

TAMSUI.

OPIMUM:
CRUDE AND
PREPARED.
—
TAMSUI.

No. 279.
I.G.

CUSTOM HOUSE,
TAMSUI, 28th May 1887.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to submit the Report on the weights, values, etc., of Opium, Boiled and Raw, called for by your Circular No. 372, Second Series.

On receipt of your Circular I sent Mr. MENCARINI and Mr. CHEW LEONG HOE, Chinese Clerk, to Twatutia, to call on some of the principal Opium dealers and collect information. They visited (1^o) the Parsee firm of OLLIA & Co., (2^o) a Chinese wholesale Opium dealer, (3^o) an Opium boiler, and (4^o) the comprador of the firm of MALCAMPO & Co.; and it is mainly from the answers which they collected that the present Report is drawn up.

1^o to 9^o.—It will be seen from what follows that the process of boiling undoubtedly increases the value while decreasing the weight of all kinds of Opium. The loss in weight by boiling may be 20 per cent., 25 per cent., or 50 per cent., according to the kind of Opium, but the value of the 100 catties is always appreciably greater after boiling than before. The answers to the questions numbered 2^o to 9^o in the Circular will be best presented in tabular form:—

KIND OF OPIUM.	100 Catties Raw will produce when Boiled	100 Catties Raw, Duty and Likin paid, is sold for	Quantity of Boiled obtained from 100 Catties Raw is sold for	Weight lost in Boiling.	Value gained in Boiling.
	<i>Catties.</i>	<i>Hk. Tls</i>	<i>Hk. Tls</i>	<i>Per Cent.</i>	<i>Per Cent.</i>
Patna.....	No market.				
Malwa.....					
Benares.....	52	376	396	48	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
Persian.....	75	428	454	25	6
Turkish.....	82	435	461	18	6

These figures strike somewhere near the mean of the various estimates collected. The quantity produced by boiling a given weight of Opium varies with the quality of the drug and the skill of the boiler. Thus, for Benares the figures obtained range from 49 to 60 per cent.; for Persian, from 72 to 79 per cent.; and for Turkish, from 80 to 85 per cent. The prices of the Raw drug also, naturally, vary with its quality; they range as follows:—

Benares Tls 370 to Tls 402 per 100 catties.
 Persian " 389 " " 454 " "
 Turkish " 428 " " 461 " "

and the value of the 100 catties Raw, when boiled down, changes proportionately.

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10°.—The local names for the various kinds of Opium are:—

Malwa: Raw, *Iu-kim* (油金), *Iu-sup* (油雲), *Bé-toé* (馬蹄), and *Lao-san-siô-t'o* (老山小土); Boiled, *Siô-t'o-ko* (小土膏).

Patna: Raw, *Kong-to* (公土); Boiled, *Toa-t'o-ko* (大土膏).

Benares: Raw, *La-t'o* (勝土); Boiled, *Toa-t'o-ko* (大土膏).

Persian: Raw, *Péh-p'ê* (白皮); Boiled, *Siô-t'o-ko* (小土膏).

Turkish: Raw, *Kim-hoe* (金花); Boiled, *Siô-t'o-ko* (小土膏).

11°.—A chest of Benares contains from 112 to 116 catties of Opium; the average is about 114½ catties. The Opium in a chest of Turkish ranges from 99 to 110 catties, and averages about 106½ catties, deduction being made of 1½ catties per chest for the paper and thread which wrap the balls. Persian is not imported in sufficient quantity to enable us to judge of its average weight; the Examiner would put it down as 102 to 105 catties per chest. Malwa and Patna are not imported now at all.

12°.—In the retail trade at this port it seems to be customary to allow the purchaser of Benares a tare of 11 taels on each ball, and of Turkish (and Persian when done up in paper) a tare of 1 per cent. No tare is allowed by wholesale dealers, I am told.

13°.—It is not the practice of this office to allow a fixed tare on Opium except for the paper and string in which one or two varieties are wrapped. All Opium is weighed net, and while in the case of Turkish Opium, and sometimes in the case of Persian, an allowance of 1½ catties a chest is made for paper and string, no allowance is made for the outside leaf on a ball of Benares or Patna.

14°.—The Opium dealers whom Mr. MENCARINI questioned were favourable to the idea of treating all Patna and Benares chests as invariably containing 120 catties, and all chests of Malwa, etc., as invariably containing 100 catties. From the Customs point of view it does not seem advisable to make such a rule. It is true that while losing on Malwa and similar varieties, which average over 100 catties a chest, we should gain on Patna and Benares, which average less than 120 catties to the chest, provided that the weights of the respective chests remained the same; but a temptation would at once be offered to importers to put themselves on the right side by increasing the weight of chests of all varieties. Mr. Examiner NEWBURY tells me that nothing of the kind occurred formerly when Duty was collected on uniform weights at certain ports. It seems, however, too obvious a means of increasing profits to be long neglected.

15°.—The tare of 1½ per cent. which, as I have said, we allow for Opium wrapped in paper is regarded as reasonable, and it would seem only fair to make some allowance for the wrapper, composed apparently of poppy leaf, which contains the Benares and Patna drug. But here a difficulty comes in, as there is no part of the wrapper which is not more or less saturated with Opium, and if allowance were made for any part of the dross in a ball of Benares, it would, logically, have to be made for the whole 50 per cent. which remains after boiling. As I have said, it is our practice to take the Opium out of every chest and weigh it apart from the case and the packing, for which, therefore, we make no fixed allowance. I find, however, that the average weight of tare—case and packing material—in a chest of Benares is 117 catties, and in a chest of Turkish, 32½ catties.

16°.—A certain, not very large, quantity of Boiled Opium is sent from boiling-shops in Twatutia and Banka into the interior of the island. It is packed in small earthen jars, containing 1 tael, 2 taels, or 4 taels apiece, and is not, as a rule, mixed with Native Opium.

17°.—The boiling firms of Tamsui do not export Boiled Opium.

18°.—There has been, and is, no tax levied here on Boiled Opium consumed at the port or travelling inland.

19°.—No fee is paid for the privilege of boiling. All may boil, and as a matter of fact many private persons think it economical to buy their Opium in the raw state and boil it for themselves.

20°.—No Boiled Opium is either imported or exported by steamer at this port, and therefore there is no practice in regard to the levy of Duty on that article.

21°.—A small quantity of Native Opium arrives by junk. The importations by steamer are hardly worth noting. This Opium, I am told, is mixed with Turkey and Persian.

22°.—The Native Opium which arrives here is, for the most part, Wénchow Opium, and, according to the dealers, is worth from *Hk.Tls* 130 to *Hk.Tls* 143 per 100 catties. Mr. LI TUNG-EN, one of the Haikwans, informs me that the late farmer of Opium Likin distinguished three classes of Native Opium, two of which were from Wénchow, and were named respectively *Chéng-chiang* (正漿) and *Ts'ai-chiang* (彩漿), while the third was Yünnan Opium. Probably this latter kind, if imported at all, would be worth more than the Wénchow drug.

23°.—The quantity obtainable by boiling from 100 catties of Raw Wénchow (value *Hk.Tls* 130 to *Hk.Tls* 143) is variously stated as 40 to 70 catties, which, it is said, sells for *Hk.Tls* 143 to *Hk.Tls* 175.

24°.—It is supposed that the Native Opium arriving here is nearly all smuggled. Nothing is known in Tamsui with regard to the taxes it pays at the place of production or *en route*. On the rare occasions on which it has passed through this Custom House it has paid a full Duty at the port of export and a Coast Trade Duty here at the Tariff rate for Foreign Opium, making a total of *Tls* 45 per picul, in addition to Likin. As to Likin, Mr. LI TUNG-EN informs me that there is no regulation, but that it was the practice of the late Opium farmer to levy a different rate on each of the three kinds enumerated above. The kind called *Chéng-chiang* was charged 50 per cent. of the amount levied on Foreign small-cake Opium; *Ts'ai-chiang*, a much inferior kind, paid 30 per cent.; while the Yünnan kind was considered good enough to pay 70 per cent. of the Foreign Opium rate. The rate levied on Foreign small-cake Opium was local *Tls* 100 (= *Hk.Tls* 90.28.0) per chest of 106 catties.

I have, etc.,

J. L. CHALMERS,

Assistant-in-Charge.

To
SIR ROBERT HART, K.C.M.G.,
Inspector General of Customs,
PEKING.

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