.H. Jackson Assistant Rest. Baroda. To Col Sir Lewis Pelly, K.C.S.I Agent Gov General and Special Commisioner Baroda. March 7th 1875. Witnesses and list of persons in custody and police surveillance 1875 IOR: MSS EUR F 126/ 86 P.18



privilege to accommodate a range of communal dietary customs.<sup>100</sup> Breaking with these traditions or attempting consumptive restrictions could prove dangerous to maintenance of law and order. David Arnold argued that prisoners maintained the sympathies of surrounding villages. Rather than view inmates as deviants or outcasts the surrounding communities would rally behind their grievances.<sup>101</sup> In this case given the serious nature of the charges, Salim and the others were restricted to the compound. However, Residency. Capt. J.H. Jackson continued to supply these drugs via other means to meet these complaints despite them being a cause of reprimand for one of the prisoners.

The Medical opinion of Salim's condition was that he was mentally suffering from his confinement. Dr Leward, Suregon Major and the Residency Surgeon gave an account of how Yeshivuntao and, 'Salim both complained of ague, the one had for some time shown symptoms of failing health, but the attacks were of the mildest nature...'<sup>102</sup> In addition to supplies brought from families he described how, 'Opium and tobacco have been furnished to those habituated to the use of these drugs.'<sup>103</sup> This understood opium as a drug of habit rather than an item of food or luxury. He believed the root of their symptoms were psychological arguing,

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<sup>100</sup>G. Cederlöf, *Founding an empire on India's north-eastern frontiers, 1790-1840 climate, commerce, polity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014) Ibid P.189

<sup>101</sup> D. Arnold, 'The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology in Nineteenth-Century India' in D. Arnold and D. Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>102</sup> From Dr Leward The Residency Surgeon, To the Private Secretary The Governor General Agent and Special Commissioner Baroda March 6th 1875, MSS EUR F 126/ 86 P.22

<sup>103</sup> Ibid pp.22-23

I have no doubt but that in both cases mental disquiet is at the root of this ailing. Yeshivuntao has shown unmistakably signs of anxiety and apprehension. Salim sustains himself with opium and is a free smoker, but when not under the full influence of the first named drug he is morose and cheerless.<sup>104</sup>

Opium was viewed by the surgeon as sustaining the mood of Salim and he also began to observe the negative effects of withdrawal. By comparison, in a review of Indian prisons published in 1872 narcotics were still strictly prohibited and treatment of addicts would be placed at the discretion of the serving medical officer.<sup>105</sup> These officers could alter not only opium consumption to a staggered withdrawal but would attempt to restrict accompanying food choices.<sup>106</sup> Overall the policy of the Government of India varied according to the medical attitudes of the surgeon responsible for the prison. In this case three years after the review of prisons favouring prohibition Dr Leward by comparison to Dr Cox favoured continuing the provision of opium to the inmates of the Baroda Residency.

In other institutional contexts opium was still regarded as a valuable medicine and used as a sedative which appeared to have more beneficial psychological effects. The use of different opiate preparations and patent remedies were used within Asylums when they wanted to induce sleep or calm an excitable patient. For example at the

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<sup>104</sup> From Dr Leward The Residency Surgeon, To the Private Secretary, P.24

<sup>105</sup> H.K. Kaul, (Ed.) *Traveller's India an Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*

Rangoon Lunatic Asylum during the year 1883 it was reported that, 'In cases of mania attended by much excitement,...' medicines used included, 'The bromide of potassium in combination with chloral, preparations of opium, and particularly morphia and Dover's powders, hyoscyannes and other sedatives,' These items were,

likewise frequently and successfully resorted to, in some cases of excitement, with the view of tranquillising the patient and producing sleep without being followed by those unpleasant symptoms which were formerly thought to arise from their employment.<sup>107</sup>

This policy was widespread among asylums in British India and typical of medical attitudes that valued opium as a sedative. For example, within the historiography, Jim Mills has shown that medical officers at the Moorshedabad asylum and the Superintendent at Madras both made use of opiates. They were used to deliberately rest the body which included the administration of morphia to, 'allay undue excitement and procure sleep'<sup>108</sup> Overall opium and its alkaloids were medically viewed as tranquilisers and used to induce sleep. This informed policy and their medical use in the same institutions where excessive use opium was classed as a cause of insanity.

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<sup>107</sup> *Report on the Rangoon Lunatic Asylum for the year 1892.* (Rangoon: Printed by The Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1893.) Ibid P.7

<sup>108</sup>J. Mills, 'Re-forming the Indian: Treatment regimes in the lunatic asylums of British India, 1857-1880' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Volume: 36/4, page (1999) pp. 416

This revelation was comparatively later in the nineteenth century as addiction became a specialism among psychiatrists and doctors in Britain.<sup>109</sup> At the Rangoon Asylum in 1892 there was a total of five patients admitted for opium eating and smoking. Of whom, only one was labelled as, ‘improved.’ As seen in the table below they were placed alongside other forms of drug habits including Ganja and liquor,

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<sup>109</sup> Harding, G., *Opiate Addiction, Morality and Medicine From Moral Illness to Pathological Disease* (London: Macmillian Press, 1988).

*Statement VI*—Exhibits the various types of insanity. The following table transposes the figures of the statement and shows in a more convenient form the result of the treatment:—

	Remained.	Admitted.	Total.	Recovered.	Improved.	Died.
Ganja-smoking	9	2	11	3	2	2
Opium-smoking	4	...	4	...	1	...
Opium-eating	1	...	1	...	...	...
Spirit-drinking	5	10	15	3	4	1
Other intoxicants	...	1	1	1	...	...

*Table 3. Various types of insanity and causes.* <sup>110</sup>

Laxman Satya argued that the Amraoti Lunatic Asylum report of 1888 documented how, ‘unsound minds’ were, ‘often traceable to the excessive use of intoxicating drugs,... Some cases are attributed to the chewing of opium or the smoking of madak.’<sup>111</sup> The ‘medicinal’ treatment of these patients at Rangoon still utilised

<sup>110</sup> *Report on the Rangoon Lunatic Asylum for the year 1892.* (Rangoon: Printed by The Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1893.) p.3

<sup>111</sup>D. S. Laxman, *Medicine, Disease and Ecology in Colonial India The Deccan Plateau in the 19th Century* (Manohar, 2009) P.152

sedatives that excluded the use of opium instead resorting to use of bromides, chloral, sulphonal, chloralamide.<sup>112</sup> However, while this formed the medicinal half of the treatment asylums also used a 'hygienic' treatment plan. The Superintendent of the Asylum described the therapy which, 'consisted of proper attention to diet, regular weighments of the patients every week,..' which was also accompanied by, 'regular exercise and some amount of manual physical work every day, cleanliness of body by regular baths, &c.'<sup>113</sup> Overall both in jails and asylums surgeons believed the use of the drug could be treated with use of alternative medicinal sedatives, combined with diet and exercise. This omitted the use of opiates from their medicinal treatment plan in a similar fashion to prisons which attempted to stop use of drugs entirely.

Attitudes towards opium addiction as a *disease* had not fully formed in this period. As a result, conflicting concerns explored above developed within the GOI. Many doctors both in Britain and India still preferred to view use of the drug as a habit or legal intoxicant. The Royal Opium Commission also reflected the general unwillingness of colonial institutions to address the issue of addiction instead framing their understanding of the drug as falling into multiple categories from, food, ration, medicine and vice making the act appear ordinary. For example, the Royal Opium Commission when discussing opium use as a food argued,

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<sup>112</sup> *Report on the Rangoon Lunatic Asylum for the year 1892.* (Rangoon: Printed by The Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1893.) P.3-7

<sup>113</sup> *Report on the Rangoon Lunatic Asylum for the year 1892* Ibid P.4

similar opinion with regard to alcoholic beverages and tea and coffee—namely, that one of their purposes to the poor consumer was to serve as economisers of food.<sup>114</sup>

In this context the drug was presented as analogous to everyday vices and attempted to provide a rationale for their use beyond intoxication or stimulation. Again, for other institutions such as asylums it was viewed as a miniscule cause of insanity. Dr Boyd, superintendent of the Colaba Lunatic Asylum, Bombay submitted that there had only been in three cases of the opium habit in three years which were, ‘put down as the probably cause of insanity.’<sup>115</sup> In this sense the Royal Opium Commission was the sum of its parts. It relied on the testimony of Government officials who viewed the opium habit as a minor nuisance. Prison officials and civil surgeons distinguished between the drug and everyday vices citing withdrawal upon entering colonial institutions. The Final report conceded this aspect and the ill-health of prisoners stating if, ‘opium is suddenly and entirely cut off the reaction is much more pronounced than in the case of alcohol and tobacco.’<sup>116</sup> This differentiated it from the category of food or stimulant among penal and medical officials. However, multiple institutions without medical expertise helped formed health attitudes and drive policy. For instance, financial experts such as the Excise Department and private firms were submitted into evidence. This was because they were viewed as experts on opium shops and hence the opium habit. For instance, Mr Mclauchlan, a

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<sup>114</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Volume 6: Part I The Report with annexures* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.104

<sup>115</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Volume 6: Part I The Report with annexures* (Eyre & Spottiswoode for HM Stationery Office, 1895) P.104

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid* P.104

professional actuary of a large insurance company over a twenty-year period, argued there was no impact on longevity from the habit and had decided, ‘It was not necessary to put an extra premium on the lives of moderate opium-eaters.’<sup>117</sup> While a legitimate question for the commission to consider this simplified a prolonged and complex debate that started with the Earl of Mar case in 1826 and would last for the rest of the century. In Britain disclosing the use of opium could be considered a *prudential* responsibility of the individual and policy holder. Those who engaged in excessive opium and laudanum consumption could see their insurers attempting to avoid paying out on their life insurance policy.<sup>118</sup> Collectively institutions and medical attitudes of the Government of India were not informed by civil surgeons obsessed with addiction. It appears medical attitudes were predominately formed by institutional understandings of the GOI which remained focused on moderate and medical consumption of opium. This framed its use as an acceptable stimulant, tonic, food, and medicine displaying minimal interest in addiction.

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<sup>117</sup> Royal Opium Commission, *Volume 6: Part I* P.106

<sup>118</sup> T. Seddon, *A History of Drugs: Drugs and Freedom in the Liberal Age* (Routledge, 2010) P.38-49



## Conclusion

To conclude there was not one voice or understanding of the drug driving a uniform policy. Policy was informed by these collective institutional voices who framed its use as a ration, a medicine, a food, a contraband item, a medical mixture, an Ayurveda recipe and an item of regulation for excise purposes. This list was a sum of the departments of the GOI and their subjects who rarely converged as their religious counterparts did in society meetings to agree opium use was a habit or addiction. To complicate the picture further medical attitudes were not the sole property of government. Missionaries that were trained in Britain to the same standards as their GOI counterparts also used the drug as medicinal. On the other side of the coin, temperance ideas and leaders could also be government officials. The current historiography has sharpened the edges and differences between the two anti-opium and pro-opium camps to provide a coherent and familiar narrative of moral crusader versus corrupt government. What this thesis contributes to the literature is the view that difference and divergence of opinion varied by region and the topic of interest. Temperance ideas especially merged within government policy which had viewed the drug as similar to alcohol and tonic use in Britain. Addiction as a theory, and viewing opium use as a disease was still in its infancy. This allowed a space for divergence, debate and multiple policies based on competing visions of how to manage the drug. For instance, Excise officials also placed trust in doctors to discreetly use the drug for medicinal purposes but demanded a licence structure. Both doctors and traditional practitioners ignored these rules often considering the wider mission of attempting to curb epidemic disease. By comparison sanitary

officials believed the recreational use of the drug could increase mortality and unlike their excise equivalents lacked the authority to impose the opium laws. The tangled web of authority saw many parties agree the distinction between the medicinal and recreational market but saw little movement in terms of a concerted policy. Within Indian Jails, Plague camps, military hospitals and emigrant ships they all possessed increased authority and an ability to restrict opium use. All of them at some stage saw fit to ration the drug and only the former penal officials argued it both to be contraband and a viable alternative to food for the poor. In short, all these nuances and distinctions as to what the Government of India's position was has been lost behind the monolithic view the Board of Revenue was pro-opium and hence delivered policies to this effect. The opium trade to China and the concern for the drug's use in India were two separate issues much like the conflation of separate issues by religious commentators. Similarly, the focus of the Royal opium commission which focused largely on Indian use also saw no issue on passing judgment on the trade to China. This chapter has attempted to unpick the logic of the two sides of this controversial debate to view the evidence and stories on their own merit, rather than through the dichotomy of the period. This approach has uncovered examples of how the drug was used day to day in India rather than the larger moral debate being led in Britain. Whether viewed as a necessity for a soldier's hard days march, a prisoner's personal supply or by a prostitute using the drug recreationally. All these events contributed to official's concerns and attitudes who reacted to opium use in different ways. This produced policy decisions often distinct from other departments and the wider pro-opium and anti-opium concerns.



## Epilogue

Hopefully the thesis has demonstrated the multitude of attitudes towards opium and debunked the founding myth of the Trocki thesis that there was a uniform policy approach to opium driven by revenue.<sup>1</sup> While the latter was a powerful consideration it was one of many drivers of policy which related to competing objectives of different departments and officials. The Trocki thesis remains true for the revenue department, but the Government of India was never a reflection of just one voice or departmental policy. Overall there was no concerted effort across all departments to achieve or maintain the monopoly. Senior positions and the opium department itself sought this goal but others had agendas related to political and health policies. Regulation of opium under the monopoly model in these contexts were either not relevant or relaxed to accommodate different groups. In conclusion there was no single objective or agenda that was driving British opium policy or ideas about the drug. Policies on opium operated at different levels. The issues were not always related to one another and they were affected by multiple ideas, local politics and subject to shifts and contradictions.

Diplomatic attitudes following the 1857 produced a flexible policy of enforcing the opium monopoly when dealing with the Princely States. The protection of the monopoly status came second which laid revenue considerations as subservient to political agents' attitudes. In different areas the recognition that princes and Maharajas were behind smuggling operations called for more tact than strict

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<sup>1</sup> C. A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy*

enforcement of the opium laws. This was because in certain spaces the question of jurisdiction fell to the opinions and attitudes of the police who caught smugglers. If a smuggler was caught on a railway traveling between British and foreign territory the opium laws may be curbed by political agents. Similarly, packages intercepted in the post left an administrative trail that often led into areas out with political agents' influence.

The question of where and when jurisdiction finished sometimes led Residents overstepping these boundaries prosecuting in spaces they had no legal authority over on their own terms. As such this attitude that smuggling was to be stamped out when discovered can also be understood as a form of imperialism which extended colonial influence into new areas. These were not driven top-down as the attitudes of excise and legal officials remarked the practise as irregular rather than illegal per se. They nevertheless defended the actions of residents allowing the prosecutions to stand rather than re-opening the cases. Nevertheless, these actions did not drive any major change in policy as the frontier lines between British territory and Native states were still respected at least in name. Internal affairs of the Princes however were subject to outside influence especially in areas where competition existed.

Missionary attitudes regarded opium as a poison following the 1868 Pharmacy act in Britain. The lack of an equivalent drove missionaries and reformers to push for the same type of regulation in India. The attitudes of missionaries that drove policy were not always religiously or morally inspired as previously advocated by Kathleen

Lodwick.<sup>2</sup> The anti-opium campaign was informed by missionary conceptions that viewed their role in Indian society as protecting children and women or the Christian family. This perceived role was played out within medical and social contexts such as attempting to revivify the British doping scandal in India, and the campaign against female infanticide. It was also these conceptions of protecting children and women that formed the organisational bridge with reformers in parliament who believed in these civilising missions for their own sake. This was in the case of liberal supporters a question of reforming government rather than conversion to Christianity per se. Similarly, as Spivak argued when it came to the protection of women in Colonial India the civilising voice of the British remained the loudest rather than a feminist subaltern perspective.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Powar Soonderbai despite being an energetic campaigner and vocal critique of the Government of India in the late nineteenth century still held the attitude that opium was destroying the domestic role of the mother and family. Whether these were truly her views or the result of editing and publishing in missionary literature, the protection of women remained an important cornerstone of British anti-opium views.

This process was in part a result of how missionaries organised themselves in opposition to the Government of India's policies. Female missionary societies attempted to envelope Indian women's and nationalist voices while maintaining control of the narrative. This is most evident in the restrictions placed on the funding and distribution of nationalist literature that opposed the opium trade. While this literature was used to further conversion efforts to Christianity organisers on the board of anti-opium societies stressed how their activities were separate from the

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<sup>2</sup> K. Lodwick, *Crusaders against opium*

<sup>3</sup> G. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'

views of the Indian National Congress and attitudes that critiqued the Government of India's policies. This is supported by the literature as early nationalist leaders remained contained and frustrated by their missionary allies who refused to see them as equals. British and international temperance organisations crucially kept the opium question alive as most of its critics moved on following the Royal Opium Commission. Crucially when the anti-opium motion was re-introduced in 1906 to the British House of Commons and was successful it was done so by a private members ballot of a temperance leader and organiser. Whether religion or temperance attitudes were the more important of the two factors it was clear the existence of related societies that practised sobriety was crucial to their longevity.

The most significant legacy of missionary attitudes in India was the campaign to re-categorise opium as a poison. This demonstrates the delay in policy by the Government of India in comparison to efforts in Britain. When the 1904 poisons act did emerge, it was conspicuously silent on the opium question. David Arnold believed this to be a product of revenue considerations and a delay produced by the Royal Opium commission which had declared the drug safe just nine years earlier.<sup>4</sup> The religious campaign which sought to revitalise the baby doping scandal that began in Britain had failed in India. However, in terms of dialogue they were one of the few groups in colonial India that regarded opium as a poison first, and a medicine second. This attitude was successful at influencing colonial institutions such as the chemical examiners categorisation and explanation of infant poisonings but had not prompted a response to reduce the phenomenon with any concerted policy

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<sup>4</sup> D. Arnold, *Toxic Histories*

objectives. This was because they answered their claims with figures of minimal poisonings and infanticide rates.

Medical attitudes are an area that should receive future research and attention. As the thesis has attempted to show the diversity of opinion and attitudes between departments it has not focused explicitly on any one location or institution of the British Raj. However, what was clear across multiple institutions was that opium was regarded a medicine first and a poison second. This is because the apparatus of government was geared towards responding to outbreaks of epidemic disease which sought out pharmaceutical solutions. This led to in numerous cases as Singh argued, over-drugging and overtreatment rather than questioning the finer points of opium's relationship to overdose and mortality.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly civil surgeons could not adopt one voice or understanding of the drug which stopped them driving a uniform policy for all institutions.

This policy was also driven by the popularity and availability of traditional Indian medicines which used opium. As this thesis has shown the Government of India also attempted to extend distribution of these medicines during outbreaks which included opium or cholera pills. However colonial attitudes maintained a superior position both in the British pharmacopeia and official surveys of medicines. As part of this process while they sought to exclude 'folk medicines' Ayurveda and Unani preparations were still utilised both by colonial institutions and unlicensed practitioners. Amendments to the opium rules for the Punjab also show that these practitioners were given further scrutiny under the opium laws and were not regarded

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<sup>5</sup> D. K. Singh Cholera, Heroic Therapies, and Rise of Homoeopathy in Nineteenth-century India (Dhrub Kumar Singh) in D. Kumar and R. S. Basu (Eds.) *Medical Encounters in British India* (Oxford, 2013)



in the same esteem by the Government of India as respectable European firms. As Mark Harrison and others have argued this no doubt stemmed from the racial divide within the Indian Medical Service which failed to promote Indian surgeons into senior positions.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, development of independent pharmaceutical bodies and manufacturers was also stifled by the fact opium remained a government run enterprise which allowed legal rules to squeeze out Indian medical attitudes and competitors.<sup>7</sup> Overall, while professional bodies of doctors and pharmacists were responsible for overseeing the regulation of opium in Britain under the 1868 Pharmacy Act, no equivalent act emerged in India due to the Royal Opium Commission concluding there was a lack of legitimate pharmacists and experts in India to do so. As such the Government of India policies had a stifling effect on medical attitudes dismissing Indian attitudes and concerns as quackery.

Civil surgeons acting as the medical experts in light of these superior attitudes were placed in different spaces with authority which called for different actions. In criminal contexts opium was withheld from prisoners in 1857 in Assam as they believed users not to be sick but rather being granted the privilege of a contraband item. On the other hand, by 1875 at the Baroda Residency a political resident and overseeing doctor saw the opium rules relaxed to accommodate prisoners. As chapter three has shown this was common in the princely states for political reasons. The regional impact as such produced a diversity of attitudes and policies which dealt with opium on a case by case basis often by administrators deferring to expert

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<sup>6</sup> Harrison M in 'Networks of Knowledge Science and Medicine in Early Colonial India, c.1750–1820' in Peers D.M., & Gooptu, N., (Eds.) *India and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012)

<sup>7</sup> B. Madhulika, 'Ayurvedic Pharmaceuticals, Contesting Economic Hegemony' in Bala, Poonam. (Ed.) *Contesting Colonial Authority, Medicine and Indigenous responses in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century India* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012).

medical judgements. As outlined in the introduction the case of addiction has been omitted in the interest of avoiding replication of the ever-expanding literature. However, attitudes within colonial asylums regarded opium eating and smoking as forms of insanity by the 1890s. Within the same walls opium was used to induce sleep in patients. What this shows is how categorisation and medicalisation of opium could both permit and prohibit its use for certain patients. This was a double-edged policy which placed a large amount of importance on the opinion or attitude of the doctor and reduced the autonomy of the patient or prisoner. In a similar fashion to pharmaceutical concerns and treatment of epidemic disease the patient was beholden to the attitudes and policies of civil surgeons which varied considerably.

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The temple of Bahuchar Mata'

<http://www.gujarattourism.com/destination/details/10/57>, date accessed 5/6/2018

## Appendix

Locality at which the opium is produced	Percentage of adulteration.	Per Liang (=3 1/8 Tola). In native currency.	Per Liang (=3 1/8 Tola). In Indian Currency.
China Proper	20 per cent	Tengas 3	Rs. S. P. 0 6 10
Ili	Ditto	Ditto	0 6 10
Karakul (Russian)	30 per cent	Tengas 2	0 4 6
Ushturfan	Ditto	Ditto	0 4 6
Badakhshan	20 per cent	Tengas 3	0 6 10
Kishtwar (Kashmir)	30 percent	Tengas 2	0 4 6

*Table 1 Opium location and adulteration.*

From the Resident in Kashmir, No. 5472, dated the 20th (received 26th) August Pro. No. 24 1901. Forwards reports on the trade between India and Russian and Chinese Turkestan and Tibet for the year 1900-1901 Subject: Reports on the trade of India with Russian and Chinese Turkistan and Tibet for 1900-1901. Proposal to produce brick tea in India, which might compete in Tibet and Chinese Turkistan with the Chinese tea. *GOI. Foreign Department, Frontier-A. Proceedings, January 1902, Nos. 24-30. NAI. P. 16*

THE MEDICINES.				
Proportion of Medicines necessary for a Ship carrying Emigrants to Mauritius or Réunion.				
<i>(50 per cent. to be added for ships proceeding to Natal or Queensland.)</i>				
Names of Medicines.	For 100 Men.	For 200 Men.	For 300 Men.	For 400 Men.
Opium	One ounce	Two ounces	Three ounces	Four ounces.
Dover's Powder	One ounce	One ounce and half	Two ounces	Three ounces.
Jeremie's Opiate	One small oz. phial	Two ounces phial	Two ounces phial	Two oz. phial.
Tincture of Opium	Four ounces	Six ounces	Eight ounces	Twelve ounces.

*Table 2 Scale of Medicine from Ship carrying emigrants.*

*W. R. Cornish (ed) A Code of Medical and Sanitary Regulations for the Guidance of Medical Officers serving in the Madras Presidency. Indian Medical Department. Vol. II. (Madras: Printed By H. Morgan, At The Government Press. 1870.) IP/25/MB.4 P.172*

*Statement VI*—Exhibits the various types of insanity. The following table transposes the figures of the statement and shows in a more convenient form the result of the treatment:—

	Remained.	Admitted.	Total.	Recovered.	Improved.	Died.
Ganja-smoking	9	2	11	3	2	2
Opium-smoking	4	...	4	...	1	...
Opium-eating	1	...	1	...	...	...
Spirit-drinking	5	10	15	3	4	1
Other intoxicants	...	1	1	1	...	...

*Table 3. Various types of insanity and causes.*

*Report on the Rangoon Lunatic Asylum for the year 1892. (Rangoon: Printed by The Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1893.) p.3*