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# *The Social Life of Opium in China, 1483–1999*

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The history of opium is a major theme in modern Chinese history. Books and academic careers have been devoted to its study.<sup>1</sup> Yet the question that scholars of the opium wars and of modern China have failed to ask is how the demand for opium was generated. My puzzle, during the initial stage of research, was who smoked opium and why. Neither Chinese nor non-Chinese scholars have written much about this, with the exception of Jonathan Spence.<sup>2</sup> Although opium consumption is a well-acknowledged fact, the reasons for its prevalence have never been fully factored into the historiography of the opium wars and of modern China. Michael Greenberg has dwelt on the opium trade, Chang Hsin-pao and Peter Fay on the people and events that made armed conflicts between China and the West

<sup>1</sup> Teng Ssu-yu, *Chang Hsi and the Treaty of Nanking 1842* (Chicago, 1944); Maurice Collis, *Foreign Mud: being an account of the opium imbroglio at Canton in the 1830s and the Anglo-Chinese war that followed* (London, 1946); Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800–42* (Cambridge, 1951); Arthur Waley, *The opium war through Chinese eyes* (London, 1958); Edgar Holt, *The opium wars in China* (London, 1964); Chang Hsin-pao, *Commissioner Lin and the opium war* (Cambridge [MA], 1964); Douglas Hurd, *The arrow war* (London, 1967); Kuo Pin-chia, *A critical study of the first Anglo-Chinese war* (Westport [Connecticut], 1973); Jack Beeching, *The Chinese opium wars* (London, 1975); Peter W. Fay, *The opium war 1840–1842* (Chapel Hill [North Carolina], 1975); Brian Inglis, *The opium war* (London, 1976); Tan Chung, *China and the brave new world* (Durham [North Carolina], 1978); James M. Polachek, *The inner opium war* (Cambridge [MA], 1992); John Y. Wong, *Yeh Ming-ch'en: viceroy of liang kuang, 1852–1858* (Cambridge, 1976) & *Deadly dreams: opium, imperialism and the arrow war (1856–1860)* (Cambridge, 1998) & Timothy Brook & Bob Tadashi Wakabayash (eds.), *Opium regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839–1952* (Berkeley, 2000). See also Dr Joseph Edkins, *Royal Commission on Opium 1: Appendix II*. (Referred here after as RoyCom) & Martin Booth, *Opium: a History* (London, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, 'Opium smoking in Ch'ing China', in Frederic Wakeman Jr & Carolyn Grant, eds., *Conflict and control in late imperial China* (Berkeley, 1975), pp. 143–173. Alexander Des Forges has brilliantly examined what he called 'representations of the consumption of opium.' See Alexander Des Forges, 'Opium/leisure/Shanghai: urban economies of consumption', in Timothy Brook & Bob Tadashi Wakabayash (eds.), *Opium regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839–1952*, pp. 167–85.

unavoidable. John Wong has continued to focus on imperialism, James Polachek on Chinese internal politics while *Opium regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839–1952*, the latest work, has studied the political systems that controlled opium.<sup>3</sup> But the political history of opium, like the opium trade and the theatre of war, is only part of the story. We need to distinguish them from the wider social and cultural life of opium in China. The vital questions are first, the point at which opium was transformed from a medicine to a luxury item and, secondly, why it became so popular and widespread after people discovered its recreational value. It is these questions that I address. We cannot fully understand the root problem of the opium wars and their role in the emergence of modern China until we can explain who was smoking opium and why they smoked it.

Previous generations of historians have failed to set opium in its social and cultural context.<sup>4</sup> This article, a synopsis of one theme of my Ph.D. thesis and upcoming book, takes a biographical look at opium because, as Igor Kopytoff and Arjun Appadurai have argued, ‘commodities, like persons, have social lives.’<sup>5</sup> It also examines opium from a cultural perspective because, as F. Dagognet and Daniel Roche have emphasized, ‘any object, even the most ordinary, embodies ingenuity, choices, a culture.’<sup>6</sup> Roche argues that ‘the history of consumption must include analysis of demand, and therefore of the structuring of needs, the classification of consumers, the circuits of distribution and the spatial organisation of supply.’<sup>7</sup> To understand needs, we must understand ‘the texture of our ordinary life,’ that is

<sup>3</sup> Michael Greenberg, *British trade and the opening of China 1800–42* (Cambridge, 1951); Chang Hsin-pao, *Commissioner Lin and the opium war* (Cambridge [MA], 1964); Peter W. Fay, *The opium war 1840–1842* (Chapel Hill [North Carolina], 1975); John Y. Wong, *Yeh Ming-ch'en: viceroy of liang kuang, 1852–1858* (Cambridge, 1976) & *Deadly dreams: opium, imperialism and the arrow war (1856–1860)* (Cambridge, 1998); James M. Polachek, *The inner opium war* (Cambridge [MA], 1992) & Timothy Brook & Bob Tadashi Wakabayash (eds.), *Opium regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839–1952* (Berkeley, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Chang Hsin-pao stressed in the beginning of his book: ‘the opium question itself is not a simple one, it had intricate legal, moral, political, economic, and administrative aspects.’ See *Commissioner Lin and the opium war* (Cambridge [MA], 1964), preface.

<sup>5</sup> Arjun Appadurai, ‘Introduction: commodities and the politics of value’ & Igor Kopytoff, ‘The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process’, in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 3 & 66.

<sup>6</sup> F. Dagognet, ‘Eloge de l’objet’, in Daniel Roche, *A history of everyday things* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 7. It was translated by Brian Pearce.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Roche, *A history of everyday things* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 14.

'the real weight of everyday life,' or 'history of what seems to have no history: material life and biological behaviour, history of food, history of the consumption of food.'<sup>8</sup> Opium smoking was a 'texture' of Chinese life; a culture history of opium consumption will help us see this 'texture'. It will also reinforce Thorstein Veblen's 'conspicuous consumption.'<sup>9</sup> 'Social histories of commodities go back to the 1940s if not earlier.'<sup>10</sup> Redcliffe Salaman's work on potato and Sidney Mintz's work on sugar are the most impressive.<sup>11</sup> Dwight Heath pointed out that 'even practitioners of the so-called "hard sciences" acknowledge that social and cultural factors must be taken into account, together with physiological and psychological factors, when one attempts to understand the interaction of alcohol and human behaviour.'<sup>12</sup> Anthropologists have brought 'their own professional point of view to bear interestingly upon the same materials studied by specialists on alcohol abuse.'<sup>13</sup> This distinctive anthropological perspective can certainly be applied to opium smoking since 'drinking and smoking are the obvious analogies.'<sup>14</sup>

But smoking as recreation was foreign to China, as was opium itself. How and when then did it come to lodge itself within the sophisticated Chinese material culture? Not only did it thrive but it also spread like wild fire over a few hundred years. This was the time when western Europeans, the British in particular, naturalized tea and sugar as Sidney Mintz has illustrated. 'Drinking is essentially a social act, performed in a recognized social context.'<sup>15</sup> The same is

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The theory of the leisure class* (New York, 1899).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Burke, private note to the author.

<sup>11</sup> Redcliffe N. Salaman, *The history and social influence of the potato* (Cambridge, 1949); Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history* (New York, 1985). See also Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban counterpoint: tobacco and sugar* (New York, 1947); Betty Fussell, *The story of corn* (New York, 1992) & Andrew F. Smith, *The tomato in America: early history, culture, and cookery* (Columbia [South Carolina], 1994). Ortiz's book concerns production rather than consumption while Fussell and Smith focused on mythology, cultivation and preparation of corn and tomato.

<sup>12</sup> Dwight Heath, 'A decade of development in the anthropological study of alcohol use: 1970-1980', in Mary Douglas (ed.), *Constructive drinking: perspectives on drink from anthropology* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 16-69. See also Richard Rudgley, *Essential substances: a cultural history of intoxicants in society* (London, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Mary Douglas (ed.), *Constructive drinking: perspectives on drink from anthropology* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Burke, private note to the author.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Douglas (ed.), *Constructive drinking: perspectives on drink from anthropology* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 4. Some have already begun to study this 'context.' See Thomas Brennan, *Public drinking and popular culture in eighteenth-century Paris* (Princeton, 1988); David Christian, *Living water: vodka and Russian society on the even*

true for smoking. ‘The social life of things’ and ‘a history of everyday things’ help me make preliminary conjectures as to why the Chinese embraced opium and how they redefined it. To fully understand the easy-entry and quick-spread of opium smoking, I will analyse the social and cultural background at the time of its entry; I will also follow opium’s journey from its birth as a recreational item to its maturity as a social icon. To illustrate how the demand for opium was generated, I will examine each stratum of people, their lives with opium, and their particular historical space and time, that is the circumstances under which they succumbed to it. From luxury to necessity, opium went through different phases; different symbols and values were invented and attributed to it. It served many in different capacities. Due to limited space, I can only focus on one aspect of Mr Opium’s social life from the late fifteenth to the late twentieth centuries. I divide his life into the five phases: his birth, that is his transformation from the late fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries; his youth, that is his initial popularization in the eighteenth century; his coming-of-age, that is his urbanization from 1800 to 1861; his middle age, that is his complete socialization from 1861 to 1911; and his old age, that is his decline in the twentieth century. From aphrodisiac to popular culture, from social identity to political economy, Mr Opium lived a colourful social life and played a role larger than himself in the theatre of modern China.

### ‘The Art of Alchemists, Sex and Court Ladies’

This section traces opium’s medicine-to-aphrodisiac transformation to the late fifteenth century when opium lived with emperors and their favourite consorts. Xu Boling wrote in *Yingjing Juan* that opium was ‘mainly used to aid masculinity, strengthen sperm and regain vigour;’ and that it ‘enhances the art of alchemists, sex and court ladies.’<sup>16</sup> This, according to Xu, took place in at least, if not earlier than, 1483 as he continued: ‘in the year *Chenhua guimao*, Zhong Guan

*of emancipation* (Oxford, 1990); David Hardiman, ‘From custom to crime: the politics of drinking in colonial south Gujarat’, in Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern studies IV: writings on South Asian history and society* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 165–228. See also Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt (eds.), *Consuming habits: drugs in history and anthropology* (London, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Xu Boling, *Yingjing juan* (12 vols., Taipei, 1971 reprint of 1776 edn.), vol 10, pp. 14–15.

and Zhong Gui was ordered to go to Hainan, Fujian, Zhejiang, Sichuan and Shaanxi where it is close to Xiyu to procure it. Its price equals that of gold.<sup>17</sup> *Chenhua guimao* is the Chenhua emperor's nineteenth year, 1483 in western calendar and 'Zhong Gui' is a eunuch. This was a historical transformation because opium had always been cultivated and used as a medicine. We know this from Yong Tao and Guo Zhen, Tang dynasty (618–907) scholarly-officials, and Su Shi, a Song dynasty (960–1279) statesman-poet, and especially medicinal books of succeeding dynasties.<sup>18</sup> Medics and scholars agree that Arab traders introduced opium into Tang dynasty China.<sup>19</sup> This is feasible not only because China's exchange with central Asia, via the Silk Road, reached its zenith during the Tang dynasty but also because the Chinese name for opium has always been *af-yong*, similar to the Arab version *af-yum*.<sup>20</sup> It is also possible that opium was indigenous to China or that it came in much earlier than the Tang dynasty, but no historians or popular writers have suggested that.

Sex was attributed to an herb traditionally used for diarrhoea and other diseases in 1483. This medicine-to-aphrodisiac metamorphosis saw the formation of opium's sexual mythology. From *yao*, or medicine, opium became *chun yao*, literally spring drug or aphrodisiac.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Xiyu, literally 'western region', referred to the region west of Yumen, today's Xinjiang province and Central Asia. Yumen, where the Great Wall ends, was the western gate of China. Xiyu was on the silk road where caravans travelled, lodged and traded. Chenhua is the reign title of Zhu Jianshen who ruled from 1465 onwards for 23 years. The author Xu Boling was an obscure Ming writer and a free spirit. According to the preface written by a friend, he made hats with bamboo leaves and travelled around the country.

<sup>18</sup> Yong Tao, 'Xigui chu xiegu', in *Quan Tang shi* (900 vols., Beijing, 1960), vol 518, p. 5923 & Guo Zhen, 'Milang hua', in *Quan Tang shi*, vol 66, p. 759; Su Shi, *Su Shi shiji* (50 vols., Beijing, 1982), vol 25, p. 1347 & Wei Yilin, *Shiyi dextiaofang* (20 vols., Taipei, 1973), vol 5, pp. 23A & 47A. Wei's book translates as 'Effective prescriptions from generations of practice.' It was published in 1266. Wei was a native of today's eastern Jiangxi province. He came from a famous family that had produced generations of doctors. The prescriptions in these volumes, as he emphasized, had been used, tested and passed down for generations.

<sup>19</sup> Dr Joseph Edkins, *Royal Commission on Opium* 1: Appendix II. (Referred after as RoyCom) & Martin Booth, *Opium: a history* (London, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> The rise and expansion of the Arab empire coincided with the height of the Tang dynasty, 618–907. See Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* (19 vols., Cambridge, 1954), vol 1, p. 125. Needham wrote 'Thang period was certainly one in which foreigners of every kind were welcomed at the capital. Chhang-an, no less than Baghdad, became a melting-place of international fame. Arabs, Syrians and Persians came there from the west to meet Koreans, Japanese, Tibetans and Tonkinese and to discuss religion and literature with Chinese scholars. In the elegant pavilions of the great city in the Wei Valley.'

*Chun yao* was medicine that helped to induce sexual desires and vitalize intercourse. *Chun* symbolizes not only regeneration and vigour but also lust. Some of them had multiple ingredients while others were made of a single herb. They could be pills, syrup, or mixed with food and drink. Aphrodisiacs had a long and rich history in China. It belonged to the ancient science called *fangzhong shu*, 'the art of sex.' Only a handful of scholars ventured into this field. Robert Hans van Gulick examined Chinese sex life, Joseph Needham studied the contribution of Taoist principles while Ruan Fangfu and Liu Dalin have begun to tackle sexology.<sup>21</sup> Gulick's research shows that there was a great demand for 'erotic literature' and the printing of pornographic literature flourished during the Ming.<sup>22</sup> Aphrodisiac became a culture and an enterprise that galvanized court life. Chenhua's was no exception.<sup>23</sup> Eunuchs and ranking officials dominated the enterprise, they presented aphrodisiacs of all sorts to gain and retain his favour and that of Lady Wan, his leading consort.<sup>24</sup> Contemporaries like Shen Defu and Lu Rong observed this, while Frederic Mote and Charles Hucker have studied the damage of such excessiveness.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Robert Hans van Gulick, *Erotic colour prints of the Ming period, with an essay on Chinese sex life from the Han to the Ch'ing dynasty, B.C. 205–A.D. 1644* (3 vols., Tokyo, 1951) & *Sexual life in ancient China, a preliminary survey of Chinese sex and society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.* (Leiden, 1961). Joseph Needham, *Science and civilization in China* (19 vols., Cambridge, 1956), vol 2, pp. 146–52. Ruan Fangfu, *Sex in China* (New York, 1991); Liu Dalin, *Xing yu Zhongguo wenhua* (Beijing, 1999); it translates as 'Sex and Chinese culture.' Liu Dalin, a sexologist based in Shanghai, is a leading expert in the field. He has assembled more than 1,200 historical objects of sex and sex education. He has also begun his crusade of sex education by opening the Museum of Chinese Sex Culture in Shanghai in 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Hans van Gulick, *Erotic colour prints of the Ming period, with an essay on Chinese sex life from the Han to the Ch'ing dynasty, B.C. 205–A.D. 1644* (3 vols., Tokyo, 1951), vol 1, p. 105.

<sup>23</sup> Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuo bian* (3 vols., Beijing, 1959 reprint of 1827 edn.), vol 2, p. 541. It translates into 'The unofficial captures of Wanli.' Shen, 1578–1642, was a native of Jiaxin, Zhejiang province. He obtained a *Juren* degree and lived in Beijing with his father and grandfather who were officials under Wanli. When they resigned, he followed them back to the south where he wrote down what he, his father and grandfather, saw and heard in the capital. The book was completed and prefaced by himself at his home in Wanli's thirty-fourth year, 1607. This reprint included all previous prefaces.

<sup>24</sup> Carrington Goodrich & Fang Chaoying (eds.), *Dictionary of Ming biography 1368–1644* (New York, 1976), pp. 298–304 & 1335–37. Zhu Jianshen's lifetime affair with his nursemaid has been excellent gossip for both scholars and ordinary people. See Frederick W. Mote, 'The Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns, 1465–1505', in Frederick W. Mote & Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge history of China volume 7: the Ming dynasty, 1368–1644, part 1* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 343–402.

<sup>25</sup> Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuo bian* (3 vols., Beijing, 1959 reprint of 1827 edn.), vol 2, p. 541 & Lu Rong, *Shuyuan zaji* (15 vols., Beijing, 1985), vol 9, pp. 116–17. See also Frederick W. Mote, 'The Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih reigns, 1465–1505', in

Yet a more elaborate testament to opium as a court luxury is found in the 1587 edition of *Da Ming Huidian*, 'The Collected Statutes of the Great Ming,' commissioned and compiled by the court itself.<sup>26</sup> It recorded tribute missions from vassal states; it also listed tribute items. Siam, Java and Bengal had all presented opium as tribute to the Ming court.<sup>27</sup> Although the date is uncertain for Bengal, and somewhat unclear with Java in 1443, the case for Siam is definite—1584. Tributes were of the best indigenous produce that was indeed novel enough, more than just worthy, for the mighty Chinese emperor and his army of consorts. Yet the champion was not Chenhua but his great great grandson Zhu Yijun who ruled under the title of Wanli. Scholar-officials, popular writers and historians have long speculated on Wanli's addiction to opium.<sup>28</sup> The Com-

Frederick W. Mote & Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge history of China volume 7: the Ming dynasty, 1368–1644, part 1* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 348. Chenhua and Lady Wan died within a few months of each other in 1487. See also Zhang Tingyu (ed.), *Ming shi* (332 vols., Beijing, 1974 reprint of 1740 original edn.), vol 113, pp. 3524–5. It had this to say about Lady Wan's endeavours to have another child: 'exquisite techniques and lascivious skills, (ancestral) hall prayers and place observations, extravagant-spending were countless.' Charles O. Hucker is one of the few historians who wrote about Ming palace women, see Charles O. Hucker, 'Ming government', in Frederick W. Mote & Denis Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge history of China volume 7: the Ming dynasty, 1368–1644, part 1* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 9–105.

<sup>26</sup> Xu Bo (ed.), *Da Ming huidian* (228 vols., Beijing, 1587). It translates into 'The collected statutes of the great Ming' and was commissioned by the Ming court in 1497. The compilation was headed by Xu Bo, his associates Liu Jian and Li Dongyang. The first edition was completed in 1503 and it constituted 228 volumes. It was revised and supplemented subsequently. The final edition of 1587 show prefaces by the Hongzhi emperor in his fifteenth year, 1502; the Zhengde emperor in his fourth year, 1509 and the Wanli emperor in his fifteenth year, 1587. A provincial edition of 180 volumes was printed in Nanchang in 1621. Cambridge university library holds both copies under the Wade Collection. It is not clear through what means Thomas Wade obtained these precious originals. Xu Bo, 1428–1499, came second in the palace examination in 1454. This success earned him the appointment of a compiler in the Hanlin Academy in 1455. He worked in the Grand Secretariat for 12 years and participated in the compilation of several government works. *Da Ming huidian* brought him the title of Grand Guardian to the Heir Apparent and Minister of Revenue under the Hongzhi emperor, son of Chenhua. Xu was favoured and much needed by Hongzhi who did not grant him retirement until almost his death.

<sup>27</sup> Xu Bo (ed.), *Da Ming huidian* (228 vols., Beijing, 1587), vol 105, pp. 9B–11B, 13A–15A & vol 106, pp. 5B–6B.

<sup>28</sup> See Yan Siyan, 'Yan'e 'erze', in *Shuo ku* (Shanghai, 1915), p. 1. Yan, 1650–1713, was a *jinshi* and ranking examiner under Kangxi. He worked at various literary jobs and helped to compile many government works. This gave him access to confidential materials of the Ming dynasty. See Zhongyang yanjiuyuan shiyu suo (compiler), *Ming Shenzong shilu* (596 vols., Taipei, 1966), vol 212, pp. 3983–4. See Ray Huang, 'The Lung-ch'ing and Wan'li reigns, 1567–1620', in Frederick W. Mote & Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge history of China volume 7: the Ming dynasty, 1368–1644, part 1* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 522 & 511–584 & 1587, *a year of no signi-*



minist government even made laboratory tests on his body and claimed that his bones ‘contained large quantities’ of what we now know as morphine.<sup>29</sup> The Communist government, like any other political regimes, is happy to discredit their predecessors, but the debate about the Ming court’s, and especially Wanli’s, consumption of opium will go on.

Opium undoubtedly was an aphrodisiac by Wanli’s time as contemporary works testified to this. The milestone of medical science, *Compendium of Materia Medica*, published in 1578, still discussed opium as a medicinal herb, yet it continued: ‘it can arrest seminal emission’ and ‘lay people use it for the art of sex.’<sup>30</sup> Was Li Shizhen (1518–1593), the founding father of modern herbal medicine, sharing his own knowledge or relaying what he had read, heard or seen? Opium had begun its outward and downward ‘liquidation’ by the early seventeenth century. Li Zhongli (1598 *jinshi*) wrote in *Bencao yuanshi* that opium was for the art of sex.<sup>31</sup> Although the knowledge was implicit

*ficance: the Ming dynasty in decline* (New Haven, 1981). See Carrington Goodrich & Fang Chaoying (eds.), *Dictionary of Ming biography 1368–1644* (New York, 1976), pp. 324–338 & 208–211. See also Lei Jin, ‘Rongcheng xianhua’, in Qi Sihe & Lin Shuhui, eds., *Yapian zhanzheng* (6 vols., Shanghai, 1954), vol 1, pp. 313–339. It translates as ‘Gossips from the city of opium.’

<sup>29</sup> Wang Hongbing, *Jingdu shijian* (Changsha, 1997), p. 15. Wang’s claim is based on the excavation of Wanli’s tomb, *Ding Ling*. Although the excavation began in 1958, the work of publishing the findings did not begin until 1979. The compilers, the archaeological research institute of the social science academy in Beijing and the Dingling museum, did not publish all the findings. They only made public the rare treasures and art works found in the tomb. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo & Dingling bowuguan (compiler), *Dingling zuiping* (Beijing, 1989) & *Dingling* (2 vols., Beijing, 1990). Wang did not provide any information as to where and how he obtained the lab report and analysis of Wanli’s bone components. It is possible that this kind of information was intended and would be kept for internal use only. Wang’s book about opium is one of the latest. It was commissioned to commemorate the hand-over of Hong Kong in 1997, a time that reminds people of the opium war.

<sup>30</sup> Li Shizhen, *Bencao gangmu* (52 vols., Beijing, 1978), vol 23, p. 1495. Originally published in 1578 during the reign of Wanli, it has been reprinted many times. Both professionals and ordinary people use it because it has served as an encyclopaedia. Li Shizhen is considered a founding figure of modern herbal medicine and this book serves as the milestone and classic of Chinese herbal science. ‘To arrest seminal emission’ is the ultimate art of sex according to Taoist sexual principles and as Joseph Needham paraphrased: ‘The art of commerce with women is to close the hands tightly and to refrain from ejaculation, causing the sperm to return and nourish the brain.’ See Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* (19 vols., Cambridge, 1983), vol 5, p. 198.

<sup>31</sup> Li Zhongli, *Bencao yuanshi* (1612). Li’s information is very limited. We only know that he obtained his *jinshi* degree in the twenty-third year of Wanli’s reign, that is 1598. The 1612 edition, found in the Joseph Needham Institute, does not have place of publication.

and limited to those who could read, the myth of opium-as-aphrodisiac survived the destruction of the Ming. Fang Yizhi (1611–1694), a scientist who lived through the change of empire, even gave instructions. ‘When it is a green bud, use a needle to prick it ten or so times. Its liquid will come out, store it in china and use paper to seal the top. Expose it for twenty-seven days; it then becomes opium. It can best arrest seminal emission.’<sup>32</sup> Gao Shiqi (1645–1703), a ranking literati and official of the early Qing, sang its praises. ‘Legend has it that in the evening of the Mid-Autumn Festival, girls should wear beautiful clothes and sow the seeds, for the blossoms of next year will be so luxurious and dazzling that nothing else in the whole world can match them.’<sup>33</sup> Not only did Mr Opium survive the destruction of the Ming but he also continued to live with the rich and famous of a new and alien dynasty, the Qing.

### Instructions Given and Examples Set

This section examines opium’s reintroduction, its entry into general relaxation and mainstream sex recreation in the eighteenth century; it also profiles opium’s vanguard consumers. China’s political intimacy with South and Southeast Asia helped introduce opium, her genealogical intimacy with them, that is the Chinese diaspora, would reintroduce opium. The Siamese, Javanese and Bengalis valued opium highly; they enjoyed eating/smoking it, so did the Chinese who travelled to and worked there. Edmund Scott saw the Chinese in Bantam smoke opium when he was there between 1602 and 1605.<sup>34</sup> John S. Stavorinus, travelling in Batavia, Bantam and Begal

<sup>32</sup> Fang Yizhi, *Wuli xiaoshi* (12 vols., Taipei, 1981 reprint of 1785 edn.), vol 9, pp. 22A–B. It can be translated as ‘Some knowledge of physics.’ Fang was a *jinshi* of Congzhen, the last Ming emperor. He was an assistant editor in the Hanlin Academy and decided to become a monk after the Manchus conquered China in 1644. He was nicknamed the ‘monk doctor’ and devoted many books to medicine. Fang is considered one of the most learned men in the late-Ming and early-Qing period.

<sup>33</sup> Gao Shiqi, *Beishu baowenglu* (Shanghai, 1860), pp. 22A–B. The title can be translated as ‘Works of the embracing old man of the north pavilion.’ It is collected in *Xuehai leibian*. Gao left more than 50 literary works, this one was compiled in 1690. See Arthur Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing period* (Taipei, 1970 edn.), pp. 413–15.

<sup>34</sup> Edmund Scott, *An exact discourse of the subtilties, fashions, policies, religion, and ceremonies of the East Indians, as well Chyneses as Javans* (London, 1943) reprint of 1606 edn.), p. 173. When Captain Lancaster left Bantam in February 1602, he left

between 1768 and 1771, also saw that 'the natives of all those countries are very fond of it [opium], smoking it together with their tobacco, or chewing it unmixed.'<sup>35</sup> Here lies the other, perhaps more important, dimension to opium's introduction. Sea-faring Chinese who sojourned to and from South and Southeast Asia smoked opium as early as the natives there. Indeed this was how tobacco and other luxuries were introduced.<sup>36</sup> This was especially true with the officers and soldiers of the early Qing's Taiwan conquest. They returned to the mainland with either memories or habits of opium and this was fundamental for the spread of smoking in the eighteenth century. Their memoirs detailed not only how to smoke but also why. Lan Dingyuan wrote that 'one is alert the whole night and it increases sexual desire.'<sup>37</sup> Huang Shujing agreed: 'one does not need to sleep during the whole night. The natives here take it as a tool to induce sexual desire.'<sup>38</sup> Zhu Jingying was quite explicit:

behind nine persons of the first fleet of the newly-chartered East India Company and Scott was one of them. They were left there until Captain Middleton arrived in Bantam in December 1604. For more on opium in Southeast Asia at the time, see William Foster (ed), *Letters received by the East India Company from its servants in the East* (6 vols., London, 1899–1902), vol 3, pp. 32–3, 39–42 & 155; vol 4, pp. 107, 188, 293 & 299; vol 5, p. 64; vol 6, pp. 174, 202 & 274.

<sup>35</sup> John Splinter Stavorinus, *Voyages to the East-Indies* (3 vols., London, 1798), vol 1, pp. 474–5. This was translated by Samuel Hull Wilcocke. Physician Engelbert Kaempfer who arrived in Batavia in 1689 also saw the natives there smoke opium. See RoyCom, 1: Appendix II.

<sup>36</sup> K. T. Achaya, 'Bounty from the New World', in Murdo J. MacLeod & Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *European intruders and changes in behaviour and customs in Africa and Asia before 1800* (Aldershot [Hampshire], 1998), pp. 259–282; Ho Ping-ti, 'The introduction of American food plants to China', in Murdo J. MacLeod & Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *European intruders and changes in behaviour and customs in Africa and Asia before 1800* (Aldershot [Hampshire], 1998), pp. 283–294. Ho's article, first published in 1955, discusses the cases of peanut, sweet potatoes and maize. Anthony Reid, 'From betel-chewing to tobacco smoking in Indonesia', in Murdo J. MacLeod & Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *European intruders and changes in behaviour and customs in Africa and Asia before 1800* (Aldershot [Hampshire], 1998), pp. 295–314. See also Susan Naquin & Evelyn S. Rawski, *Chinese society in the eighteenth century* (New Haven, 1987), pp. 23 & 170.

<sup>37</sup> Lan Dingyuan, *Pingtai jilue* (Taipei, 1958), p. 50. Lan, 1680–1733, was a native of Zhangpu, Fujian province. Born into a lower middle class intellectual family, he was taught by his mother and only obtained the *xiuca* degree. The book is a collection of his writings during the Taiwan campaign. The original preface by himself was dated the first year of Yongzheng, 1723. Lan was later made Magistrate of Puning county. He sponsored scholarship, promoted female learning, local history revision and other literary projects while in office.

<sup>38</sup> Huang Shujing, *Taihai shichai lu* (8 vols., Shanghai, 1935 reprint of 1736 first edn.), vol 2, p. 40. It translates into 'Errands to Taiwan.' Huang was a *jinshi* of Kangxi [1709] and belonged to a family of *jinshi* and ranking officials. He and his brothers were in the upper-middle echelon of the political hierarchy. He was dis-

Opium smoke is from Batavia, *Luzon* [Philippines] and other ocean countries; it is a prohibited article by sea. Taiwan has many rascals, they mix it with tobacco and inhale it, it is said that it helps with the performance [during sexual intercourse] and one does not need to sleep during the whole night. When inhaling it, one must invite many people, take turns eating [smoking] it; spread a mat on the floor on which everyone lies down, burn a lamp in the middle and then inhale. A hundred to several hundred mouthfuls is the amount. The pipe is made of bamboo, about eight or nine *fen* [2.99 cm], stuff it with palm slices and hair, use silver to rim the two ends; make a hole on the side, size it like the little finger; use clay to shape a bowl like a kettle or gourd, make a hole in the middle so the fire can burn through; inlay it to the hole, put opium on top of the hole, a little bit of paste [opium] is enough. Inhale it into the mouth until it is finished, it makes a *gege* noise.<sup>39</sup>

Opium-as-aphrodisiac came to China via two routes: one as court tribute and the other on a consumer level. But how exactly did this non-Chinese way of relaxation marry with the Chinese industry of sex recreation? *Xu Banqiao Zaji* provides a picture of the industry in the mid-late eighteenth century:

The riverboats of the *Qinhai* river are covered with awning above and surrounded by railings below. Lanterns hang at the corners, low beds are set in the middle, *yu* [jar for liquid] and *lei* [ancient urn-shaped wine vessel] are decoratively placed, everything is exquisite. There is no curtain on either side so that it is easy to look out. When the boat sets out at sunset, the two oars move in unison; wind of lotus assails the nostrils, and the fragrance of snow-white lotus root stirs the heart, songs charm the ear and ravishing women surround you. This is really a dream celestial world.<sup>40</sup>

The *Qinhuai* was no ordinary river but the cradle of sex civilization and the heart of sex recreation. The 'riverboats' were luxuriously decorated leisure vessels called *huafang*.<sup>41</sup> Opium smoking would be

patched to Taiwan in 1722 after the Zhu Yigui rebellion. *Errands to Taiwan* was published in the first year of Qianlong, 1736.

<sup>39</sup> Zhu Jingying, *Haidong zhaji* (Taipei, 1958), p. 29. It translates as 'Notes from the east sea.' It was finished in 1772 and the current edition shows a preface by Zhu's brother-in-law in 1773. Zhu was a native of Wuning, Hunan province and a *Juren* under Qianlong. He was stationed in Taiwan for three years. This book was, in his own words, 'whatever I heard, I picked up some paper and wrote it down. They accumulated day after day into eight categories.'

<sup>40</sup> Zhuquan jushi, 'XuBanqiao zaji', in *Yanshi congshu* (Taipei, 1976), p. 2A. The title can be translated as 'The extended miscellaneous works of the wooden bridge' while *Yanshi congshu* translates as 'Collection of the history of merry adventures.'

<sup>41</sup> The *Qinhuai* river had been home to the sex industry since Qin dynasty, 221–206 BC. Works about it are plenty. Zhang Dai (1597–1685), a Ming aristocrat, knew the place inside out: 'the *Qinhuai* river houses are convenient for living, for socialising, for sex recreation. They are expensive, but the residents never waste a

a most welcome and most natural addition to the industry catered to the literati and officials. When Jiangnan set the standard for the country, *Qinhuai* set the standard for the business. Opium smoking accompanied by sex recreation on leisure boats was well established in Canton by 1793. Shen Fu's memoir *Fusheng Liuji*, 'Six Chapters of a Floating Life,' details this:

So we went to where the Yangzhou gang [of prostitutes] was. Opposite were two rows of boats, about a dozen. Everyone inside had [hair] buns and sprayed temples, wore light make-up. They were dressed in wide sleeves and long skirts; they talked and I could hear their words. . . . I was asked to pick a prostitute. I chose a very young one, her figure and appearance looked like my wife Yun, but her feet were extremely small and pointed, her name was *Xi'er* [happy girl]. *Xiufeng* [husband of Shen's cousin] called out to a prostitute named *Cuigu* [emerald girl] and the rest had their own old acquaintances. We let the boat anchor in the middle of the river and had a feast of wine and food for a few hours. I was afraid that I would not be able to control myself and insisted on going home. But the city gate was already closed. The gate of a sea town closed at sunset, I did not know that. After dinner, some lay down to smoke opium while others held their prostitutes in their arms to tease.<sup>42</sup>

These boats were the famous 'flower boats,' Canton's *huafang*.<sup>43</sup> And this was how the Chinese industry of sex recreation absorbed a

day. Painted boats, the sound of *xiao* (Chinese flute) and percussion come and go.' See Zhang Dai, *Tao'an mengyi* (8 vols., Hangzhou, 1982), vol 4, p. 43. Zhang lived a princely life until the end of the Ming when he was reduced to plain clothes and vegetable foods. For more on Zhang, see Arthur Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing period* (Taipei, 1970 edn.), pp. 53–4. Qian Yong and many others who frequented Nanjing also wrote about the grandeur of the *Qinhuai* river. See Qian Yong, *Luyuan conghua* (24 vols., Beijing, 1979), vol 7, p. 193. Wang Yingkui, *Liunan suibi* (6 vols., Beijing, 1983), vol 6, p. 115. Gong wei, *Caolin bitan* (6 vols., Beijing, 1981), vol 4, pp. 113–14. Zhao Lian, *Xiaoting zalu* (5 vols., Beijing, 1980), vol 2, p. 434 & vol 4, p. 85. Ouyang Zhaoxiong & Jin Anqing, *Shuichuan chunyi* (2 vols., Beijing, 1984), vol 2, p. 47. Mao Xianglin, *Moyu lu* (16 vols., Shanghai, 1985), vol 4, pp. 52–3.

<sup>42</sup> Shen Fu, *Fusheng liuji* (4 vols., Shanghai, 1934), vol 4, p. 90. This book was given to Cambridge University Library by Sir James H. S. Lockhart, Colonial Secretary of Hong Kong, 1895–1902. Lin Yutang, a famous scholar of the nationalist era, once translated the book. I did not use his translation because it is biased and vague. I do not dispute his understanding of the text but his intention was to make the content less explicit. As a man of letters, he had much in common with Shen Fu and he was sympathetic. For example, the last sentence literally reads 'some held their prostitutes (in their arms) to tease or poke fun.' But Lin's translation reads 'some were fooling round with the girls.'

<sup>43</sup> James Holman travelled to Canton in the year 1830. He saw the same kind of boats outside Canton. 'On our return to the shore we passed between a double line of large boats, that are constantly moored in the centre of the river, with the head and stern of each boat so close in line that you might pass along the whole, from

non-Chinese way of relaxation and put it into an indigenous context. This is a most vital process as Igor Kopytoff provides a theoretical explanation: 'in situations of culture contact, they can show what anthropologists have so often stressed: that what is significant about the adoption of alien objects—as of alien ideas—is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use.'<sup>44</sup> Shen Fu was a native of Jiangnan. His father spent his life working for high government officials as a private secretary. Fu had accompanied and assisted him from his teenage days. The pinnacle of both their careers came when they joined ranking officials to welcome and entertain the Qianlong emperor on his grand southern tour in 1784 when Fu was only twenty-two. Father and son deployed their literary talents to make a living, they also engaged in business. Commerce was becoming more profitable than selling words and letters, and the wind of money was blowing from Canton. Literati and officials would continue to redefine opium and spread the consciousness of consumption.

Born and bred in *taiping shengshi*, the heyday of peace and prosperity, many of Shen Fu's peers indulged in sex and drugs, another contemporary Yu Jiao knew the situation well:

My friend Yao Chunpu bragged to me about the marvels of opium. He said that it smelled fragrant and it tasted pure and sweet. When depression was drizzling and melancholy settled in, you lie down facing the partner on the low bed with a short lamp, take turn to inhale. At the beginning your spirit is refreshed, your head is cleared and eyes sharpened. Then your chest and diaphragm are suddenly opened and your mood is many times better; before long your muscles are softened and your eyelids close. At this point, you doze off on the pillow, detached from any thoughts as if you were in a dream world. Your spirit and soul are calmed; it really is a paradise. I smiled and

one to another, without having occasion to go into a boat. These barges are called "flower boats," a name they derive from the elegant and ornamental style in which they are fitted up, and carried and gilded. These boats, however, are nothing better than licensed brothels of the first order, for the exclusive use of the Chinese, foreigners not being permitted to trespass upon them with impunity. The ladies on board, however, do not appear to have any objection to the visits of strangers, if their sentiments may be speculated upon, from their outward signs, for no respectable foreigner can pass these boats without receiving signals of invitation. I have heard of one or two foreigners who were bold enough to venture on board, but who paid dearly for the experiment, although to what extent I cannot really say.' See James Holman, *A voyage round the world, including travels in Africa, Asia, Australasia, America, etc. from 1827 to 1832* (4 vols., London, 1834–5), vol 4, pp. 83–4.

<sup>44</sup> Igor Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 67.

said 'it looks like that, but it is not so.' Recently among the four classes of people, only peasants do not taste it, many officials indulge in it. As for the brothels, everyone is equipped with it as a bait to allure clients.<sup>45</sup>

Qianlong's reign saw lettered opium smokers who knew how to put their experience into words. Yu Jiao obtained a *juren* degree in 1736. He was unlucky in climbing the ladder of officialdom on the one hand but on the other he could afford to remain outside the most powerful enterprise of all. Like the Ming obscure writer Xu Boling, he spent much of his lifetime travelling. He lived in Beijing, but he spent more time in the provinces. *Meng'an zazhu* was a collection of short essays about his encounters from Beijing to Guangdong. He devoted a whole section to the prostitutes who worked along the south China coastal urban centres, such as Chaozhou and Meixian. Yu Jiao was a keen observer of his time, so was Charles de Constant, the young French merchant who did business in south China at the same time. Constant wrote that: 'la passion des Chinois pour l'opium étant devenue un besoin.'<sup>46</sup> This necessity certainly did not escape the eyes of the Macartney ambassadors in 1793. George L. Staunton noticed that 'the Mandarines did indulge themselves in habits of luxury' and they smoked 'tobacco mixed with odorous substances, and sometimes a little opium.'<sup>47</sup>

From 'the art of alchemists, sex and court ladies' of the late fifteenth century to the brothels of south China coast in the late eighteenth century, opium was making its way to the masses. It had begun to live a life of its own. Opium could not have re-arrived at a better place at a more opportune moment—the decadent eighteenth century when the leisure revolution started in mid-Ming intensified. It was a natural addition to the commercializing Qing economy; it also fitted in seamlessly with the existing patterns of relaxation and recreation. On the one hand tobacco had set the precedent for opium, on the other Chinese material culture made opium's outward

<sup>45</sup> Yu Jiao, *Meng'an zazhu* (10 vols., Beijing, 1988), vol 10, p. 372. The title can be translated as 'The miscellaneous works of Meng'an.' Yu Jiao was a native of Shan-yin, Zhejiang province. The book was compiled at his home in Jiaqing's sixth year, 1801. His memoir seems to indicate that he was a local literati who travelled widely.

<sup>46</sup> Louis Dermigny (ed.), *Les memoires de Charles de Constant sur le commerce a la Chine* (Paris, 1964), p. 205. This was an observation made in the 1780s long before opium smoking became a social problem.

<sup>47</sup> George Leonard Staunton, *An authentic account of an embassy from the king of Great Britain to the emperor of China* (2 vols., London, 1797), vol 2, p. 70.

and downward diffusion easy.<sup>48</sup> China's political and genealogical intimacy with South and Southeast Asia facilitated the introduction of smoking and the reintroduction of opium while the leisure class embedded it into sex recreation and redefined it for mass consumption. This was the dynamics of Ming–Qing maritime relations, commerce and consumption.

### Taste-making and Trend-setting

This section studies the making and coming of the opium-smoking consumer trend from 1800 to 1860. These six decades, that is the reigns of the Jiaqing, Daoguang and Xianfeng emperors, were the most important transitional time for the social life of opium because they saw its rapid outward and downward 'liquidation'.<sup>49</sup> Mr Opium continued to live with the leisure class, but he had many more partners: eunuchs, soldiers, students, women, urban middle classes and rich peasants. My focus however would still be the sex industry and the literati-officials because they were the taste-making and trend-setting forces in the making of this consumer trend. Opium smoking was already an integral part of the sex industry along the south China coast by the late eighteenth century. It surfaced on the *Qinhuai* river in Nanjing by, if not earlier than, the early nineteenth century as *Penghua Sheng*, 'The flower-holding gentleman,' detailed:

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed discussion about how the Chinese material cultures of cuisine, herbs, utensils and tea provided the best soil for opium smoking to grow at the time, see Yangwen Zheng, *The social life of opium in Qing China* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2001). See also Claude Levi-Strauss, *The raw and the cooked* (London, 1994), p. 336. He wrote 'The Hanunoo regard as a "real" food only that which is prepared for human consumption by cooking. Hence, ripe bananas which must be eaten raw are considered as "snack" foods. Real food such as pre-ripe bananas, root crops, cereals, cucumbers, tomatoes and onions are never eaten raw. A meal must include cooked food. In fact, meals are usually enumerated by the term: pag'apuy, "fire making."' Levi-Strauss would have come to a similar conclusion had he gone to China; as a matter of fact, this was just as characteristic of Chinese as it was of Filipinos. Like food and tea, opium must go through fire, that is *be* cooked, before it can be enjoyed because it was raw. This is the mythical and cosmological difference between 'nature' and 'culture,' therefore between barbarism and civilization.

<sup>49</sup> Igor Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 78.



Chen Xizi was the daughter of *Baoxia*, titled *Lanzhou*, Rank One, aged twenty. She lived in the East End. Her skin was lush and smooth. She socialized and entertained very skilfully and belonged to the gentleman *Lotus six*. Within three years, he died of opium smoking. *Ji* [Chen Xizi] returned to her old business, but really it was not what she wanted to do. Another gentleman *Jiannan* was enchanted by her, spent gold to have her.<sup>50</sup>

Chen Xizi was a famous courtesan active at least in 1817 when *Qinhuai huafanglu* was written. Rank One indicated that she was literate and commanded a high price, therefore only affordable to the lettered rich like *Lotus six* who had been smoking opium for three years. Opium was still a luxury in the short reign of Jiaqing, Prince of the Blood of the First Degree Minning, the future Daoguang emperor, testified to this. He enjoyed opium smoking and he called opium 'the satisfier'.<sup>51</sup> Clarke Abel made this observation in 1817: 'the Chinese indeed consider the smoking of opium as one of the greatest luxuries.'<sup>52</sup> As a matter of fact, Jiaqing's reign saw the penetration of opium smoking in officialdom, as one of them summarized: 'In the middle of Jiaqing and in officialdom, it's becoming a hobby among both the high and the low.'<sup>53</sup> Opium had captured the most important consumers by the 1810s and this was the foundation of his future fame.

<sup>50</sup> Penghua sheng, 'Qinhuai huafanlu', in *Yanshi congshu* (Taipei, 1976), p. 241. *Yanshi congshu* translates as 'Collection of the history of merry adventures.' It is a collection of works on sex recreation, it tells the stories of ranking courtesans. *Qinhuai huafanlu* was written in Jiaqing's twenty-second year, 1817.

<sup>51</sup> Aixin Jueluo Minning, *Yangzheng shufang quanji dingben* (40 vols., Beijing, 1822), vol 17, p. 22B & 23A. Minning was the common name of Emperor Xuanzong, Daoguang. Xuanzong was his temple name and Daoguang was his reign title. He was the second son of Emperor Jiaqing and the latter was the fifth son of Qianlong. Minning was well-versed in Chinese. His literary works, written before he ascended the throne, were collected in the second year of his reign 1822 and printed in 1824 under the title 'Yangzheng shuwu quanjidingben.' There were 40 volumes. His other literary works, 24 volumes of poems and 10 volumes of prose, were printed later in 1828 and 1830. For more on opium in Nanjing at the time, see Yi Ming [anonymous], 'Qingren yishi', in *ManQing yeshi daguan* (10 vols., Shanghai), vol 8, pp. 101–102. Muke Dengbu, the Manchu Garrison Commander in Nanjing between 1814 and 1818, amassed many boxes of opium before he died in 1824.

<sup>52</sup> Clarke Abel, *Narrative of a journey in the interior of China* (London, 1818), pp. 214–215. Abel was a member of the Amherst Mission to China in 1816–1817. He represented the geological society and was chief medical officer and naturalist to the embassy.

<sup>53</sup> Dai Lianfen, 'Libianxian zhiyan', in *Qingshuo qizhong* (Shanghai, 1992), p. 57. *Qingshuo qizhong* translates as 'Seven stories of Qing.' They are miscellaneous works of seven Qing writers. They are unique because of their accounts of unusual people, things and events. It is unofficial social history by lower-ranking men of letters, such as Yu Jiao and Dai Lianfen. Some contain ghost stories while others were about prostitution and vice. They are the best source for marginal topics such as low life.

Daoguang's first decade (1820–1830) little resembled Qianlong's heyday. But for many, the good life lasted. They smoked opium, they were besotted with all sorts of *yang huo*, as a contemporary of late Jiaqing–early Daoguang remembered vividly:

*Wai yang* [outer ocean or foreign] things are the most fashionable now. For example, all without exception, houses, rooms, boats and carriages all contain glass-made windows, clothes and curtains are made from furs and feathers, even utensils and decorations are called *yang* copper, *yang* china, *yang* paint, *yang* linen, *yang* cotton, and *yang* blue, *yang* red, *yang* marten, *yang* otter, *yang* paper, *yang* pictures, *yang* fans, the list is endless. The southern provinces even circulate *yang* money, it came from Japan, Liuku and England.<sup>54</sup>

Chen Zhan did not mention that matches were called *yang* fire, westerners were called *yang* people, westerner-owned company *yang* guilds, and opium *yang* smoke, and later *yang* drug. In their efforts to understand Ming–Qing economy and society, historians have not paid any attention to the major socio-economic background of opium's rising popularity–*yanghuo re*, a craving for foreign stuff. We can never understand who smoked opium and why without understanding *yanghuo re*, from which opium smoking grew to prominence. *Yanghuo re* certainly had its origins in the Ming dynasty when Matteo Ricci showered Chinese officials with European curios in order to reach the court in Beijing and when maritime trade brought a whole array of commodities and produces to China.<sup>55</sup> It intensified in the

<sup>54</sup> Chen Zhan, 'Chen Zhongyu yan', in Liang Zhangju, *Tuiyan suibi* (22 vols., Taipei, 1973), vol 7, pp. 371–2. Chen's work translates as 'What Chen Zhongyu said' and Liang's work translates as 'The miscellaneous after I retired.' I have been unable to consult directly a copy of the work of Chen Zhan. Liang Zhangjiu was a fellow scholar who quoted Chen's words in his own discussion of the popular fascination with things foreign. Liang, 1775–1849, was a native of Fujian and a *jinsi* of 1802. He headed a local college in Fujian [1807–1814] before he worked at various government jobs in Beijing from 1816 to 1821. From 1822, he first worked in Hubei and Jiangsu provinces as judicial commissioners. He became the lieutenant governor of Jiangsu in 1832, of Gansu and Chihli in 1835, governor of Guangxi between 1836 and 1841, governor of Jiangsu in 1841 and acting governor of Jiangxi and Anhui. He left many literary works. His three memoirs tell much about the private lives of his close colleagues from late Qianlong through late Daoguang's time. This *yang* money was silver dollars that the free traders brought to China. They were mainly Spanish and Mexican dollars. Spanish dollars were introduced through the Philippines but Mexican dollars replaced the Spanish ones and became the standard coin in the 1850s. See Hao Yen-p'ing, *The commercial revolution in nineteenth-century China* (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 34–46.

<sup>55</sup> K. T. Achaya, 'Bounty from the New World', in Murdo J. MacLeod & Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *European intruders and changes in behaviour and customs in Africa and Asia before 1800* (Aldershot [Hampshire], 1998), pp. 259–282; Ho Ping-ti, 'The introduc-

eighteenth century; a good example was John Henry Cox who sold singsongs: clocks, watches and fantastically-shaped mechanical toys such as snuff boxes concealing a jewelled bird which sang when the lid was open; all of them were extremely popular collectibles among the Chinese elite.<sup>56</sup> *Yanghuo re* was the direct result of Ming–Qing socio-economic transformation on the one hand and the leisure revolution on the other. It is the very indicator of intensified commercialization, consumerism and unstoppable urbanization.

Opium was a *yanghuo*. Indeed ‘that which is the most expensive is *yang*’ was a saying of the time and opium was the most expensive. Yang Zhangsheng remembered this in *Jingchen Zalu*, ‘The Miscellaneous Notes on the Dust of Beijing’:

From then on at *Meihe Tang* [Hall of Plum and Crane], the wine gatherings of the literati as well as conversations over tea and melon would always see *Yunxiang* [famous opera singer] present. . . . This was real happiness of a lifetime, as if one has entered paradise on earth. But it seemed that his unknown illness was deep-seeded and it was taking its hold. After three months, it went out of control. On the day he died, his face was wet with tears and he swore to Buddha: that this life was finished and in the next life he would never be an object of love again. Alas! Dead and gone! It first began with *Zheng Xuechao*, of Xiangshan, who thought that Yunxiang’s illness could not be cured and wanted to make him happy so he gave him opium paste. . . . That winter Zheng had guests from Guangdong who brought him the most celebrated product and sold it to him at 240 *liang* in gold. . . . Unfortunately Xuechao died and three days later Yunxiang died as well. It was the Twelfth Moon of the Fourteenth Year of Daoguang [January 1835]. Yunxiang was only eighteen. All is lost! How sad!<sup>57</sup>

tion of American food plants to China’, in Murdo J. MacLeod & Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *European intruders and changes in behaviour and customs in Africa and Asia before 1800* (Aldershot [Hampshire], 1998), pp. 283–294. See also Susan Naquin & Evelyn S. Rawski, *Chinese society in the eighteenth century* (New Haven, 1987), pp. 23 & 170.

<sup>56</sup> Many, both Company employees and free merchants, did not have the Company’s permission to linger in China, but they stayed regardless. The Company’s court of directors in London intervened; one of the very few free merchants allowed to stay was John Henry Cox. He is significant in the story of opium because he founded a partnership with Daniel Beale in 1782 and they were the forefathers of Jardine Matheson. William Milburn wrote about the trade in these *yanghuo*. See William Milburn, *Oriental commerce: the rise and progress of the trade of the various European nations with the eastern world, particularly that of the English East India Company, from the discovery of Cape of Good Hope to the present period with an account of the Company’s establishments, revenues, debts, assets, at home and abroad* (2 vols., London, 1813), vol 2, pp. 479, 482 & 488.

<sup>57</sup> Yang Zhangsheng, ‘Jingchen zalu’, in *Biji xiaoshuo daguan xubian* (4 vols., Taipei, 1962), vol 2, pp. 2–4. *Biji xiaoshuo daguan xubian* translates as ‘The extended collection of jottings and short stories.’ Ji and Zheng were good friends of the author, Yang Zhangsheng, also a native of Guangdong. Yang passed the *Juren* examination

This was a tale of female impersonating and homosexuality, or 'Passions of the Cut Sleeve,' in the literati-artistic circles of Beijing.<sup>58</sup> This was the leisure class. A city was where the leisure class resided and *yang huo*, such as opium, could be sold dear. Opium lived with them because they knew about it and they could afford it. With the leisure class, opium became leisured, urban, cultured and a status symbol as Thorstein Veblen put it: 'the ceremonial differentiation of the dietary is best seen in the use of intoxicating beverages and narcotics. If these articles of consumption are costly, they are felt to be noble and honorific.'<sup>59</sup> Opium was costly while the leisure class of the early nineteenth century helped to make smoking noble and

in 1831 and gained as high a rank as *Guozijian xuezheng*. This was an ideal position because it gave him a salary, time to study for the final *Jinshi* exam and, most importantly, an opportunity to network while living in the capital of politics and culture. Yang came from a family that afforded his study at the famous Xuehai Tang. He was very skilled at verses and was fond of opera and music. He became a song writer during those years when he hung about the capital waiting for examinations and career opportunities. He passed the *Jinshi* exam but was not awarded the title in the end. This was the scandal of the examination season and many believed that it was because the Head Examiner, who happened to be his old teacher, did not approve of his lifestyle. Therefore he *saw through the pink dust* and gave himself up to 'conversations of tea and melon.' He returned to Guangdong and wrote down what he saw in the capital: people and things, events and gossip. The stories he told concern more than just his friends and their lives, they concern the history of beauty and talent, of urban and material culture, of taste-making and trend-setting and finally of this genre of literature. See Liu Zhaotang (ed.), *Qingdai yandu liyuan shiliao* (4 vols., Beijing, 1934), vol 1, pp. 59–60). It translates as 'Historical materials of the Beijing pear garden during the Qing.' It is a selected collection of writings on the lives and careers of famous opera singers and dramatists during the Qing. See also Tan Fan, *Youlin shi* (Shanghai, 1995), pp. 149–171. It translates as 'History of actors.' Lewis C. Arlington, *The Chinese drama from the earliest times until today: a panoramic study of the art in China, tracing its origin and describing its actors in both male and female roles: their costumes and make-up, superstitions and stage slang; the accompanying music and musical instruments; concluding with synopses of thirty Chinese plays* (Shanghai, 1930), Introduction and pp. 39–42. This is a comprehensive book about the industry. It was prefaced by Herbert Giles and the famous Peking opera performer and female-impersonator—Mei Lanfang.

<sup>58</sup> Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the cut sleeve* (Berkeley, 1990). Females were not allowed in the profession, therefore female roles were always performed by males. Usually they were boys or young men who looked feminine or acted like females after year of practising. Female impersonation has a fascinating history in Chinese theatre. Books about sexuality and homosexuality are few. Hinsch is certainly a pioneer in the field while Ruan and Liu are the very few contemporaries. See Ruan Fangfu, *Sex in China: studies in sexology in Chinese culture* (New York, 1991); Liu Dalin, *Xin yu Zhongguo wenhua* (Beijing, 1999). Qing and contemporary scholars also wrote about this. See Liang Zhaoren, *Lianggu qiyuan suibi* (8 vols., Shanghai, 1982), vol 3, p. 124 & Liu Zhaotang (ed.), *Qingdai yandu liyuan shiliao* (4 vols., Beijing, 1934).

<sup>59</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The theory of the leisure class* (London, 1994 edn.), p. 70.

honorific. This was the beginning of Mr Opium's stardom. 'An object of love,' opium at 240 gold and opera—nineteenth century China had her sex, drugs and rock-and-roll.

Opium smoking accompanied by sex was undoubtedly a much-preferred recreation among the literati-officials by the 1830s. Zhao Guisheng, a county-level scholar-official of Sichuan, celebrated the quintessence of opium smoking on the eve of the Opium War:

The Hunanese pipe in the mouth,  
the lamp throws sunshine around,  
That unique odor,  
that exquisite rarity from the sea trade,  
rises like steam and cloud.  
...  
the curved shoes below are like softened jade  
the lazy hands at the bed are as thin as a thread  
intimate friends meet again when smoke rises  
How happy!<sup>60</sup>

While Huang Yue, Minister of Ceremony and later Finance, and a favourite of the Jiaqing emperor, better explained China's defeat at British hands:

Lusty friends gather two or three,  
lying down face to face like an old couple,  
A bowl of light sits in the middle,  
flames in both darkness and dawn.  
A naughty boy lights it for you,  
it matters not how much you inhale.  
Small talk knows neither winter nor spring.  
day and night, one forgets cold and hunger.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Zhao Guisheng, 'Xiti yapian yan', in Wang Peixun, *Tingyulou suibi* (8 vols., Chengdu, 1987), vol 6, p. 341. Zhao's poem translates 'Playful verses to the opium smoke.' Wang was born in Shangdong province in 1783. He passed the *juren* examination in Daoguang's second year, 1822 and was sent to work in Sichuan in 1835. He was magistrate in several south Sichuan counties until at least 1844. This book is a lifetime memoir, telling the stories of his friends and colleagues, the local happenings in south Sichuan during the reigns of Jiaqing and Daoguang. Zhao was a native of Jiangsu who was sent to work in Sichuan in the 1830s. He traveled widely in both the eastern and western part of the province while working there. It seems that Wang and Zhao were good friends since they worked not too far from each other and they were both non-Sichuan natives.

<sup>61</sup> Huang Yue, 'Yinpeng', in Lei Jin, ed., *Rongcheng xianhua* (Shanghai, 1954), p. 317. Huang's poem translates as 'Lusty friends.' This poem was written during the reign of Jiaqing when opium-smoking was very popular in officialdom. The tone is similar to those written by other scholar-officials of Jiaqing's time. They sang praises of opium. See Ru Yuanpu, 'Buxi yapian', in Wang Peixun, *Tingyulou suibi* (8 vols., Chengdu, 1987), vol 5, p. 328 & Zhong Jiangi, 'Yapian yan', in Wang Peixun, *Tingyulou suibi* (8 vols., Chengdu, 1987), vol 6, p. 346.

The urban elite was the 'message-sending' and 'production-moulding' forces of the opium smoking consumer trend.<sup>62</sup> They set the standard when it came to relaxation and recreation; they spread the consciousness of consumption. This highlights urbanization and urban culture, the role they played in leisure pattern and social change, the impact they had on popular culture, and most relevantly how they helped to generate the demand for opium. Susan Naquin and Evelyn Rawski argued that the centralizing influence of the Chinese state 'affected public behaviour, family life, and personal morality' and that 'urban culture was important not just for the 5 percent or so of the population that actually resided in central places but for virtually all Chinese.'<sup>63</sup> The scholar-officials worked and lived to interpret and uphold high moral principles; they did not inspire others, they led them. Veblen's theory of the leisure class substantiates opium at this stage. 'It is only at a relatively early stage of culture that the symptoms of expensive vice are conventionally accepted as marks of a superior status, and so tend to become virtues and command the deference of the community.'<sup>64</sup> This 'deference of the community', that is the participation of lower classes, made opium smoking visible as a socio-economic problem in the 1830s. This only challenged their authority, it led to prohibition and ultimately war.<sup>65</sup> The story of opium strengthens the conviction that 'consumption is subject to social control and political redefinition.'<sup>66</sup>

When wars were fought and prohibitions enacted, opium smoking became a consumer trend and it was making its way to the countryside. The sex industry experienced such an unprecedented boom

<sup>62</sup> Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Susan Naquin & Evelyn S. Rawski, *Chinese society in the eighteenth century* (Ann Arbor, 1987), p. 56. For more on urban elite and elite culture, see G. William Skinner, 'Introduction: urban and rural Chinese society', in G. William Skinner, ed., *The city in late imperial China* (Stanford, 1977), pp. 264–269. Frederick W. Mote's 'The transformation of Nanking, 1350–1400' also gave a good study of the city life in Nanking in early Ming.

<sup>64</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The theory of the leisure class* (London, 1994), p. 71.

<sup>65</sup> The story of opium is similar to alcohol in the West and qat in contemporary Africa. See Lee V. Cassanelli, 'Qat: changes in the production and consumption of a quasilegal commodity in northeast Africa', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 236–257. The chewing of the quasilegal qat by the newly rich and upwardly mobile urbanites of Somali challenged state control; and government response was a ban in 1983.

<sup>66</sup> Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: commodities and the politics of value', in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 6.

after the Opium War (1839–1842) that smoking places were found common in remote villages and clustered agrarian communities as the 1878-compiled *Nanhui Xianzhi* recorded:

During the past thirty or forty years, smokers have not been confined just to the cities but have become almost as common in the remote countryside. To give an idea of a town's daily consumption of opium, the amount of money spent on it exceeds that spent on rice. In addition there are also the *huayan guan* [flower-smoke shop]. They say they are husband-and-wife houses; but in reality they seduce the sons of good families. They are a place for secret adultery.<sup>67</sup>

Sex recreation accompanied by opium smoking in *huayan guan* was evolving into a cult of its own. The inter-war years (1842–1856) saw increased smuggling, cultivation and consumption. Shanghai was replacing Canton as the undisputed capital of opium commerce and consumption.<sup>68</sup> But more fundamentally Shanghai was emerging to be the centre of sex recreation. Mao Xianglin, a local scholar, knew the situation well:

Ever since the disturbance of *guichou* [1853, the Taiping rebellion], the city's defence is tight and the gate is shut at sunset. The brothel business within the walls has declined. But recently, they've moved to the foreigner's place [British and international settlement]; and they were joined by travelling gangs [prostitutes] from Guangdong. These women had strange clothes, they wore no hair-buns, no tight skirts, no bound feet, no high heels, no jewellery, but they can sing, we don't understand the words, but the songs are sexy enough to tell . . . There are also *huagu* (flower-drum) women, they sing sensual words to attract clients. Since opium is fashionable, *yan guan* [opium shops] stand one after another, the crafty ones always use women to allure clients; they gather around, they wore long skirts and heeled shoes.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Jin Fuceng & Zhang Wenhui (ed.), *Nanhui xianzhi* (22 vols., Taipei, 1970), vol 20, p. 6A. This edition was compiled in the Guangxu emperor's fourth year, 1878. The 1884-compiled *Songjiangfu xuzhi*, 'The extended Songjiang county gazetteer,' also recorded; 'In our country, there were not many smokers before Daoguang's reign. But since the end of his reign [mid-1840s], the evil can not be contained, smokers have increased day by day in big streets and big cities. Apart from the cities, the habit has also spread to the small towns and villages. One day's expenditure on opium exceeds that on rice and other foodstuffs, many [rice and food stores] have ended up bankrupt for this reason.' See Bo Run & Yao Guangfa, *Songjiangfu xuzhi* (40 vols., Taipei, 1974), vol 5, 14A–B. This is a reprint of the 1884 edition.

<sup>68</sup> John K. Fairbank, 'The creation of the treaty system', in Denis Twitchett & John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge history of China volume 10 late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, part 1* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 213–261.

<sup>69</sup> Mao Xianling, *Moyu lu* (16 vols., Shanghai, 1985), vol 7, pp. 104–5. Although Mao's biographical information is lacking, this memoir indicates that he was born around 1815. The book was prefaced by himself in 1870, it seemed he died before

The fact that 'yan guan stand one after another' can also be gauged from the life of Wang Tao, a famous social figure who worked in Shanghai between 1849 and 1862.<sup>70</sup> This was a picture of Jiangnan in the Xianfeng emperor's tenth year, 1861:

When I was small, I saw tea houses and wine stores but they were not many. In recent years and day by day wine stores have out-numbered rice stores, tea houses have surpassed wine stores, and foreign smoke shops further out-numbered wine stores. Remote towns and little villages, they may not have rice stores, yet I have never heard of any place where you cannot get *yang yan* [foreign smoke].<sup>71</sup>

Opium was part of a consumer trend that centred on *yang huo*; it was also evolving into a trend of its own. Most important of all, it enthralled many in six decades, from prince, opera star to 'both the high and the low' in officialdom, from soldiers to urban middle classes and rich peasants. Men of letters and officials exemplified opium and spread the consciousness of consumption as smoking filtered down the class lines and from the coast and urban centres to inland and rural areas. They ultimately influenced the standardization of the popular culture of opium. The two wars fought in the name of opium had helped to put opium on the map of Chinese neighbourhoods and of Chinese culture. It would continue to poison and in certain respects regenerate the Chinese people and society in the century to come.

1874 when the book was printed. Mao was a *jiansheng*, a student of government-supervised and subsidized state colleges. Graduates were eligible to participate provincial and national examinations and could be appointed directly to offices. Some would purchase this title by contributing grain or money to the state. Mao lived and worked in the Shanghai area.

<sup>70</sup> Wang Tao, *Wang Tao riji* (Beijing, 1987), pp. 22–3. Wang Tao, 1823–1897, was a native of Wuxian, Jiangsu province. He had obtained the *xiucai* degree 1841 and went to Shanghai in 1848. He met Walter Henry Medhurst of London Missionary Society there and became the Chinese editor for the Mission Press. He also struck up a lifetime friendship with James Legge (1815–1897). Wang Tao left a whole array of literary works in addition to this diary.

<sup>71</sup> Chen Xiqi, 'Bibin zaji', in *MingQing xijian shiji xulu* (Nanjing, 1983), p. 33. *Bibin zaji* translates as 'The miscellaneous notes on the escape from the soldiers' and *MingQing xijian shiji xulu* as 'Introduction to the records of Ming-Qing rare histories.' According to the publisher, the original version is hand-copied and is located at the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. Chen Xiqi was born in Haining, Zhejiang province and was a *Juren* of Daoguang. When the Taiping troops converged upon Zhejiang in 1861, Chen's family went on the road to escape the soldiers. He jotted down the miscellaneous things he saw; he also wrote about local customs, such as dining, fashion, opium smoking and gambling.



### ‘The Volume of Smoke and Powder’<sup>72</sup>

This section is devoted to women, their lives with opium and the sex industry. The social life of opium had started with ‘the court ladies’ of the mid-Ming, it would galvanize the sex industry when teahouses, restaurants and brothels used opium ostentatiously to lure clients in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Opium created jobs for women, it also intensified their subjugation. This was so because the process of heating up a tiny globule of opium paste until it bubbled, scooping it up with a small needle, putting it on the bowl of a long-stemmed pipe and holding it above the oil-burning lamp until it was smoked turned into a craft and became a means of livelihood for prostitutes and female servants in general. The union of women and opium has a linguistic aspect.<sup>73</sup> *Yan*, originally meant smoke from burning, vapour from heating or natural mist, can be conjugated with different suffixes. For example, *Yan hua*, literally ‘smoke and flower’, means the spectacular beauty fireworks displayed as well as the world of prostitution. *Yan hua* was the beginning of the *Huayan guan*, the opium-sex den. There is also *yan fen*, ‘smoke and powder.’ Like *hua*, *fen* refers to women. Smoking coloured the business of ‘flower’ and ‘powder,’ while *hua* and *fen* enriched the experience of smoking. ‘Smoke and flower/powder’ denoted the leisure of opium smoking accompanied by sex recreation. More, such as *yan xia*, ‘mists and clouds,’ was to come. *Yan xia* used to denote one’s love for the beauty of nature, now it was extended to opium addiction. Opium fuelled the sex recreation industry; it also enriched the vocabulary of the Chinese language.

Chinese women first began smoking with tobacco, and they

<sup>72</sup> Lu Lin (ed.), *Yanfen juan* (Hefei, 1994). ‘Yan’ is smoke and ‘fen’ is powder; ‘JUAN’ refers to a volume of a collection or a single book. Lu Lin and other editors assembled some of the famous writings about women and their lives, such as love and prostitution into a single volume. They explained in the preface that ‘The volume of smokes and powder’ not only exposes the darkness of feudal society but also express their sympathy for those who were weak and meek.

<sup>73</sup> The second edition of the *Hanyu dacidian* gives a good explanation to the origin of this linguistic aspect. See *Hanyu dacidian bianji weiyuanhui* (compiler), *Hanyu dacidian* (12 vols., Shanghai, 1993), vol 7, 175–87. As early as the Tang dynasty, *yanhua* was used to denote the world of prostitution. See Huang Tao, ‘Gui yuan’, in *Quan Tang shi* (900 vols., Beijing, 1960), vol 704, p. 8095. The famous Shen Defu used *yanfen* to denote prostitutes. See Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuobian* (3 vols., Beijing, 1959), vol 3, 692–3.

certainly enjoyed opium when it came along.<sup>74</sup> Although they began smoking opium in at least, if not earlier than, Qianlong's time, the golden age of female consumption followed the two opium wars.<sup>75</sup> Those who were highborn or married rich were more likely to pick up the habit. Mrs Archibald Little observed that in Sichuan in the late nineteenth century.<sup>76</sup> Women of upper and upper-middle class background had access to and enjoyed opium smoking, so too did those who served upper and upper-middle class men. Opium was as an important attraction as a courtesan/prostitute's youth and beauty. It helped them to entertain men of letters/officials and maintain their livelihood. Xu Huanyuan told stories of *yan fen*, 'smoke and powder' in Hefei, capital of Anhui province, in *Chennan Caotang Biji*, 'Diary at the Hall of Grass in the South City:'

On the eve of the result [provincial examination], *Gongzi* was drunk and asleep. *Ji* sent someone to buy the list [successful candidates]; she paced back and forth, could not control her feet, sometimes murmuring to herself and at other times looking around nervously; her servants, both old and young, laughed at her in private. Dawn was approaching, *Ji* secretly mixed opium paste and waited for the news. Suddenly she heard hurried knocking, she opened the door immediately and the messengers were there, *Gongzi* had passed the exam. *Ji* rewarded [tipped] the messengers lavishly and began to think about getting money for the metropolitan [national] examination. *Gongzi* thanked her and stayed on with her.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Wang Shizhen, *Xiangzu biji* (12 vols., Shanghai, 1982 reprint of 1705 edn.), vol 3, p. 45. Wang wrote 'nowadays, from the nobility and gentlemen down to slaves and women, all are addicted to tobacco.' See also George Leonard Staunton, *An authentic account of an embassy from the king of Great Britain to the emperor of China* (2 vols., London, 1797), vol 2, p. 173-4.

<sup>75</sup> Wang Kangnian, 'Zhuangxie xuanlu', in Wang Hongbin, ed., *Jindu shijian* (Changsha, 1997), pp. 24-25. Wang's work can be translated as 'Selected work of Zhuangxie.' I have been unable to consult a copy of Wang Kangnian's *Zhuangxie xuanlu* and I quoted it from Wang Hongbin's work. Wang, 1860-1911, came from a family of scholars, officials and bibliophiles in Hangzhou. He was a *jinsi* of Guangxu and rose to be a Grand Secretary in the latter's reign. See Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing period* (Taipei, 1970 edn.), pp. 821-22.

<sup>76</sup> Mrs Archibald Little, *Intimate China* (London, 1899), pp. 178-79. Mrs Archibald Little arrived in China (Shanghai) in May 1887. She traveled extensively in China and spent most of her time in Sichuan where her husband helped open up British trade there. She was very interested in Chinese women; her book shows that she spent much time with upper-class women in Sichuan. She also took many pictures of China, especially Sichuan.

<sup>77</sup> Xu Huanyuan, 'Chennan caotang biji', in Lu Lin, ed., *Yanfen juan* (Hefei, 1994), p. 445. *Gong zi* originally referred to sons of wealthy and distinguished families, gradually it extended to men of letters or means. Xu's biographical information is limited; his writing seems to show that he was familiar with the *Qinghuai* river and night life of Nanjing in the late nineteenth century. He titled the story *Chiqing ji*, 'the infatuated woman.'

Brothel-going was costly and maintaining a *Ji* on a long-term basis was even more so. Opium can be enjoyed at a man's own convenience and privacy without women. Dens were initially opium shops where one bought the cake, either smoked it there or took it away. Many had done so for years without the companionship of women. Yet nothing could replace what women would bring. Smoking released a fog-like cloud that arose, lingered in different shapes and disappeared like a ghost. Although many were captured by this *yan xia*, 'mists and clouds,' that could carry them away from the earthly world of stresses and strains, many more were fascinated with the human 'mists and clouds,' that is sexual intercourse. 'The drama of the smoke-cloud' was a polite and enigmatic phrase that denoted such recreation as the following story tells. The smoke cloud added meaning and substance to the 'human cloud,' as Yang Enshou tells of his own experience:

At your first visit to *Taoyuan*, you are invited to play the drama of the smoke-cloud after tea. She, the beautiful, would lie down and languidly extend her luminous white wrist. Opium would be passed between her intertwining fingers and exhaled slowly as a cloud. Like the *Sizhao* flower, one is never tired of looking at it through the mist. As for the smoking guns [pipes], luxurious ones come in jade and *daimao* [exquisite tortoise shell], plain ones in square or [Hunan] mottled bamboo. Sometimes you would see black bamboo ones as big as a thumb inscribed with *Sandu fu*; the characters were as tiny as ants but without any damage done to the bamboo and without any abbreviation of strokes. Ah, this really is an object of lovesickness. Some *Gong zi* came to the province for the autumn examination, on the eve of the result, he gathered all the famous flowers [prostitutes] to celebrate.<sup>78</sup>

Smoking accompanied by sex and poetry-appreciation, what 'confusions of pleasure!'<sup>79</sup> Smoke cloud and human cloud echoed and

<sup>78</sup> Yang Enshou, 'Lanzhi lingxianglu', in Lei Jin, ed., *Qingren shuohui* (Shanghai, 1928), pp. 404-405. Yang's work can be translated as 'Collection of individual beauty by *Lanzhi* and *Qingren shuohui* translates as 'Collected stories of the Qing people.' It was compiled by Lei Jin who wrote 'Gossips from the city of opium' in Shanghai. Lei Jin collected many literary works and compiled them. *Sizhao* is a flower in legend; it was said that when it blossomed, its brightness shone like the sun. *Sandu fu* was written by the Jin dynasty poet Zuo Si. It was said that he took ten years to write *Sandu fu*. The work became an immediate success; it was so popular that the price of paper went up in the capital Luoyang. Zuo used history to criticize the Jin regime and expressed his anger at the caste system. His language was simple but powerful and full of spirit. *Sandu fu* was a classic among the educated.

<sup>79</sup> Timothy Brook, *Confusions of pleasure: commerce and culture in Ming China* (Berkeley, 1998).

elevated the soul of a man who knew how to put his experience into words. Yang Enshou was a man of letters from Changsha, capital of Hunan province.<sup>80</sup> *Taoyuan* was the name of a town in north-western Hunan where legend had that beautiful women came from.<sup>81</sup> Hunan was situated at the cross-road of opium transportation, surrounded by opium-importing and opium-growing neighbours. But what added to Hunan's geographical importance was the beauty and abundance of its natural resources: the famed mottled bamboo, a major material for the pipe and a profitable business for the Hunanese. Like snuff bottles, the opium pipes fascinated and inspired generations of literati and officials. This also shows the sophistication of pipe-making at the time. Examination students bound for Changsha every year and their celebration would not be without 'smoke' and 'powder' both of which would be exhaled as clouds. Sex recreation found the best partner in opium, together they catered especially to men of letters and means.

We see a vivid picture of a brothel's goings-on and the specialization that was beginning to take place in the opium-sex industry in the late nineteenth century. The process of heating up a tiny globule of opium paste until it bubbled, scooping it up with a small needle, putting it on the bowl of a long-stemmed pipe and holding it above the oil-burning lamp until it was smoked turned into a craft and became a means of livelihood for lower ranking prostitutes and female servants in general. This was only the beginning. They were also responsible for lighting the lamp and ensuring that all was ready for inhaling, refilling both the bowl and the lamp, and rotating or at least keeping the pipe burning when a client wanted a break. This was a delicate job because temperature mattered and the paste could not be over-heated or under-heated; either would make it impossible to scoop with a needle. Therefore only 'intertwining fingers' could achieve that with efficiency and grace. Zhou Sheng, another man of letters,

<sup>80</sup> Yang Enshou, 1835–1891, was a *ju ren* of Tongzhi (1870). He came from a well-to-do provincial family. He worked as private secretaries and advisers to provincial officials in Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi and Hunan provinces in the 1860s. He became a salt commissioner and was later a magistrate in Hubei in 1875. Yang left diaries and literary works, including comments on operas and performance. As a matter of fact, today he is known as a critic of opera and drama. His diary details his theater experience. It seems that this book was written when he was still in and around Hunan, therefore before 1875.

<sup>81</sup> Yang once worked as a private secretary close to Taoyuan. It could also be the name of the den.

tells us his first-hand experience, in *Yangzhou Meng*, 'Yangzhou Dream:'

Every day, she made herself up heavily and demanded one *liang* of silver [50 grams] when she saw a client. She led him to the inner room where a lamp and trays were already set up. Taking the Hunanese mottled bamboo pipe and lying down with a man she had never seen before, she shared the pillow with him opposite on the other side of the lamp. She scooped paste and lighted the lamp. She lived on this business and had to humour her clients sometimes. Shy as a slave girl with her eyes [lowering them flirtatiously], she was good at teasing speech and seducing the young [less experienced] ones. When there was nobody else around late in the evening, she would lie down and inhale with him [client] face to face.<sup>82</sup>

Heating and scooping opium paste was a well-established profession by the 1870s when Zhou Sheng travelled to Yangzhou.<sup>83</sup> Yangzhou prostitutes had their own guilds, and they worked as far as Beijing and Canton.<sup>84</sup> Zhou Sheng knew many of them who survived on such crafts as 'paste-scooping.' The above 'she' started as a servant girl, but paste-scooping allowed her to undertake prostitution should the situation arise. 'She' made a living out of this craft and 'she' certainly took advantage of the late evenings. The all-female profession of *zhugao* and *tiaogao*, 'heating and scooping paste' would flourish into the early twentieth century.

Opium gave women a unique means of survival; thousands made a living for themselves while thousands more supported their families by this means. Wang Tao, one of the most noticeable social figures of the late nineteenth century, was not only an experienced

<sup>82</sup> Zhou Sheng, 'Yangzhou meng', in *Shuo ku* (4 vols., Shanghai, 1915), vol 1, p. 9B.

<sup>83</sup> Antonia Finnane, 'Yangzhou, a central place in the Qing empire', in Linda Cooke Johnson, ed., *Cities of Jiangnan in late imperial China* (Albany, 1993), pp. 117–49. Finnane argues that Yangzhou's geographical advantage and salt trade had turned the city into a relatively central place in the Qing economy and society.

<sup>84</sup> See Shen Fu, *Fusheng liuji* (4 vols., Shanghai, 1934), vol 4, p. 90. Shen indicated that the girls on the flower boat were from Yangzhou. They also operated in Nanjing, Shanghai. See Penghua sheng, *Qinghuai huafang lu* (Beijing, 1994), pp. 20B–21A; Wang Tao, *Huaguo jutan* (Beijing, 1994), p. 10A; it can be translated as 'The drama of the kingdom of flowers.' See also *Haiqu yeyoulu* (Beijing, 1994), 30B–31A; it can be translated as 'Collection of frequenting brothels close to the sea (the city of Shanghai).' See also Li Dou, *Yangzhou huafanglu* (17 vols., Beijing, 1960). It can be translated as 'The luxuriously-decorated vessels of Yangzhou.' Li's book is dedicated to the history and characters of Yangzhou during Qianlong's time. James Holman, a British traveler to Canton in the 1830s, knew that they charged dearly. See *A voyage round the world, including travels in Africa, Asia, Australasia, America, etc. from 1827 to 1832* (4 vols., London, 1834–5), vol 4, pp. 83–4.

smoker, he was also an experienced *piao ke*, brothel-goer. He enjoyed opium, sex, and he loved discoursing women:

Girl *Hu*, also called *Meizhu* or *Baoer*, came from a small [poor] family in Tinglin in County Song. Her father, *Futang*, had unsurpassed skills and was employed by the country's policing service. . . . At this time, *Ji* [Girl *Hu*] was only twelve, she liked to wear black clothes, people called her 'black *A Bao*,' or affectionately 'black peony.' She grew up, looked sweet and charming, had graceful manners, could write verses, was good at making herself up to look even more delicate and touching. . . . A family surnamed *Xu* who lived in the neighbourhood had a son who was about twenty and not yet married . . . One day he saw the girl and said that she was a lotus flower floating on autumn water. . . . He found out about her family . . . and gave presents to her father.

. . .

*Hu*'s father had the opium addiction, he needed one *liang* of gold every day and this could only be brought in by the girl. . . . At this time, a new magistrate assumed office, he protected robbers and bandits, set them free and paid out no salaries. *Hu*'s family became poor, eventually the situation got so bad they were almost without food. They depended on the girl to lean against the door and smile at strangers passing by [prostitution]. She appeared to be selling opium but in fact was attracting clients. Before long, she even went out and accompanied distinguished guests at dinner parties, this was real prostitution, suddenly she became very famous in the business.<sup>85</sup>

Filial piety, serving one's father and supporting one's family, was the foremost important virtue for a woman. Women of poor families were just as responsible as men when it came to survival.<sup>86</sup> *Yu Yue* knew from the experience of his friend:

*Gu sheng*, Gentleman *Gu*, from *Wujiang* [*Jiangsu*] went to *Suzhou* for the examination and he settled down next to the *Jili qiao* [bridge of fortune]. A teahouse called *Jinfeng lou* [pavilion of fine peacock] sits next to it. He had nothing to do after a meal and went for tea there. It was a full house with only one table partially free in the corner. An old woman and a young lady were there. *Gu* went to the table. The old woman began to talk to *Gu*, after a while they found the conversation enjoyable. The old woman said:

<sup>85</sup> Wang Tao, 'Songying manlu', in Lu Lin, ed., *Yanfen juan* (Hefei, 1994), pp. 388–389. It can be translated as 'informal collection in the shadow of Shanghai.'

<sup>86</sup> Baby girls often sold for more money and women often brought home better incomes by selling their bodies. See Wang Jiazhen, 'Xijiang shiwengao shi'er zong', in *MingQing xijian shiji xulu* (Nanjing, 1983), p. 289. Wang's work translates as 'Twelve works of poetry and prose by the west river.' Wang was a native and local scholar of Zhejiang. He left many literary works and writings about the economic situation in late Qing. He wrote about the sale of female babies and young girls. He wrote: 'Who says it is bad luck to have a girl? It is good to have a girl. You see, the grass of a harvest year is the treasure of famine season.'

'it's boring here, if you are interested, come to my home, I'll cook you a nice meal.' *Gu* went along. When he got there, he was led upstairs, the decoration there was quite fine. This was Daoguang's time, opium was already popular [after the first war]. On the bed, the smoking sets were on display. She asked him to try. *Gu* said that he was not used to it. The old woman said 'It's only occasional, it doesn't hurt!' She asked the young lady to heat the smoke and serve the guest.

*Gu* got on the bed, the young lady took off his shoes and said: 'you can sit or sleep, please feel at home. The old lady will be back shortly.' After a while, he heard harsh door-knocking, the young lady got up and went downstairs to see what was happening, *Gu* felt suspicious, he also went downstairs and hid behind the door. After she opened the door, thirty some men rushed in. They asked where the man is. She said 'He is upstairs.' The gang went upstairs, and *Gu* slipped out of the door. This was a custom of Suzhou, they always use women as allure. When young men fell into the trap, they would rob him of all his possessions, sometimes forcing him to borrow up to ten thousand or even tens of thousands before they would let him go. This is called *xianren tiaoyun* [The celestial being jumps to the cloud].<sup>87</sup>

These two women partnered, voluntarily or involuntarily, with local gangsters to squeeze out a living. Women constituted a large smoking population and their motives for consumption varied dramatically. Like men of letters, soldiers and eunuchs, they also redefined the social life of opium. Opium was a luxury for the upper and upper middle classes, an aphrodisiac for courtesans and prostitutes, a livelihood for the lower classes and a 'pain-killer' for those who chose to end their pains.<sup>88</sup> Sex recreation is universal;

<sup>87</sup> Yu Yue, *Youtaixianguan biji* (16 vols., Shanghai, 1986), vol 11, p. 292. It can be translated as 'Notes from the studio of *Youtaixian*.' Yu, 1821–1906, was a native of Zhejiang. He passed the *jinshi* examination of Daoguang's thirty's year, 1850, with distinction. He then read in the Hanlin academy until 1855 when he became an education commissioner in Honan province. He left office in 1857 and devoted the rest of his life to teaching and writing. He taught in Suzhou, Shanghai and Hangzhou. He left many literary works and is remembered as an advocate and publisher of official histories in the late Qing. He had many students and was well-known among scholars of Jiangnan. This memoir was written during his late years.

<sup>88</sup> Opium had replaced the hanging rope; suicides, aided by opium, not only filled the pages of many late Qing literary works but also caught the attention of missionaries and professionals. See Baiyi jushi, 'Hutian lu', in *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* (3 vols., Taipei, 1962), vol 1, p. 27; Wang Tao, 'Haiqu yeyoulu', in Cong tianzi (compiler), *Xiangyan congshu: fulu* (80 vols., Beijing, 1994), vol *zhong*, pp. 3B–4A, 4A–B, 15A–B, 21A, 34A & 'Huaguo jutan', in Cong tianzi (compiler), *Xiangyan congshu: fulu* (80 vols., Beijing, 1994), pp. 4B–5A, 11B–12A & Yu Yue, *Youtaixianguan biji* (16 vols., Shanghai, 1986), vol 1, pp. 7, 25, 27; vol 2, p. 46 & vol 3, pp. 69–70. See also Wang Tao, 'Houliaozhai zhiyi', in *Qingshuo qizhong* (Shanghai, 1992), pp. 30–31; Xuan Ding, *Yeyu qiudenglu* (12 vols., Changsha,

but what distinguished the Chinese way was not simply literate women but more importantly opium. Beauty alone would not have made Girl Hu and her contemporaries successful, their talent was an asset, serving opium now became yet another. Opium intensified their proletarianization, it also allowed some to take not only their own but also their family's life into their own hands. This was the dichotomy of Chinese women.<sup>89</sup>

### 'Shanghai Vice'<sup>90</sup>

This is opium's epilogue. This section tells not only the story of opium during the Nationalist era, 1912–1949 but also the story of Shanghai in the 1990s when opium in the form of its modern derivatives, despite a thirty-year hibernation (1949–1979), has found its way back to China. The story of Shanghai has been told by many.<sup>91</sup>

1985), vol 12, 291–92. It can be translated as 'Collection of evening language by the autumn lamp.' See also 'jijiu tunfu shengshu yangyan qisihuisheng dan', *Shen Bao*, June 14 & 15, June 21 (1872), 541 & 549; 'Ji fu yangyan an', *Shen Bao*, June 21 (1872), 585–6. Missionaries and British civil servants in late nineteenth century China noticed the suicide of Chinese women. See Robert K. Douglas, *China* (London, 1887 2nd edn.), pp. 83–94. Arthur H. Smith, *The natural history of the Chinese boy and of the Chinese girl; a study in sociology* (Shanghai, 1890), p. 19. James D. Ball, *Things Chinese, or notes connected with China* (London, 1892), p. 718. Historians have studied marriages of and suicides among Chinese women. See James P. McGough, 'Deviant marriage patterns in Chinese society', in Arthur Kleinman & Lin Tsung-yi, eds., *Normal and abnormal behavior in Chinese culture* (Dordrecht, 1981), pp. 171–201; Andrew C. K. Hsieh & Jonathan D. Spence, 'Suicide and the family in pre-modern Chinese society', in Arthur Kleinman & Lin Tsung-yi, eds., *Normal and abnormal behavior in Chinese culture* (Dordrecht, 1981), pp. 29–47.

<sup>89</sup> Florence Asycough, *Chinese women, yesterday and today* (London, 1938). Asycough wrote about the ways of maidens, wives and mothers, about prostitution; she also wrote about talented, strong and even communist women, such as the Tang dynasty poet Li Qingzhao, the three Song sisters and Qiu Jin, the revolutionary who was beheaded by the Qing. See also Mary B. Rankin, 'The emergence of women at the end of the Ch'ing', in Margery Wolf & Roxane Witke, eds., *Women in Chinese society* (Stanford, 1975), pp. 39–66.

<sup>90</sup> Phil Agland, *Shanghai vice (TV series)* (London, 1999). This seven-episode series was first broadcast by Channel 4 during the months of February and March 1999.

<sup>91</sup> *North China Herald* was a newspaper published in Shanghai during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It told much of the happenings of Shanghai during these four decades. *Shen Bao* was one of China's earliest newspapers published in Shanghai in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Percy Finch, *Shanghai and beyond* (New York, 1953); Harriet Sergeant, *Shanghai* (London, 1991);



Early twentieth-century Shanghai was a charming city that provided a variety of recreations from Turkish baths to Russian and American prostitutes, from horse races and jazz bars to Chinese gambling salons, singsong houses and opium dens. This was 'L'age D'or de la Bourgeoisie Chinoise' and opium was indeed the 'opiate of the people'.<sup>92</sup> Hu Xianghan remembered the good old days in *Shanghai xiaozhi*, 'The small gazetteer of Shanghai':

The spectacle of opium dens in the old days was grander than teahouses, they were what people called *biggies* in the international settlement. They were lined up one after another; you couldn't really count them. At the beginning the *Mianyun Ge* in the French Settlement was the best, then they started to compete with each other. Later *Nanchen Xin* was the best. It was spacious, grand, exquisite and sumptuously-decorated. Big ones were like a couch bed and small ones were cubicles. Even those who are not addicted to opium came and lay down. When evening descended and prostitutes converged, the whole place bustled with noise and excitement. It was not strange that man and woman who never met before shared a bed facing each other. Secret lovers were found here. Businessmen as well as gentlemen frequented and hung around this kind of places.<sup>93</sup>

The prevalence and sophistication of the opium-sex business have already been discussed by both Gail Hershatter and Christian Henriot.<sup>94</sup> Given that China was already the world's most populous country at the turn of century, 500 million; it is perhaps not surprising that she also had the largest prostitute population. Sidney D. Gamble compared the Chinese case with others in 1919:

Lu Hanchao, *Beyond the Neon lights: everyday Shanghai in the early twentieth century* (Berkeley, 1999). See also G. Lanning & S. Couling, *The history of Shanghai* (Shanghai, 1921); John Pal, *Shanghai saga* (London, 1963); Pan Ling, *Old Shanghai: gangster in paradise* (Hong Kong, 1984); Christian Henriot, *Shanghai, 1927-1937: municipal power, locality, and modernisation* (Berkeley, 1993); Linda Cooke Johnson, *Shanghai, from market town to treaty port, 1074-1858* (Stanford, 1995); Lu Hanchao, 'Away from Nanking road: small stores and neighbourhood life in modern Shanghai,' *Journal of Asian Studies*, 54, 1 (1995), 93-123 & Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: community, culture and colonialism, 1900-1949* (Manchester, 1999).

<sup>92</sup> Marie-Claire Bergere, *L'age d'or de la bourgeoisie chinoise* (Paris, 1986).

<sup>93</sup> Hu Xianghan, 'Shanghai xiaozhi' in *Shanghai tan yu Shanghai ren congshu* (Shanghai, 1989), p. 41. Hu was an uncle of the famous Hu Shi. This book was published in 1930.

<sup>94</sup> Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous pleasures: prostitution and modernity in twentieth-century Shanghai* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 49-50, 145, 186, 428n.132. See also Christian Henriot, *Belles de Shanghai* (Paris, 1997), pp. 12, 73, 95, 173, 209, 244, 263, 289, 321, 335, 344 & 372.

<i>City</i>	<i>Number of inhabitants per recognized prostitutes</i> <sup>95</sup>
Shanghai	137
Peking	258
Tokyo	277
Nagoya	314
Japan	392
Chicago	437
Paris	481
Berlin	582
London	906

Not only was opium indispensable in the sex industry but also it had completely taken over the business of general relaxation by this time. Not only teahouses and restaurants provided opium smoking, but also tourist places and public parks were equipped with facilities for smoking in case one fancied it when on a stroll along the river or in the park. Even *Shuchang*, a theatre where people listened to story-telling, also provided opium smoking; and this was indeed a must-do in the 1920s and 1930s Shanghai.<sup>96</sup> Alexander Des Forges brilliantly put opium in the context of leisure and Shanghai.<sup>97</sup> Somerset W. Maugham had read so many descriptions of Chinese opium dens that made his blood run cold; he made sure he visited one when he was in China in the early 1920s:

I was taken into an opium den by a smooth-spoken Eurasian the narrow, winding stairway up which he led me prepared me sufficiently to receive the thrill I expected. I was introduced into a neat enough room, brightly lit, divided into cubicles the raised floor of which, covered with clean matting, formed a convenient couch. In one an elderly gentleman, with a grey head and very beautiful hands, was quietly reading a newspaper, with his long pipe by his side. In another two coolies were lying, with a pipe between them, which they alternately prepared and smoked. They were young men, of a hearty appearance and they smiled at me in a friendly way. One of them offered me a smoke. In a third four men squatted over a chess-board,

<sup>95</sup> Sidney D. Gamble, *Peking: a social survey* (New York, 1921), p. 247.

<sup>96</sup> Chi Zhizheng, 'Fuyou mengying', in *Shanghai tan yu Shanghai ren* (Shanghai, 1989), p. 160. Chi (1854–1937) was a native of Zhejiang and scholar. He worked as private secretaries in Nanjing, Taiwan and Hangzhou from the 1880s. He retired to Shanghai in his later life, writing and enjoying life as he detailed in his memoir. See also Alexander Des Forges, 'Opium/leisure/Shanghai: urban economies of consumption', in Timothy Brook & Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (eds.), *Opium regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839–1952* (Berkeley, 2000), 167–85.

<sup>97</sup> Alexander Des Forges, 'Opium/leisure/Shanghai: urban economies of consumption', in Timothy Brook & Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (eds.), *Opium regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839–1952* (Berkeley, 2000), 167–85.

and a little farther on a man was dandling a baby while the baby's mother, whom I took to be the landlord's wife, a plump, pleasant-faced woman, watched him with a broad smile on her lips. It is a cheerful spot, comfortable, home-like, and cosy. It reminded me somewhat of the little intimate beer-houses of Berlin where the tired working man could go in the evening and spend a peaceful hour. Fiction is stranger than fact.<sup>98</sup>

Opium identified Chinese people and their culture. What was more, it was not just about misery and tragedy. Herbert Giles had long seen it that way: 'The Chinese people are naturally sober, peaceful, and industrious; they fly from intoxicating, quarrelsome samshoo, to the more congenial opium-pipe, which soothes the weary brain, induces sleep, and invigorates the tired body.'<sup>99</sup> He concluded: 'moderation in all kinds of eating, drinking and smoking, is just as common a virtue in China as in England or anywhere else.'<sup>100</sup> Regardless of whether we agree with him or not, opium had finally entered stardom and swept Chinese consumer society. Mr Opium continued to lead a lively social life in the 1920s and 1930s despite the plague of war and famine.

The outbreak of the Second World War and Japanese invasion compelled the Nationalists' move to the Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, while the Communists settled in Shaanxi and Gansu, both being deep opium countries.<sup>101</sup> As the war intensified, some sank

<sup>98</sup> Somerset W. Maugham, *On a Chinese screen* (London, 1990), pp. 33–4. It was first published in London in 1922.

<sup>99</sup> Herbert A. Giles, *Chinese sketches* (London, 1876), p. 114.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116. See also RoyCom, 1:1637. Mr T. W. Duff, a 30-years merchant in China, gave the following testimony to the royal commission: 'Having lived in several of the outports in China during 30 years, I have become somewhat familiar with the habits of the natives and have had a great deal to do in business with men who indulge in the opium pipe. My opinion is that under the circumstances of their living, food, climate, and habitations, opium to them has no deleterious effects, indeed quite the contrary, for it is a positive need and they could not do without it. In what I say here, I do not refer to the occasional abuse of the drug in some of the large towns like Shanghai.'

<sup>101</sup> For Nationalist opium policies, see Joyce A. Madancy, 'Poppies, patriotism, and the public sphere: nationalism and state leadership in the anti-opium crusade in Fujian, 1906–1916'; Edward R. Slack Jr, 'The national anti-opium association and the Guomindang state, 1924–1937'; Alan Baumlér, 'Opium control versus opium suppression: the origin of the 1935 six-year plan to eliminate opium and drugs' & Lucien Bianco, 'The responses of opium growers to eradication campaigns and the poppy tax, 1907–1949', in Timothy Brook & Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (eds.), *Opium regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839–1952* (Berkeley, 2000), 228–47, 248–69; 270–91 & 292–319. Chen Yongfa of Academic Sinica has long argued that the Communists cultivated opium in Ya'an in order to survive the economic embargo in the 1930s and 1940s. See Chen Yongfa, 'Hongtaiyang xia de yingsu hua', *Xin shixue*, I, 4 (1990), 41–117. It translates as 'The poppy flower under the red sun.'

further into opium while others took to the road of opium; it delivered them, even if the delivery was ephemeral, in a time of national peril and international disaster. Chongqing was much less glamorous than Shanghai or Beijing, yet it had much opium. Many had made sure that they tasted it when they were there. Herbert O. Yardley, known as 'the father of cryptography in the United States,' was one. Initially a free agent hired by the Nationalist government to break Japanese codes in 1938, Yardley had his share of frustration in Chongqing, but he did not forget there was opium:

To divert my thoughts from these depressing speculations, I asked Schwer if he had ever smoked opium. I had never done so, and it seemed improper to leave Chungking without having been in an opium den. Schwer professed to being an old hand and said it wasn't bad but that 'you sort of need a girl.'<sup>102</sup>

Opium was a most important symbol of China for foreigners like Yardley and Schwer. Once they were in China, experimenting with opium was a way of tasting indigenous culture. Opium was available in many parts of the world, but it was the Chinese who perfected the way of smoking as Schwer constantly reminded Yardley:

'Here you are,' he said. 'It's simple. Hold the pipe bowl at an angle so that the flame touches the opium and suck on the pipe.'

I did as he said and took a few puffs.

'How'm I doing?'

'Just stretch out and keep at it. But it's no fun without a woman.'

... 'I told you opium was no good without a woman.'<sup>103</sup>

Schwer had summarized the very essence of opium smoking. What mattered therefore was not only smoking in a Chinese den but more

See also Xie Juezai, *Xie Juezai riji* (2 vols., Beijing, 1984), vol 2, p. 734; Peter Vladimirov, *The Vladimirov diaries Yanan, China: 1942-1945* (London, 1975), p. 43. See also Edgar Snow, *Red star over China* (London, 1968 first revised and enlarged edn.), pp. 54-55 & *Random notes on red China, 1936-1945* (Cambridge [MA], 1957), p. 19; Nym Wales, *Red dust: autobiographies of Chinese communists as told to Nym Wales* (Stanford, 1952), pp. 46-47; Harrison E. Salisbury, *The long march: the untold story* (London, 1985), pp. 181 & 305.

<sup>102</sup> Herbert O. Yardley, *Chinese black chamber: an adventure in espionage* (New York, 1983), p. 155. It was my supervisor Dr Hans van de Ven who first pointed me to this book. Chongqing had much opium not because Sichuan had its own opium but because Yunnan and Guizhou opium would make its way there as well. See H. G. W. Woodhead, *Adventures in far eastern journalism: a record of thirty-three years' experience* (Tokyo, 1935), p. 233 & James Bertram, *The shadow of a war: a New Zealander in the Far East 1939-1946* (London, 1947), p. 25. Bertram's aide told him 'Kweichow is famous for three things. Hills, rain and opium.'

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

importantly the ambiance of smoking when accompanied by Chinese women. From the 'court ladies' of the mid Ming to the paste-scooping women of the late Qing and now in war-torn Chongqing, Mr Opium had never lost his aphrodisiac appeal and sex touch for nearly five hundred years.

The Communists carried out a ruthless campaign when they took over in 1949. It seemed that they did stamp out the evils of opium, gambling and prostitution during the thirty years of puritan revolution. The 1980s saw the beginning of economic reform in China, they also saw the 're-emergence of drugs,' that is opium and its modern derivatives.<sup>104</sup> 'The poppy flowers blossom again in the north and south,' and underground opium dens resurfaced in the old opium country.<sup>105</sup> More than 700 underground opium dens were raided in Guizhou province in 1986 alone.<sup>106</sup> The Communists are confronted with opium and the concomitant problems of consumption, cultivation and trafficking. As the 1999 television documentary 'Shanghai Vice' explained:

The buildings of Shanghai's waterfront echo with memories of the European past. For over seventy years the western powers ruled here in uneasy

<sup>104</sup> Zhou Yongming, 'Nationalism, identity, and state-building: the antidrug crusade in the people's republic, 1949-1952' in Timothy Brook & Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (eds.), *Opium regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 380-403.

<sup>105</sup> Su Zhiliang, *Zhongguo dupinshi* (Shanghai, 1997), 530. Su used materials that are only for internal use. He mentioned the report of Tao Siju, Minister of Public Security, to the 16th session of standing committee of the National People's Congress and that of Li Peiyao, Vice-chairman of the standing committee of the National People's Congress in 1995. Tao pointed out that the sale of narcotics is one of the major security problems while Li acknowledged that the situation is the worst in the old opium provinces: Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou. The Chinese leadership knew the resurgence of the opium. The author Su graduated from Huadong Normal University with a master's degree in history in 1985. He was a visiting research fellow at Tokyo university in the early 1990s. He is now the deputy chairman of the history department in Shanghai Normal University and has published widely on drug consumption and the underground world.

<sup>106</sup> Wang Hongbing reported that between 1991 and 1995, drug related cases numbered 125,000 and criminals 189,000; drugs confiscated included: heroin 15.8 tons, opium 10.6 tons, marijuana 3.4 tons, *bingdu* [frozen narcotics] 2.3 tons. See Wang Hongbing, *Jingdu shijian* (Changsha, 1997), p. 492. Su Ning reported that more than 3,000,000 poppy shrubs were destroyed in 1992. Su Ning, 'Woguo jindu taidu jianjue cuoshi deli', *Renmin Ribao*, June 26 (1992), 1; 'Yinianlai woguo pohuo dupinan wanyuqi', *Renmin Ribao*, June 27 (1992), 3 & 'Jiancha jiaqiang shehui zhi'an zonghe zhili de juejing zhixing qingkuang', *Renmin Ribao*, August 30 (1994), 3. See also Ren Yuanxin, 'Zuigao renmin fayuan gongzuo baogao', *Renmin Ribao*, March 24 (1995), 2 & Zhang Shutang, 'Yanda douzheng zai quanguo zhankai', *Renmin Ribao*, April 29 (1996), 1.

alliance with the Chinese underworld. Free trade and lax laws propelled an economy driven by opium and vice. Then under Mao, prostitution, gambling and opium addiction all but disappeared. Recently free trade and opportunities have returned to the city, vice has also returned fuelled not by opium but by its modern derivative heroin.<sup>107</sup>

‘What the Revolution in China wiped out, Reform brought it back.’<sup>108</sup> Opium’s modern derivatives have come back to haunt China because opium did not die a natural death in the thirty-year hibernation. Like Shanghai and China, opium was modernized. The Chinese people may have learned their lessons from history, but history alone could not save China. The social life of opium, embedded in Chinese history, continues.

### Conclusion

Mr Opium has had ‘a tenacious hold’ on China over the past five hundred years; he has lived a social life that no other commodity has had since its epoch-making transformation.<sup>109</sup> I have set opium in its cultural context and we have seen how the Chinese people, collectively and overtime, developed a complex culture of consumption around its use. Opium, first of all, helps us see not only China’s intimacy with South and Southeast Asia during the Ming but also the dynamics of Ming’s maritime trade and diplomacy. The introduction and naturalization of opium smoking took both exogenous and endogenous forces. No single paradigm, imperialism or China-centred, can single-handedly explain Chinese history; the story of opium has reinforced this conviction. Opium gives us a glimpse of Chinese sexology, and especially of its role in Ming court culture. Although Robert Hans van Gulick and Joseph Needham have studied

<sup>107</sup> Phil Agland, *Shanghai vice (TV series)* (London, 1999). This was from the first episode of the series.

<sup>108</sup> Adi Ignatius & Julia Leung, ‘What the revolution in China wiped out, reform brought back’, *Wall Street Journal*, November 15 (1989), A1 & A23. *Renmin ribao*, The People’s Daily, also reported the emergence of drug traffic and consumption. See Su Ning, ‘Woguo jindu taidu jianjue chuoshi deli’, *Renmin Ribao*, June 26 (1992), 1; Su Ning, ‘Jiancha jiaxiang shejui zhi’an zonghe zhilide jue ding zhixing qingkuang’, *Renmin Ribao*, August 30 (1994) & Zhang Shetang, ‘Yanda doucheng zai quanguo zhankai’, *Renmin Ribao*, April 29 (1996). The June 26th paper provided statistics. The correspondent Su Ning reported that in the past year drug related cases totaled 8,344, criminals arrested were 18,479, poppy uprooted amounted to 3,000,000 and there were 148,539 registered drug addicts.

<sup>109</sup> Percy Finch, *Shanghai and beyond* (New York, 1953), p. 282.

Chinese sexology, we need to know much more in order to understand that which had helped to shape the history of opium and China for the next five hundred years.<sup>110</sup> Opium sheds light on sexual practices beyond the world of the Ming court. Opium smoking accompanied by sex recreation was indeed a Chinese invention. Sex was an industry, it was also an art and opium helps unravel this cherished tradition. Opium helps us understand Chinese women. The social life of opium would not be without them, elite, urban and popular culture would not be without them. They contributed to the making of the aphrodisiac myth, but more importantly they helped write the legacy of opium. Like Mr Opium, they played a role larger than themselves in modern China.

No historians and social scientists have written about a most important aspect of Ming–Qing socio-economic transformation and leisure revolution: *yanghuo re*, the Chinese craving for foreign stuff. Telling the story of opium is a beginning. The Chinese desire for things foreign had its origin in Ming maritime exchange. Tobacco, sandalwood, singsongs came, as would opium. Robert Hart had once remarked that ‘the Chinese have the best food in the world, rice; the best drink, tea and the best clothing, cotton, silk and fur.’<sup>111</sup> They certainly needed the best smoke, opium. Although they called foreigners barbarians, they appreciated what the foreigners had to offer. This teaches us much about Chinese rhetoric and pragmatism. Historians have continued to study urbanization, but much needs to be done to understand urban elite, taste-making, the mechanisms of transmission and the role of urban institutions such as theatres and teahouses in our effort to understand Ming–Qing consumer behaviour, popular culture, leisure pattern and social change. A comprehensive study of *yanghuo re* would certainly answer and raise many questions about Ming–Qing economy, culture and society. Opium helps us understand social control. Mrs Archibald Little complained in 1899: ‘With opium-dens all over the place, with exquisite opium-pipes and all the coquetries of opium-trays and other accessories in the houses of the rich, how is it that we all give warning to a servant

<sup>110</sup> Robert Hans van Gulick, *Erotic colour prints of the Ming period, with an essay on Chinese sex life from the Han to the Ch'ing dynasty, B.C. 205–A.D. 1644* (3 vols., Tokyo, 1951) & *Sexual life in ancient China, a preliminary survey of Chinese sex and society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.* (Leiden, 1961); Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China* (19 vols., Cambridge, 1983), vol 5, p. 198.

<sup>111</sup> Jerome Ch'en, *China and the West: society and culture 1815–1937* (London, 1979), p. 27.

when we hear that he has taken to opium? How is it that the treasure on a journey is never confided to a coolie who smokes?<sup>112</sup> When men of letters and officials smoked, opium was cultured and a status symbol, but when the lower classes began to lie down, opium became degrading and ultimately criminal. The story of opium is a perfect example of the political redefinition of consumption.

From the late fifteenth to the late twentieth century, Mr Opium has outlived many political regimes and continues to play a role larger than himself in the social change of China. Joseph Esherick has argued:

in all of these changes—political, economic, cultural, demographic, and environmental—the Chinese Revolution has played a crucial role in the transformative process. But in the end, these historical processes are larger than the revolution, and it will be necessary to subordinate the history of the revolution to these larger patterns of change. Only then can we escape the teleology of revolution and gain an understanding of China's past that provides a better key to understanding its present.<sup>113</sup>

Opium is one historical process that is larger than the revolution. It started centuries before the revolution, it survived the revolution as well. It has been evolving as a Chinese institution in the past five hundred years; and it represents a larger pattern of change and continuity. I have found, through my Ph.D. research, that opium is a fruitful optic through which to look at China's capacity and complexity.

<sup>112</sup> Mrs Archibald Little, *Intimate China* (London, 1899), pp. 95–6.

<sup>113</sup> Joseph W. Esherick, 'Ten theses on the Chinese revolution', *Modern China*, 21, 1 (1995), 45–76.