

between local understandings of law, and the chapters are full of illustrative anecdotes. On both frontiers, the fluidity of residence and ethnic bonds made it difficult to demarcate boundaries among subject peoples.

While the book draws on new empirical material and makes productive comparisons across regions, it does so without advancing any particular new conceptual framework provoked by these novel comparisons. Its chronological structure cuts out several important formative decades from the history of extraterritoriality. This means, for instance, that the murder of Augustus Raymond Margary in 1875, which led to diplomatic repercussions that touched on extraterritoriality in the region, falls outside of the temporal scope of the book. The book would also have benefited from a more detailed recognition of the author's debts to earlier research, especially in regard to mixed courts on China's littoral frontier.

These drawbacks notwithstanding, Whewell has broken new ground and has made an important contribution to the history of extraterritoriality and informal empire in China. Whewell has shown how comparative and transregional scholarship can yield new insights to our understanding, and the reviewer hopes that this book will be followed by other books that link Southeast Asia to Central Asia in this refreshing way.

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Diana S. Kim, *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition across Southeast Asia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020. Pp. 336. \$35.00 hardcover (ISBN 9780691172408).
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I wrote about the creation of an empire financed by a drug trade (*Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore 1800–1910*, Cornell University Press, 1990). Diana Kim tells how the drug trade that financed that empire was dismantled. My studies focused on the system of opium revenue “farming,” whereby colonial governments permitted private contractors, the farmers, to manufacture and retail smokable opium to their subject populations. By the end of the nineteenth century, the farming system provided anywhere from 20% to 50% of the financial support of the various colonial states of Southeast Asia: English, French, Dutch, and to some extent Spanish. By 1910, all of these farms had been taken out of private hands, the farming system had been abolished, and the provision of opium was undertaken by government

monopolies run by colonial civil servants. As such, they continued to provide a major, if not *the* major source of income for every colonial state. These were, as Kim so aptly phrases it, the empires of vice.

The ostensible purpose of these monopolies was to ultimately abolish the opium trade in general, thus justifying European imperial ventures. By the beginning of the twentieth century, every colonial power asserted a greater purpose: the French called it their "*mission civilisatrice*." The Dutch, the British, the Spanish, and the Americans all claimed similar goals. In 1901, the Americans abolished the opium trade in the Philippines as they took control of the islands. It was a clear expression of President William McKinley's aim to "civilize and Christianise" our "little brown brothers." This event and the contemporary anti-opium movement throughout the world impelled other colonial powers to make some effort to likewise restrict opium use in their territories. However, by 1942, no other colonial power had fully ended their opium monopolies. In my own writings on these opium monopolies, I felt justified in viewing these suppression efforts with a certain degree of cynicism. Kim's book has forced me to reconsider that assumption.

She focuses on local colonial officials, particularly the mid-level administrators who were the front-line individuals directing the anti-opium policies. She presents them as generally acting with a sincere determination to carry out their missions as they perceived them. She challenges the idea that they were dragging their feet to eradicate the opium scourge and were attempting to perpetuate it in order to buttress colonial budgets. However, it was in their perception of their missions (because they were various) that they faltered.

Her study is an impressive expedition into a vast range of colonial archives, particularly the writings of those administrators situated on the ground. Not only has she delved deeply into the copious official records of three quite different colonies, but she has also gone further to examine the minds of the individual officers through their dispatches, personal letters, memoirs, and interviews.

She examines three key examples: Burma during the 1880s and 1890s, Malaya and Singapore in the 1920s and 1930s, and French Indochina between the 1930s and 1950s. She has been able to demonstrate the different situations, questions, and problems with which the various administrators dealt. In the final analysis, her work has more to do with European conceptions, or misconceptions, than it does with colonial subjects or the long-term history of the respective countries. In each case, she shows that the local administrators created their own idea of the "drug problem."

In Burma, administrators saw the drug problem as one primarily affecting indigenous Burmese (or Burman) subjects, as well as certain indigenous minority groups such as the Mon, Kachin, or Shan. These groups were judged too weak to be allowed to indulge in opium use. They became too easily addicted, fell into sloth and lethargy, and thence into petty crime to support

their habits. Thus, these groups became the target of opium restrictions, and opium use became a crime in itself for those individuals. However, Chinese and Indian migrants were deemed to be of sterner stuff than the Burmese, and were not deemed to be subject to this phenomenon of “moral wreckage.” They could still be allowed unrestricted use of the drug. What resulted was a system of legal opium use and a system of illegal opium use.

In Singapore and Malaya, the systems and issues were quite different. First of all, the main users of opium were Chinese migrants, mostly mining and agricultural laborers. The tax farmers were also Chinese. They were also among the most successful and wealthy Chinese in the colonies. As opium farmers they provided a steady and dependable income for the colonial state and were leaders in all of the colony’s major economic ventures. The ultimate issue in Malaya and Singapore was the financing of the state without the opium revenue. Ironically, this seems to contradict Kim’s argument that colonial administrators often found the opium revenue an embarrassment, and were more concerned with ending the use of opium among their Chinese subjects than in losing the revenue that it generated. British officials felt that the policy to end the trade was largely a benefit for the Chinese. Therefore, some argued that the Chinese should be taxed to make up the lost revenue. After 15 years of trying to find a substitution for the opium revenue, the colonial government set up the Opium Revenue Reserve Fund, which allowed the government to set aside \$5,000,000 annually out of the current opium revenue to hold in escrow in case the diminishing opium tax failed to cover expenses

The situation in French Indochina was a striking contrast. While the British gradually reduced the consumption of opium in their colonies and simultaneously kept money aside for a rainy day, the French ran themselves into a financial catastrophe. Kim tells the tale of hapless French officials basically covering current costs with next years’ prospective profits, and finding themselves financially embarrassed when the profits failed to materialize.

Kim carefully examines the discourse of colonial officials. She shows that much of their thinking was largely based on false perceptions and their own self-created problems. Thus, most of their efforts were expended on solving what were essentially imaginary problems. Despite Kim’s insistence that these administrators were sincere about abolishing the drug trade, they were also concerned about preserving the revenue that it generated. She stresses the integrity of these officials, claiming: “It is difficult to read the records of opium monopolies and envision a colonial state obsessed with maximizing opium revenue, or indeed find evidence of local administrators cagily hiding profits” (85). Nevertheless, she shows that administrators were constantly taking steps to deal with possible deficits, or were suffering deficits because of reductions in opium smoking in their colonies or simple bad management.

But she insists: “Finally, there is reason to rethink the opium monopolies beyond blunt functions of revenue collection because of the many and

conflicting rationales of their institutional purpose...Some considered the opium monopoly as an institution of atonement for the past wrongs of earlier colonial administrations who had introduced a new and dangerous habit to natives" (85).

Kim gives little attention to the financial problems of the farming system, which predated the government monopolies in British and French colonies. There were major economic crises in 1880 and 1909, which bankrupted the current farming syndicates. One could argue that the move to create government monopolies in each case was at least partially motivated by a colonial desire to sustain the financial stability of the farms and to put a damper on Chinese attempts to attain what they considered to be an inordinate level of economic power within the imperial shell. Analysis of these issues may explain why it was so difficult to wind up the monopolies and opium consumption itself.

There is scant indication that the colonial officials whom Kim studies had a clear understanding of the majority Chinese community of *taukeh*s (Chinese businessmen) and coolies, who were the main suppliers and users of opium. Drug use was not merely a matter of state revenue and imperial morality; it was a key element in the entire colonial economy. Its commerce sustained not only the state, but also key segments of the colonial and metropolitan societies.

The extensive and painstaking research that Kim has done here is a major contribution to the field, which exposes at a granular level the strengths and weaknesses of the late colonial states of Southeast Asia. She helps us to understand the real shortcomings of colonial rule and how total power can, in the end, become more of a fantasy than a reality. Her study of the discourse of mid-level colonial administrators shows how they missed the point in their perception of the drug problem, but her argument would have been amplified if she had noted the issues that underpinned that failure.

Nonetheless, she admirably demonstrates the persisting irony of how the modern global drug system came to be. The illegal drug commerce of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is the direct lineal descendent of the colonial drug economy. The flawed attempts by late colonial officials seem to have done more to create the current system than they did to abolish their own drug economy.

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