

**CHINA, IMPERIAL
MARITIME CUSTOMS.
II.-SPECIAL
SERIES: NO. 4; OPIUM**

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China, Imperial Maritime Customs. II.-Special series: No. 4; Opium by Various

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VARIOUS

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

OPIUM IN CHINA: HOW MANY SMOKERS DOES THE FOREIGN DRUG SUPPLY?

1.—*Opium in China: how many smokers does the Foreign drug supply?*—The following pages contain the results of an inquiry instituted to answer this question.

2.—The Commissioners of Customs at a score of ports along the coast and on the Yangtze were instructed by Circular to make inquiry in their respective districts and draw up replies to questions appended to the Circular. That Circular and the Commissioners' Reports are given here in full, and in a separate table the answers to the questions will be found brought together for greater convenience. With these questions and answers to start from, an answer to the question at the head of this Introductory Note can be easily worked out.

3.—In round numbers, the annual importation of Foreign Opium may be said to amount to 100,000 chests, or, allowing 100 catties to each chest, 10,000,000 catties (the *catty* is the Chinese pound: one catty is equal to *one pound and a third avoirdupois*). When boiled down and converted into what is known as Prepared Opium, the raw drug loses about 30 per cent. in weight; accordingly, 10,000,000 catties of the unprepared drug imported reach the hands of retailers as, say, 7,000,000 catties of Prepared Opium. The catty is divided into 16 *liang* (ounces), and the *liang* into tenths called *mace*; in 7,000,000 catties there are therefore [7,000,000 × 16 × 10] 1,120,000,000 mace of Prepared Opium for smokers.

4.—Before reaching the smoker, Opium pays the Chinese Government import duty and likin taxes amounting to, say, 100 *taels*, and is then sold at, say, 800 *taels* of Chinese sycee or silver [$\text{£}3 = \text{7}\frac{1}{2}\text{ 10}$] per 100 catties: thus the total quantity retailed, i.e. *imported*, may be said to be paid for with 56,000,000 *taels*, or $\left[\frac{70,000 \times 800}{10} \times 3 \right]$ $\text{£}16,800,000$, and one mace of Prepared Opium is consequently worth, say $\left[\frac{\text{£}16,800,000 \text{ or } 4,032,000,000 \text{ pence}}{1,120,000,000} \right]$, about threepence halfpenny (English).

5.—Divided by the number of days in the year, the quantity of Prepared Opium smoked daily may be said to be $\left[\frac{1,120,000,000}{365} \right]$ 3,068,493 mace, and the value $[3,068,493 \times 3.60]$ 11,046,573*d.*, or $\text{£}46,027$.

6.—Average smokers consume 3 mace of Prepared Opium and spend about 10*d.* daily. This quantity is the same as $\frac{1}{8}$ ths of an ounce avoirdupois, and suffices for from 30 to 40 pipes, i.e. whiffs, "draws," or inhalations. If we divide the total number of mace consumed daily by the total quantity each average smoker consumes daily, we find that there are in round numbers above 1,000,000 smokers $\left[\frac{3,068,493}{3} \right]$ of Foreign Opium.

7.—The population of China is spoken of as amounting to more than 400,000,000, and may fairly be pronounced to be something above 300,000,000. Estimating population at 300,000,000 and Opium-smokers at 1,000,000, and proceeding with the calculation, the result is that $3\frac{1}{3}$ in every 1,000 smoke; that is, that Opium-smoking is practised by *one-third of one per cent.* of the population.

8.—In addition to the Foreign drug, there is also the Native product. Reliable statistics cannot be obtained respecting the total quantity produced: Ichang, the port nearest Szechwan, the province which is generally believed to be the chief producer and chief consumer of Native Opium, estimates the total production of Native Opium at 25,000 chests annually, while another port, Ningpo, far away on the coast, estimates it at 265,000 chests. Treating all such replies as merely so many guesses, there are, it is to be remarked, two statements which may be taken as facts in this

connexion: the one is that, as far as we know to-day, the Native Opium produced does not exceed the Foreign import in quantity, and the other that Native Opium was known, produced, and used long before any Europeans began the sale of the Foreign drug along the coast. Granting, then, that the Native product equals the Foreign import, and that 100,000 chests are produced annually, and granting also that this quantity, when prepared, provides 1,120,000,000 mace of Prepared Opium for the annual consumption of 1,000,000 additional smokers, the number of Opium-smokers in China may be said to be in all 2,000,000, or *two-thirds of one per cent.* of the population. The Native product sells for one-half of the price obtained for the Foreign drug, and may be estimated to be paid for with, say, £8,400,000 by 1,000,000 smokers, who spend about 5½*d.* apiece daily. The total amount spent by China on this luxury, produced at home and imported from abroad, is thus, say, £25,000,000 annually.

9.—Examined in this way the result arrived at is that 200,000 chests, or almost 12,000 tons [1,680 catties = one ton], of unprepared Opium are consumed annually by 2,000,000 Opium-smokers; that these smokers expend £25,000,000 on Opium; that this is an expenditure of, say, from 5*d.* to 11*d.* daily by individual smokers; and that all the smokers amount to only two-thirds of one per cent. of the population. If more than 3 mace apiece is consumed daily by smokers, then smokers are less numerous; if less than 3 mace, then smokers are more numerous, and smoking individually less harmful. The truth is that many smoke more than 3 mace and many less, but from the statistical point of view it is safe to say that Opium-smokers in China constitute simply two-thirds of one per cent. of the population. On the supposition even that the quantity of Native Opium produced is ten times that of the Foreign Opium imported, the total will not yet suffice for the consumption of even four per cent. of the population. Four per cent. is a small per-centage, but in China it means twelve millions of people. It is hardly credible, however, that Native Opium is produced in such quantity; but whatever the number of Opium-smokers may really be—and allowing that many people smoke without injury,—there must in any case be a per-centage of smokers for whom the habit works nothing but evil.

10.—Chinese who have studied the Opium question are opposed to a traffic which more or less harms smokers now numbering, say, over two millions, and annually increasing; at the same time they admit that Opium provides a large revenue, that the expenditure for Opium and liability to the incidence of Opium taxation touch an infinitesimally small per-centage of the population, and that neither the finances of the State, nor the wealth of its people, nor the growth of its population, can be specially damaged by a luxury which only draws from 5*d.* to 11*d.* apiece a day from the pockets of those who indulge in it, and which is indulged in by only *two-thirds of one per cent.* of the population. They admit all this, but they do not find in either the revenue produced or the statistical demonstration of its per-centage innocuousness any sufficient reason for welcoming the growth of the trade or for desisting from the attempt to check the consumption of Opium.

ROBERT HART,

Inspector General.

INSPECTORATE GENERAL OF CUSTOMS,

PEKING, 29th January 1881.

OPIMUM.

CIRCULAR NO. 64: SECOND SERIES.

INSPECTORATE GENERAL OF CUSTOMS,

PEKING, 10th July 1879.

SIR,

1.—I ENCLOSE a form of return concerning Opium-smoking, which you will please to fill up after making such inquiries at your port as shall ensure correctness in the information you send me. OPIMUM.
CIRCULAR 64.

2.—You will observe that what is wanted is—

- 1°, to ascertain how many catties of boiled or prepared Opium can be got from 100 catties of the drug in the crude or unprepared condition in which it arrives in China ;
- 2°, to ascertain the price of 100 catties of unprepared Opium after paying Import Duty, and the price of the same hundred catties when converted into.....catties of prepared Opium ;
- 3°, to ascertain what weight of prepared Opium is smoked daily—(a) by beginners, (b) by average smokers, and (c) by heavy smokers ;
- 4°, to ascertain how many pipes one mace of prepared Opium will fill (one catty weighs 16 taels, and one tael weighs ten mace ; consequently 1 catty = 160 mace) ;
- 5°, to ascertain the price of one mace of prepared Opium at the retail shops or smoking rooms ;