

CHAPTER 2

Literature Reviews on Theories and Concepts and Related Studies

I will divide this chapter into three parts: review of theoretical discussion, opium related studies and conceptual framework. First, I will employ three concepts: the political economy of opium; the discourses of opium; and livelihood strategies in order to understand opium production from different perspectives in rural upland of Shan State. In the second part, I will briefly review what studies have been done in the opium literature concerning Myanmar issues followed by a conceptual diagram with a brief explanation.

2.1 The Political Economy of Opium

Before taking up the political economy of the illegal cash crop, it is essential to briefly discuss the general historical development and definition of political economy and to address the major schools of thought that have provided political economy with its richness and diversity, as well as its application by some scholars. Without doubt, understanding definition and its historical development are very helpful but sometimes it takes us too far and makes it more complicated for us. My simple understanding of the term *political economy* relates to the interplay between the political and economic process regarding production, consumption, power relation, policy making and the relationship between individuals and society, and between the market and the state.

Adam Smith's, the father of economics, work deals a lot with political economy without offering a definition but the closest approach to such a definition is found in the first line of the fourth book in "The wealth of Nations". Smith (1776) considered political economy as a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator, proposes two distinct objects; first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or, more properly, to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and,

secondly, to supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services. It proposes to enrich both the people and the sovereign.

The political economy which originated from moral philosophy was developed in the 18th century. Today, political economy is clearly distinguished from the term economics but it was inter-exchangeable with economics in the 19th century. The meaning of the term has fluctuated widely and it has been applied to different fields of context. There are many schools of thought over political economy. However, it is possible to identify two broad traditions of political economy which currently influence political science: the tradition of classical political economy by Adam Smith and his followers and by Marx and Marxian tradition. Although the two schools of thoughts agreed on a few core ideas, they differed on the method of production of goods and services and distribution of resources. Smith's preference centers on free trade and self-regulating market where government has limited role in economic system, while Marx emphasized the influential role of state on the market.

Examining opium with the political economy approach reveals the complexity of colonial power and modern politics in Myanmar. Opium is a political crop similar to sugar that Sidney Mintz (1986) studied in the Caribbean regions. The emergence of sugar in these regions during the colonial time manifests the international politics when British introduced this crop and plantation into Caribbean regions and supplied it back to the growing consumption in England. Subsequently, as sugar market expanded all over the world, sugar was integral in the game of globalization. Mintz (1986) states that the English people came to view sugar as essential; supplying them with it became as much a political as an economic obligation. Once the magnitude of its market and potential market was grasped, maintaining control over it become important and sugar led all else in dramatizing the tremendous power concealed in mass consumption (Mintz, 1986).

Opium, in the same way, associated with colonial apparatus, reflects the changing power relation and transformed the landscape in China and Golden Triangle. The import of opium into China monopolized by the British's company started in the 17th century and continued to rise in the following centuries. When the growing numbers of people

addicted to this drug, the Chinese empire demanded to suppress opium use and trade. Nevertheless, British refused to comply and maintained their opium trade which resulted in the opium wars in the mid 19th century in China.

In 1949 when Chinese communists came to power, opium was strictly banned and China was able to get rid of opium in the mainland in the 1950s. However, the politics of China and the suppression of opium in China have led to the transformations of highlands in Golden Triangle which comprises Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. This area has been notorious for drugs and has played a role in the global market of heroin, politics and wars.

Opium as an illegal crop is also associated with political conflict, particularly in Myanmar and elsewhere. The conflict which cannot be separated from the economic and political processes results from existing power relation and it has been treated as peripheral factor (Brown, 1999). In Myanmar, the fundamental elements of the political conflict lie upon inequalities of power between Burmese and non-Burmese before the colonial time.

As stated by Brown (1999), central to politics and the underlying cause of conflict is the lack of legitimacy of central government, contested political institutions and uneven ethnic representation, all of which have been compounded by heavy-handed military rule which has steadfastly denied ethnic aspirations. Graubner (2007) argued that an armed conflict whose outbreak can be explained by ideological differences or ethnic grievances changes with the duration of the conflict: causes and triggers of the conflict are reshaped by the massive disruptions caused by the complex political emergency – the armed conflict - itself.

The linkage between conflict and drug is a non-linear causality but they are linked in an interdependent relationship as drug production, trafficking and consumption are indeed favored by situations of crisis and violent conflict (Graubner, 2007). In the same way, Graubner (2007) stated that illicit drug crops are primarily cultivated in areas characterized by violent conflict, weak state control and social turmoil.

Money generated from the illicit drug economy has been proven to finance non-state and sometimes also state armed groups not only in Afghanistan and Colombia, but also in many other places of the world (Graubner, 2007). Brown (1999) also asserted that the conflict serves a number of economic and political functions which clearly benefit certain groups and the profits from lucrative trade in opium, heroin and amphetamines are received directly by the armed groups involved and by corrupt officials in the form of 'baksheesh' payments or a cut in mutually advantageous deals.

Clearly, on one hand, the drug trade has become the armed opposition's lifeblood (Smith, 1999) and provided the funds for ethnic armed groups to continue their armed activities against the state. On the other hand, it has also funded the military government's war against ethnic rebels as the military imposed self-supported system in the 1990s (Lintner and Black, 2009). At the community level, the years of internal conflict aggravated economic and environmental pressures to grow opium poppy and the practice of opium cultivation became an important strategy for mitigating the impact of the conflict on communities (Graubner, 2007).

Back in the colonial era, opium was perceived as a crucial commodity to generate large amount of revenue. However, today cultivating opium poppy and coca for the production of hard drugs is not a traditional way of life or a profit-maximizing strategy, but rather a high-risk survival strategy in societies where access to certain resources can only be achieved through cultivating drug crops (Graubner, 2007).

In addition to farmers who earn a pittance from poppy cultivation, the opium in Myanmar has also served a significant function for powerful groups and conflict actors such as the government troops, ethnic resistant groups, militia groups and drug dealers as well as warlords. Various actors in Shan State justify their actions on the grounds of nationalism, ethnic identity and security (Brown, 1999). There are many groups with strong political objectives while some groups with little or no political agenda have become more committed to opium trade. Renard (1996) notes that given the shifting and highly personal relationships that have characterized this areas for centuries, the dynamics of opium politics in upper Myanmar became even more complex and fluid, with no one group exerting authority over the entire area.

2.2 The Discourses of Opium

As Foucault (1972) has shown, discourse to refer to the general domain of all statements, is a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements. Based on the interpretation of Foucault, Ferguson (1990) articulates that discourse is a practice, it is structured, and it has real effects which are much more profound than simply mystification. Rather than seeing discourse as simply a set of statements which have some coherence, we should, rather, think of a discourse as existing because of a complex set of practices which try to keep them in circulation and other practices which try to fence them off from others and keep those other statements out of circulation (Mills, 2003).

Foucault also stresses that discourse is associated with relations of power because discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (Foucault 1978). In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality (Foucault 1981). Mills (2003) sums up that discourse should therefore be seen as both an overall term to refer to all statements, the rules whereby those statements are formed and the processes whereby those statements are circulated and other statements are excluded.

Opium appeared as poor, backward, primitive, traditional and wild in the international development discourse. The development discourse may not reflect the reality of the opium community, but it is powerful and able to have influence over the discourses by the state and local people. Therefore, it is obligatory to understand how the international development discourse is produced and works in the third world. The development as discourse was formulated as the role of modernization and the only way of destroying mass poverty. In 1949, when Harry Truman, president of the United States, took office, he addressed a fair deal in his inaugural speech to appeal to the United States and the world to solve and manage the problems and affairs of the underdeveloped countries.

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate, they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people... I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life... What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing... greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge (Truman 1949, cited in Escobar 1995).

For them, as for many others, Truman simply had substituted a new word for what had already been there: backwardness and poverty. Since then, the promotion of development in the third world has been extended by world's dominant groups such as UN agencies, International Banks and International organizations. The development began to deal with numerous and various principles. Some of them stood out clearly on poverty, insufficient technology and capital, rapid population growth, inadequate public services, archaic agriculture practices, and so on, whereas others were introduced with more caution or even in surreptitious ways such as cultural attitudes and values and the existence of racial, religious, geographic, or ethnic factors believed to be associated with backwardness (Escobar 1995). Statements of poverty and backwardness on poor countries have been considerably uttered by international institutions. In 1975, World Bank's report on Lesotho was a good example.

“Few developing countries faced such bleak economic prospects and were so ill-prepared as Lesotho when it gained independence in October 1966. In few countries of the world was economic independence more remote from political independence than in Lesotho... It was then virtually untouched by modern economic development. It was and still is, basically, a traditional subsistence peasant society. But rapid population growth resulting in extreme pressure on

the land, deteriorating soil, and declining agricultural yields led to a situation in which the country was no longer able to produce enough food for its people. At independence there was no economic infrastructure to speak of. Industries were virtually non-existent... There are several reasons why Lesotho has remained at such a low state of social and economic development.” (World Bank Country Report of Lesotho 1975, cited in Ferguson 1990)

These statements indicated that not only Africa but also Asia and Latin America were represented and reconstructed through development discourse. As argued by Escobar, the invention of development necessarily involved the creation of an institutional field from which discourses are produced, recorded, stabilized, modified and put into circulation. The knowledge produced about the Third World is utilized and circulated by these institutions through applied programs, conferences, international consultant services, local extension practices, and so on (Escobar, 1995). The images and language of development circulate at the local level, for instance, in Malaysian villages where educated villagers and party officials have become adept at using the language of development promoted by the national and regional government (Ong 1987).

To Escobar (1995) the development discourse is a rule-governed system held together by a set of statements that the discursive practice continues to reproduce - whether such practice refers to industrialization, agriculture, peasants, or women and the environment. Mitchell (1991) demonstrates that objects of analysis do not occur as natural phenomena but are partly constructed by the discourse that describes them. The more natural the object appears, the less obvious this discursive construction is. Then he continues to argue that development discourse wishes to present itself as a detached center of rationality and intelligence. The relationship between West and non-West will be constructed in these terms. The West possesses the expertise, technology and management skills that the non-West is lacking. This lack is what has caused the problems of the non West (Mitchell, 1991).

At times, development grew to be so important for Third World countries that it became acceptable for their rulers to subject their populations to an infinite variety of interventions, to more encompassing forms of power and systems of control; so

important that First and Third World elites accepted the price of massive impoverishment, of selling Third World resources to the most convenient bidder, of degrading their physical and human ecologies, of killing and torturing, of condemning their indigenous populations to near extinction; so important that many in the Third World began to think of themselves as inferior, underdeveloped, and ignorant and to doubt the value of their own culture, deciding instead to pledge allegiance to the banners of reason and progress; so important, finally, that the achievement of development clouded the awareness of the impossibility of fulfilling the promises that development seemed to be making (Escobar 1995).

We can see that development discourse does operate within a familiar broad contemporary configuration of Western knowledge (Ferguson 1990). Sachs (1992) also argues that the metaphor of development gave global hegemony to a purely Western genealogy of history, robbing peoples of different cultures of the opportunity to define the forms of their social life. The coherence of effects that the development discourse achieved is the key to its success as a hegemonic form of representation: the construction of the poor and underdeveloped as universal, preconstituted subjects, based on the privilege of the representers; the exercise of power over the Third World made possible by the discursive homogenization; and the colonization and domination of the natural and human ecologies and economics of the Third World (Escobar 1995).

In the 80s and 90s, mainstream development theory with its preoccupation with economic growth gained its critique by post-development school of thought which highlights the role of grassroots movements, local knowledge and popular power in transforming development. Changing the order of discourse is a political question that entails the collective practice of social actors and the restructuring of existing political economies of truth (Escobar, 1995). As a result, alternative development has emerged in opposition to development which is based on Western hegemony and knowledge systems. Alternative development offers an alternative vision of human and social development that emphasizes the value of equity, participation and environmental sustainability (Cohen, 2009).

When the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) was established in 1991, it integrated these principles into a specifically drug-oriented ‘alternative development’ approach, replacing crop substitution of the 1970s and integrated rural development of the 1980s. In the global war on drugs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which incorporated UNDCP in 1997, has declared a strategic goal of balancing law enforcement, with demand reduction and alternative development (Cohen, 2009).

UNODC defines alternative development as a process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotics and psychotropic substances through specifically designed rural development measures in the context of sustained national growth and sustainable development efforts in countries taking action against drugs, recognizing the particular socio economic characteristics of the target communities and groups, within the framework of a comprehensive and permanent solution to the problem of illicit drugs¹.

Currently, alternative development has been implementing in six countries: Afghanistan, Bolivia, Colombia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Peru where illicit crops such as opium and coca are produced. As opium is a symbol of primitiveness, backwardness and poverty in the contemporary development discourse, opium eradication which comes along with alternative development seems to a key to development. Thus, opium eradication and poverty reduction as development discourse has been operated and reproduced at all levels in opium producing countries. However, the discursive practice of development has negative impacts on peasants who rely on opium cultivation as their livelihoods in the case of Myanmar.

2.3 Livelihood Strategies

In reviewing livelihood literature it would be pointless without mentioning the concepts of risk and vulnerability as they have become the dominant themes of on-going academic debate on rural livelihoods. The term livelihood gained much analytical significance in the late 1990s after the idea of sustainable livelihoods was popularized

¹“Alternative development” (online) <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/alternative-development/index.html?ref=menu> (accessed: 2013, Nov 17).

as a relatively coherent and integrated conceptual approach to reflect the social and environmental concern of development efforts of international organizations. Sustainable livelihoods focus on the livelihood systems of marginal groups, particularly the poor, and the way in which they adapt to maintain their livelihoods under conditions of severe environmental, socio-economic and political stress.

The simplest meaning of livelihood refers to means of securing the basic necessities including food, income, shelter, healthcare and clothing. However, based on the notion of equity, capability and sustainability, Chambers and Conway (1991) propose that a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.

Drawing on Chambers and Conway, the British Department for International Development (DFID) adopted and modified the definition with some minor changes as follows: a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Scoones, 1998). De Hann and Zommers (2005) also mention that livelihood is concerned not only with material well-being (such as money, food and shelter) but also non-material aspects of well-being (such as ownership rights, management skills and relationships).

In the livelihood framework by DFID (1999) five core asset categories of capital such as human, social, natural, physical and financial are identified upon which livelihoods are built. Human capital is the ability to pursue different livelihood strategies dependent on skill, knowledge, ability to provide labor and health. Social capital is the relations between people and includes networks, associational membership, trusts and exchange ties. Natural capital is the environmental resource stock to which household members

have rights of access. Physical capital is the basic infrastructure and producer goods that enables the pursuit of a livelihood. Financial capital is the resources (stocks and inflows of money) available that provide different livelihood options. These forms of capital are essential to pursue different livelihood strategies and to achieve livelihood objectives.

A livelihood strategy is a dynamic process in which people combine activities to meet their various needs at different times (DFID, 1999). Scoones (1998) also points out that the ability to pursue a livelihood strategy is dependent upon the basic material and social, tangible (stores and material resources) and intangible assets (claims and access) that people have in their possession. Livelihood strategies are a part of a livelihood system in which the interaction between society and the natural environment occurs, and the interaction process varies with its regional and social context (De Hann, 2000). He also demonstrates that livelihood strategies are complex and concerned with both the local and the broader economic and political context (De Hann, 2000).

According to Scoones (1998), there are three broad clusters of livelihood strategies: agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification in off-farm and non-farm activities, and migration. The process of intensification involves creating greater output per unit area through capital investment or increases in labor inputs, and extensification involves placing more land under cultivation or diversifying to a range of off-farm income earning activities. Migrating temporarily or permanently may be part of the construction of this strategy. Livelihood strategies, for example, can be described at an individual, household and village level, as well as at regional or even national levels (Scoones, 1998).

Ellis (2010) asserts that in order to survive or improve living standards, rural families construct diverse livelihood activities and the diversification process is mediated through social institutions, including community and kinship ties, property rights and obligations, and gender relations within the household. Moreover, these are formed by interactions with the physical environment and by changes over time in the larger economy - including the impact on income-earning opportunities of structural adjustments and market liberalization policies. As better-off families generally have sufficient livelihood assets, they are able to diversify into more favorable labor markets

through their skills and education. Generally, better-off families diversify their opportunities in order to improve living standards; meanwhile, poor families aim purely to survive, under a greater level of risk (Ellis, 2010).

Risk, as defined by United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) (2003), is the probability of harmful consequences, or unexpected losses (deaths, injuries, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human induced hazards and vulnerable conditions. Beyond expressing a possibility of physical harm, it is essential to appreciate that risks are always created or exist within social systems. Jaeger et al. (2001) also defines risk as a situation or event in which something of human values (including the humans themselves) has been put at stake and where the outcome is uncertain. It is necessary to take consideration that the social contexts in which risks occur and that people therefore do not necessarily share the same perceptions of risks and their underlying causes.

Vulnerability means not lack or want but defencelessness, insecurity, and exposure to risk, shocks and stress (Chambers, 1989). Vulnerability has two sides: the external side of exposure to shocks, stress and risk; and the internal side of defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss (Chambers, 1995). To a broader context, vulnerability encompasses the economic and institutional context, as well as the physical dimension of environmental threat, focusing on livelihoods access, the causes of poverty and marginalization and the impact of hazard risk mitigation strategies on local people (Hewitt, 1983 - cited in Adger, 1999).

DFID elaborates vulnerability context as people's livelihoods and the wider availability of assets are fundamentally affected by critical trends as well as by shocks and seasonality – over which they have limited or no control. Shocks refer to human health shocks, natural shocks, economic shocks, conflict, and crop/livestock health shocks. Trends contain population trends, resource trends (including conflict), national/international economic trends, trends in governance (including politics) and technological trends. Seasonality involves prices, production, health and employment opportunities (DFID, 1999). DFID also states that different types of conflict can have

profound adverse effects on the livelihoods of the poor. In areas of civil conflict people suffer from lawlessness and physical damage. Conflicts over access to resources are of increasing importance as populations expand and resource use intensifies. If unaddressed, such conflicts may further marginalize already poor groups (DFID, 1999).

Vulnerability may result from poverty, marginalization and exclusion, and it is generated by social, cultural, economical and political processes (Barrett, 2001). The impoverishing forces or causes of vulnerability vary in accordance with the frequency of shock and stresses, as well as the conditions found within the social-cultural, political, economic and environmental setting. According to Blaikie et al. (2004) vulnerability has three sets of links: root causes, dynamic pressure and unsafe conditions. Root causes are mainly related to economic, demographic and political processes and dynamic pressure is based on the effects of the root causes and lead to unsafe conditions in relation to risk.

Unlike any other farmers, the livelihoods of opium farmers involve a multi-dimension of risk and vulnerability as opium is illegalized by the state and international communities in Myanmar. Apart from natural hazards and weather conditions, opium cultivators in Shan State encounter a great deal of risk and vulnerability in relation with opium eradication policy and opium related factors. To opium dependents, a dynamic process of livelihood strategies to cope with risk and vulnerability is needed to secure their social well-being. Therefore, it is important to look at opium farmers' livelihood in terms of risk and vulnerability not only from climatic point of view but also from social, economic and political aspects.

2.4 Opium Related Studies

The discursive analysis of opium in Southeast Asia started in the 1970s and continued in the 1990s and up to the present with major attempts at articulating the complexity of drug production, trade, consumption, and its related conflicts, politics, and wars. The earlier study of opium was undertaken by Alfred W. McCoy (1972). His groundbreaking study of "the politics of heroin in Southeast Asia" offers an analysis in uncovering the central role that opium plays in the economy, politics, and wars of the region and the political dimensions of international heroin traffic. He traces trails from

the highlands of Shan State, Laos and Northern Thailand where the opium is grown and harvested by tribespeople, and explores heroin production by various armed groups. Then, he identifies the complicity of American CIA agents in the narcotics traffic to global market at three levels: coincidental complicity by allying with groups actively engaged in the drug traffic; support of the traffic by covering up for known heroin traffickers and condoning their involvement; and active engagement in the transport of opium and heroin.

Bertil Lintner, a Myanmar specialist, has studied the relations between the Burmese politics, ethnic insurgencies and opium production since 1985. His work (1994) on “Myanmar in revolt: opium and insurgency since 1948” explains the connection between Myanmar's booming drug production and its insurgency and counter-insurgency, providing an answer to the question of why Myanmar has been unable to get away from decades of military rule and build a modern, democratic society. Lintner's later work (2009) “Merchants of Madness: the Methamphetamine Explosion in the Golden Triangle” co-authored with Michael Black looks into drug production facilities, traffickers, money launderers, financier, and other elements within the secretive world of the Golden Triangle's colorful milieu of narco-militias and complex array of drug operators as methamphetamine, known as yaba, or *madness medicine*, in Thailand began to be produced in the 90s. Their study deals with the drug problem in the Golden Triangle as consequences of Myanmar's underlying ethnic conflict and political issues.

As successive governments have not been able to end the large-scale cultivation and use of opiates, and political instability seems to have fueled the widespread domestic use of heroin, “The Burmese connection” by Ronald D. Renard (1996) assesses and pays attention to the historical and contemporary impact of the production, consumption, and trade of narcotics on Myanmar's people, economy, and international relations. His study also suggests ways to reduce the country's illicit-drug problems, encouraging a constructive engagement involving the Burmese government and the international community. Another work of Renard, (2001) “Opium Reduction in Thailand, 1970-2000”, examines a success story of how Thailand effectively reduced the production of opium inside and at its borders through the corporation of local and international

organizations. This analysis highlights the stages in Thailand's effort to discover new options for subsistence and development that would benefit both the isolated hilltribe villagers in the hills of northern Thailand as well as the country at large.

Similar to Lintner's work, Jelsma et al. (2005) analyze the relationship between drugs and conflict in Myanmar, the consequences of Myanmar's illicit drug production for neighboring countries, and place Myanmar in the international context of the global drug trade, drawing parallels with Afghanistan and Colombia. The authors take an in-depth look at the long and dramatic history of drugs, armed conflict, ethnic strife, and cease-fire agreements in Myanmar. It explained the role that the drug trade has played in more than fifty years of civil war and the complexity of insurgent politics, as well as investigated the failure of previous drug-control efforts. The consequences of the drug problem in Myanmar has affected the Thai, Chinese and Indian governments' responses their respective drug policies. They also inspect comparative perspectives from Colombia and Afghanistan and the struggle over drug policy in Myanmar within an international context.

It is important to mention the work that focuses on the role of alternative development within development discourse as opium eradication has become the target of national and regional governments and international agencies. The article by Cohen (2009) looks at the two contradicting models of development in response to opium eradication in Lao which is also similar to the case in Northern Shan State. The first model is Western alternative development which is the international aid component of supply-side policies and the second model is China's opium-replacement policy which reflects a business-oriented model of development. The article concludes that China's opium-replacement policy has contributed to a type of unregulated frontier capitalism with socio-economic and environmental effects that threaten the principles and goals of alternative development and even to marginalize the role of international development organizations in northern Laos.

There are a few works that have been recently done by M.A students from Chiang Mai University and Chulalongkorn University in Southern and Northeastern Shan State. Unlike any other work, Nang Kham Nyo Oo (2011) studies the motivation of people's

involvement in opium cultivation and sales from economic perspective in Pa-Oh region. Her study identifies three stages of cause: poverty as immediate cause, wage advantage as underlying cause and social breakdown as the root cause that motivate farmers to change traditional cheroot production to opium production. Her study concluded that while more people are growing opium but only a small percentage actually make more money. Sai Lone (2008) analyzes the socioeconomic impacts of opium eradication campaign enforced by local authority and alternative development implemented by international institutions in Wa region. He concludes that alternative development has assisted the basic necessities such as food, healthcare and education; however, the economic need of the former opium farmers are still far behind being met.

As this short review shows, there are a number of conventional works that contribute to articulating the relationship between poverty and opium cultivation, and between the political conflict and drug trade, and drug policy at different levels looking from various perspectives such as historical, anthropological and economic. All these works don't tell very much about why people still grow opium nowadays and most of the works look at opium as the crop that needs to be eradicated and that causes the problem of all the well-beings. Yet, there is no work that tries to understand opium production from the point of view of local people. Thus, the goal of this study is to contribute rational perspective of the opium growing community, of which many studies lack focus, as mentioned above.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the above opium-related literature review and theoretical discussions, I formulate a theoretical framework for my investigation to explain the persistence of opium cultivation and household strategies while international agencies and national government have been launching opium eradication campaigns.

Firstly, this framework is used to examine the driving forces – such as internal and external forces with the emphasis on the independence era. The political economy approach is used to identify factors and actors contributing to the historical development of opium production in upland Shan State since 1948.

To develop a better understanding of the war on drugs in the global context, this study employed the concept of discourse to investigate how opium has been changed in its meaning over time by various agencies and states. In particular, my analysis traces the discourse that has been produced by the west and the way that it has been reproduced by regional agencies as well as Myanmar state.

Lastly, the study draws attention to livelihood strategies used by poppy farmers in coping with political risk and environmental challenges. In addition, this inquiry also focuses on the factors that influence poppy farmers' decision to continue opium cultivation and the complexity of opium production.

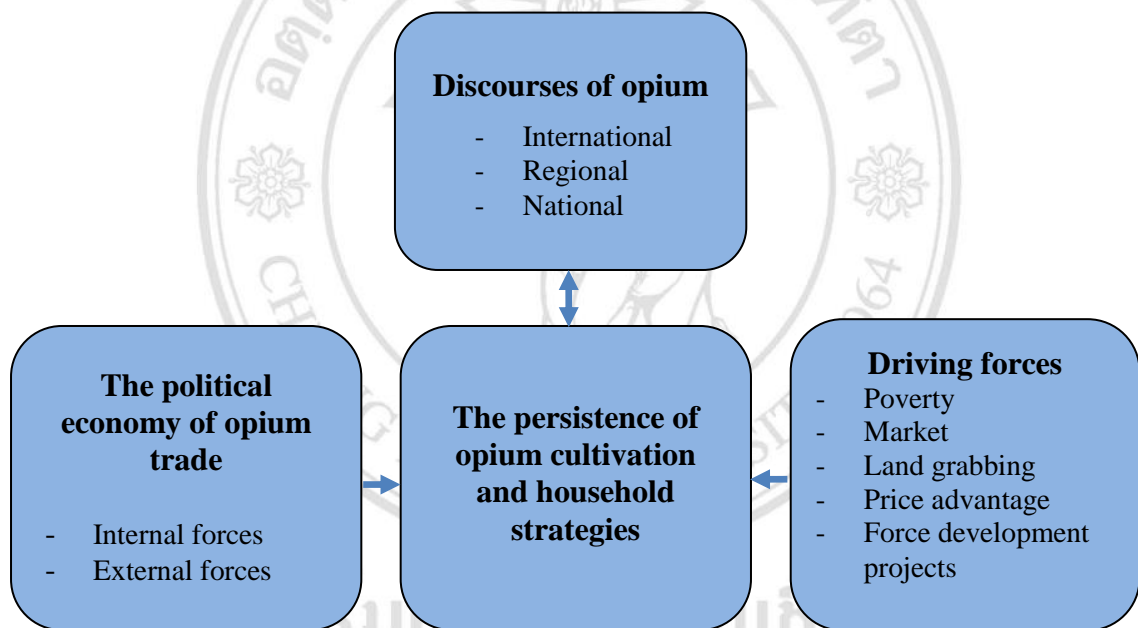


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework