

READING 1

The Debate on the Legalization of Opium, 1836

These documents relate to the debate that took place in the Qing court in 1836 on the topic of legalizing opium. Although opium could no longer be legally imported into Canton, it was widely smuggled up and down the coast. Opium imports and silver exports had been increasing rapidly, and the government seemed to be losing control of the coast.

Both sides in the debate reflect the limited knowledge that the Qing court had of the outside world and the limits of its powers, both in controlling the foreigners and in controlling its own people. The participants in the debate saw the problem much differently than did the leaders of the twentieth-century anti-opium campaigns, as both the prohibitionists and the legalizers assessed the threat of opium very differently than would later writers. Even Zhu Zun makes a number of statements that would have been attacked in the twentieth century, and it is hard to imagine anyone after 1900 taking many of the positions Xu Naiji takes. The debate was decided by the emperor in favor of prohibition. Lin Zexu was sent to Canton to deal with the matter, and the First Opium War resulted.



Memorial to the Emperor, Proposing to Legalize Its Importation

Xu Naiji, vice president of the sacrificial court, presents the following memorial in regard to opium, to show that the more severe the interdicts against it are made, the more widely do the evils arising therefrom spread; and that it is right urgently to request that a change be made in the arrangements respecting it, to

which end he earnestly entreats his sacred majesty to cast a glance hereon and to issue secret orders for a faithful investigation of the subject.

I would humbly represent that opium was originally ranked among medicines; its qualities are stimulant; it also checks excessive secretions and prevents the evil effects of noxious vapors. When anyone is long habituated to inhaling it, it becomes necessary to resort to it at regular intervals, and the habit of using it, being inveterate, is destructive of time, injurious to property, and yet dear to one even as life. Of those who use it to great excess, the breath becomes feeble, the body wasted, the face sallow, the teeth black: the individuals themselves clearly see the evil effects of it yet cannot refrain from it. It is indeed indispensably necessary to enact severe prohibitions in order to eradicate so vile a practice.

On inquiry I find that there are three kinds of opium: one is called company's; the outer covering of it is black, and hence it is also called "black earth"; it comes from Bengal; a second kind is called "white-skin" and comes from Bombay; the third kind is called "red-skin" and comes from Madras.¹ These are places that belong to England.

In Qianlong's reign, as well as previously, opium was inserted in the tariff of Canton as a medicine, subject to a duty of three taels per hundred catties, with an additional charge of two taels, four mace, and five candareens under the name of charge per package. After this, it was prohibited. In the first year of Jiaqing, those found guilty of smoking opium were subject only to the punishment of the pillory and bamboo. Now they have, in the course of time, become liable to the severest penalties, transportation in various degrees, and death after the ordinary continuance in prison. Yet the smokers of the drug have increased in number, and the practice has spread throughout almost the whole empire. In Qianlong's and the previous reigns, when opium passed through the customhouse and paid a duty, it was given into the hands of the hong merchants in exchange for tea and other goods. But at the present time, the prohibitions of government being most strict against it, none dare openly to exchange goods for it; all secretly purchase it with money. In the reign of Jiaqing there arrived, it may be, some hundred chests annually. The number has now increased to upward of 20,000 chests, containing each a hundred catties. The "black earth," which is the best, sells for about 800 dollars, foreign money, per chest; the "white-skin," which is next in quality, for about 600 dollars; and the last, or "red-skin," for about 400 dollars. The total quantity sold during the year amounts in value to ten and some odd million dollars, so that, in reckoning the dollar at seven mace, standard weight of silver, the annual waste of money somewhat exceeds ten million taels. Formerly, the barbarian merchants brought foreign money to China, which, being paid in exchange for goods, was a source of pecuniary advantage to the people of all the seaboard

provinces. But latterly, the barbarian merchants have clandestinely sold opium for money; which has rendered it unnecessary for them to import foreign silver. Thus foreign money has been going out of the country, while none comes into it.

During two centuries, the government has now maintained peace and, by fostering the people, has greatly promoted the increase of wealth and opulence among them. With joy we witness the economical rule of our august sovereign, an example to the whole empire. Right it is that yellow gold be common as the dust.

Always in times past, a tael of pure silver exchanged for nearly about 1,000 coined cash, but of late years the same sum has borne the value of 1,200 or 1,300 cash: thus the price of silver rises but does not fall. In the salt agency, the price of salt is paid in cash, while the duties are paid in silver: now the salt merchants have all become involved, and the existing state of the salt trade in every province is abject in the extreme. How is this occasioned but by the unnoticed oozing out of silver?² If the easily exhaustible stores of the central spring go to fill up the wide and fathomless gulf of the outer seas, gradually pouring themselves out from day to day, and from month to month, we shall shortly be reduced to a state of which I cannot bear to speak.

Is it proposed entirely to cut off the foreign trade and turn to remove the root to dam up the source of the evil? The celestial dynasty would not, indeed, hesitate to relinquish the few millions of duties arising therefrom. But all the nations of the West have had a general market open to their ships for upward of a thousand years; while the dealers in opium are the English alone, it would be wrong, for the sake of cutting off the English trade, to cut off that of all the other nations. Besides, the hundreds of thousands of people living on the sea-coast depend wholly on trade for their livelihood, and how are they to be disposed of? Moreover, the barbarian ships, being on the high seas, can repair to any island that may be selected as an entrepot, and the native seagoing vessels can meet them there; it is then impossible to cut off the trade. Of late years, the foreign vessels have visited all the ports of Fujian, Zhejiang Jiangnan, Shandong, even to Tianjin and Manchuria, for the purpose of selling opium. And although at once expelled by the local authorities, yet it is reported that the quantity sold by them was not small. Thus it appears that, though the commerce of Canton should be cut off, yet it will not be possible to prevent the clandestine introduction of merchandise.

It is said that the daily increase of opium is owing to the negligence of officers in enforcing the interdicts? The laws and enactments are the means that extortionate underlings and worthless vagrants employ to benefit themselves; and the more complete the laws are, the greater and more numerous are the

bribes paid to the extortionate underlings, and the more subtle are the schemes of such worthless vagrants. In the first year of Daoguang, the governor of Guangdong and Guangxi, Yuan, proceeded with all the rigor of the law against the head of the opium establishment, then at Macao. The consequence was that foreigners having no one with whom to place their opium proceeded to Lintin to sell it. This place is within the precincts of the provincial government and has a free communication by water on all sides. Here are constantly anchored seven or eight large ships, in which the opium is kept, and which are therefore called "receiving ships." At Canton there are brokers of the drug, who are called "melters." These pay the price of the drug into the hands of the resident foreigners, who give them orders for the delivery of the opium from the receiving ships. There are carrying boats plying up and down the river; and these are vulgarly called "fast-crabs" and "scrambling-dragons." They are well armed with guns and other weapons and are manned with some scores of desperadoes, who ply their oars as if they were wings to fly with. All the customhouses and military posts that they pass are largely bribed. If they happen to encounter any of the armed cruising boats, they are so audacious as to resist, and slaughter and carnage ensue. The late governor Lu, on one occasion, having directed the commodore Zun Yuchang to cooperate with the district magistrate of Xiangshan, they captured a boat containing opium to the amount of 14,000 catties. The number of men killed and taken prisoners amounted to several scores. He likewise inflicted the penalty of the laws on the criminals Yaouhow(?) and Owkwan(?) (both of them being brokers) and confiscated their property. This shows that faithfulness in the enforcement of the laws is not wanting; and yet the practice cannot be checked. The dread of the laws is not so great on the part of the common people, as is the anxious desire of gain, which incites them to all manner of crafty devices, so that sometimes, indeed, the law is rendered wholly ineffective.

There are also, both on the rivers and at sea, banditti, who, with pretense of acting under the order of the government, and of being sent to search after and prevent the smuggling of opium, seek opportunities for plundering. When I was lately placed in the service of your majesty as acting judicial commissioner at Canton, cases of this nature were very frequently reported. Out of these arose a still greater number of cases in which money was extorted for the ransom of plundered property. Thus a countless number of innocent people were involved in suffering. All these widespread evils have arisen since the interdicts against opium were published.

It will be found on examination that the smokers of opium are idle, lazy vagrants, having no useful purpose before them, and are unworthy of regard, or even of contempt. And though there are smokers to be found who have

overstepped the threshold of age, yet they do not attain to the long life of other men. But new births are daily increasing the population of the empire; and there is no cause to apprehend a diminution therein; while, on the other hand, we cannot adopt, too great, or too early, precautions against the annual waste that is taking place in the resources, the very substance, of China.

Since, then, it will not answer to close our ports against [all trade], and since the laws issued against opium are quite inoperative, the only method left is to revert to the former system, to permit the barbarian merchants to import opium, paying duty thereon as a medicine, and to require that, after having passed the customhouse, it shall be delivered to the hong merchants only in exchange for merchandise, and that no money be paid for it. The barbarians, finding that the amount of duties to be paid on it is less than what is now spent in bribes, will also gladly comply therein. Foreign money should be placed on the same footing with sycee silver, and the exportation of it should be equally prohibited. Offenders when caught should be punished by the entire destruction of the opium they may have and the confiscation of the money that be found with them. With regard to officers, civil and military, and to the scholars and common soldiers, the first are called on to fulfill the duties of their rank and attend to the public good; the others, to cultivate their talents and become fit for public usefulness. None of these, therefore, must be permitted to contract a practice so bad or to walk in a path that will lead only to the utter waste of their time and destruction of their property. If, however, the laws enacted against the practice be made too severe, the result will be mutual connivance. It becomes my duty, then, to request that it be enacted that any officer, scholar, or soldier found guilty of secretly smoking opium shall be immediately dismissed from public employ, without being made liable to any other penalty. In this way, lenity will become in fact severity toward them. And further, that, if any superior or general officer be found guilty of knowingly and willfully conniving at the practice among his subordinates, such officer shall be subjected to a court of inquiry. Lastly, that no regard be paid to the purchase and use of opium on the part of the people generally.

Does any suggest a doubt that to remove the existing prohibitions will derogate from the dignity of government? I would ask if he is ignorant that the pleasure of the table and of the nuptial couch may also be indulged in to the injury of health? Nor are the invigorating drugs *footsze(?)* and *wootow(?)* devoid of poisonous qualities; yet it has never been heard that any one of these has been interdicted. Besides, the removal of the prohibitions refers only to the vulgar and common people, those who have no official duties to perform. So long as the officers of government, the scholars, and the military are not included, I see no detriment to the dignity of government. And by allowing the

proposed importation and exchange of the drug for other commodities, more than ten millions of money will annually be prevented from flowing out of the central land. On which side then is the gain, on which the loss? It is evident at a glance. But if we still idly look back and delay to retrace our steps, foolishly paying regard to a matter of mere empty dignity, I humbly apprehend that when eventually it is proved impossible to stop the importation of opium, it will then be found that we have waited too long, that the people are impoverished, and their wealth departed. Should we then begin to turn round, we shall find that reform comes too late.

Though but a servant of no value, I have by your majesty's condescending favor been raised from a subordinate censorship to various official stations, both at court and in the provinces, and filled on one occasion the chief judicial office in the region south of the great mountains (Guangdong). Ten years spent in endeavors to make some return have produced no fruit, and I find myself overwhelmed with shame and remorse. But with regard to the great advantages, or great evils, of any place where I have been, I have never failed to make particular inquiries. Seeing that the prohibitions now in force against opium serve but to increase the prevalence of the evil, and that there is none found to represent the facts directly to your majesty, and feeling assured that I am myself thoroughly acquainted with the real state of things, I dare no longer forbear to let them reach your majesty's ear. Prostrate I beg my august sovereign to give secret directions to the governor and lieutenant governor of Guangdong, together with the superintendent of maritime customs, that they faithfully investigate the character of the above statements and that, if they find them really correct, they speedily prepare a list of regulations adapted to a change in the system and present the same for your majesty's final decision. Perchance this may be found adequate to stop further oozing out of money and to replenish the national resources. With inexpressible awe and trembling fear I reverently present this memorial and await your majesty's commands.

**Report of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor.
Sept. 7th, 1836**

We have, in obedience to the imperial will, jointly deliberated on the subject of repealing the regulation now in force in regard to the importation of opium and of permitting it to be sold in barter for other commodities; and we herein present a draft of regulations, which we have sketched, comprising nine sections, on which we humbly illicit your sacred majesty to cast a glance. . . .

We are humbly of opinion that in framing regulations it is of the first

importance to suit them to the circumstances of the times and that, to govern well, it is essential in the first place to remove existing evils. But if in removing one evil, an evil of greater extent is produced, it then becomes the more imperative to make a speedy change suited to the circumstances of the occasion.

We, your majesty's ministers, having examined the original memorial and considered the details therein contained respecting the evils to be removed, regard the whole as true and accurate. The request for a repeal of the prohibitions and change in the system, and a return to the former plan of laying a duty on opium, is also such as the circumstances of the times render necessary; and it is our duty to solicit your majesty's sanction thereof. In case of such sanction, any foreigner, who in the course of trade may bring opium, must be permitted to import and pass it at the customhouse, paying the duty on it as fixed by the maritime tariff of Qianlong, and must deliver it to the hong merchants, in the same manner as long-ells, camlets, and other goods bartered for native commodities, but on no account may he sell it clandestinely for money.

If this plan be faithfully and vigorously carried into effect, the tens of millions of precious money that now annually go out of the empire will be saved, the source of the stream will be putrid, and the stream itself may be eventually stayed. The amount of duties being less onerous than what is now paid in bribes, transgressions of the revenue laws will cease of themselves; the present evil practices of transporting contraband goods by deceit and violence will be suppressed without effort; the numberless quarrels and litigation now arising therefrom at Canton, together with the crimes of worthless vagrants, will be diminished. Moreover, if the governmental officers, the literati, and the military be still restrained by regulations and not be suffered to inhale the drug, and if offenders among these classes be immediately dismissed from the public service, while those of the people who purchase the drug and smoke it are not interfered with, all will plainly see that those who indulge their depraved appetites are the victims of their own self-sacrificing folly, persons who are incapable of ranking among the capped and belted men of distinction and learning. And if in this way shame be once aroused, strenuous exertion and self-improvement will be the result—for the principles of reform are founded in shame and remorse. Nor, as is truly said in the original memorial, will the dignity of government be at all lowered by the proposed measure. Should your majesty sanction the repeal, it will in truth be attended with advantage both to the arrangements of the governments and the well-being of the people. . . .

1. The whole amount of opium imported should be paid for in merchandise: in this there must be no deception. The object in repealing the interdict on opium is to prevent the loss of specie occasioned by the sale of the drug for money. When opium is brought

in foreign vessels, therefore, the security and senior merchants should be held responsible for the following arrangements being carried into effect: the value of the opium to be correctly fixed; an amount of native commodities of equal value to be apportioned; and the two amounts to be exchanged in full: no purchase to be made for money payments. . . .

2. The naval cruising vessels, and all the officers and men of the customhouse stations, should be required diligently to watch the entrances and passages of rivers but at the same time to confine their search to such entrances and passages; they should not be allowed to go out to seaward and under cover thereof to cause annoyance. . . . If the soldiers, or vagabonds feigning to be soldiers, frame pretexts for cruising about in search of them [opium smugglers], not only can they effect no good, but they may also give occasion to disturbances, attended with evil consequences of no trivial character. They should, therefore, be strictly prohibited so doing.

3. [skipped]

4. [skipped]

5. This amount of duties should be continued the same as formerly, no increase is called for; and all extortionate demands and illegal fees should be interdicted. . . . Perspicuous and strict proclamations should therefore be issued, making it generally known that, beyond the real duty, not the smallest fraction is to be exacted and that offenders shall be answerable to the law against extortionate underlings receiving money under false pretexts.

6. No price should be fixed on the drug. It is a settled principle of commerce that, when prices are very low, there is a tendency to rise, and when high, a tendency to fall. Prices then depend on the supply that is procurable of any article, and the demand that exists for it in the market they cannot be limited by enactments to any fixed rate. Now, though the prohibition of opium be repealed, it will not be a possible thing to force men who buy at a high price to sell at a cheap one. Besides, it is common to men to prize things of high value and to underrate those of less worth. When therefore opium was severely interdicted, and classed among rarities, everyone had an opportunity to indulge in overreaching desires of gain; but when once the interdicts are withdrawn, and opium universally admitted, it will become a common medicinal drug, easily to be obtained.

"The gem, when in the casket, prized,
When common, is despised!"

So the price of opium, if left to itself, will fall from day to day; whereas

if rated at a fixed value, great difficulty will be found in procuring it at the price at which it is rated. It is reasonable and right, therefore, to leave the price to fluctuate, according to the circumstances of the times, and not to fix any rate.

7. [skipped]

8. The strict prohibitions existing against the cultivation of the poppy, among the people, may be in some measure relaxed. Opium possesses soothing properties but is powerful in its effects. Its soothing properties render it a luxury, greatly esteemed; but its powerful effects are such as readily to induce disease. The accounts given of the manner in which it is prepared among the foreigners are various; but in all probability it is not unmixed with things of poisonous quality. It is said that of late years, opium has been clandestinely prepared by natives, by boiling down the juicy matter from the poppy; and that thus prepared, it possesses milder properties and is less injurious, without losing its soothing influence. To shut out the importation of it by foreigners, there is no better plan than to sanction the cultivation and preparation of it in the empire. It would seem right, therefore, to relax, in some means, the existing severe prohibitions and to dispense with the close scrutiny now called for to hinder its cultivation. If it be apprehended that the simple people may leave the stem and stay of life to amuse themselves with the twigs and branches, thereby injuring the interest of agriculture, it is only necessary to issue perspicuous orders, requiring them to confine the cultivation of the poppy to the tops of hills and mounds, and other unoccupied spots of ground, and on no account to introduce it into their grainfields, to the injury of that on which their subsistence depends.

9. All officers, scholars, and soldiers should be strictly prohibited and disallowed the smoking of opium. . . . With regard to officers, civil and military, and to the scholars and common soldiers, the first are called on to fulfill the duties of their rank and attend to the public good; the others, to cultivate their talents and become fit for public usefulness. None of these, therefore, must be permitted to contract a practice so bad or to walk in a path that will lead only to the utter waste of their time and destruction of their property.

If the laws be rendered overly strict, then offenders, in order to escape the penalty, will be tempted to screen one another. This, assuredly, is not then so good a plan as to relax the prohibitions and to act upon men's feelings of shame and self-condemnation. In the latter case, gradual reformation may be expected as the result of convection. Hence the original memorial also alludes

to a reformation noiselessly effected. The suggestions therein contained are worthy of regard and of adoption. Hereafter no attention should be paid to the purchase and use of opium among the people. But if officers, civil and military, scholars, or common soldiers secretly purchase and smoke the drug they should be immediately degraded and dismissed, as standing warnings to all who will not arouse and renovate themselves. Orders to this effect should be promulgated in all the provinces, and strictly enjoined in every civil and military office, by the superiors on their subordinates, to be faithfully obeyed by everyone. And all who, paying apparent obedience, secretly transgress this interdict should be delivered over by the high provincial authorities to the Civil or Military Board, to be subjected to severe investigation.

Memorial in Favor of Banning Opium

Zhu Zun, member of the council and of the Board of Rites, kneeling, presents the following memorial, wherein he suggests the propriety of increasing the severity of certain prohibitory enactments, with a view to maintain the dignity of the laws and to remove a great evil from among the people: to this end he respectfully states his views on the subject and earnestly entreats his sacred majesty to cast a glance thereon.

I would humbly point out that wherever an evil exists it should be at once removed and that the laws should never be suffered to fall into desuetude. Our government, having received from heaven the gift of peace, has transmitted it for two centuries: this has afforded opportunity for the removal of evils from among the people. For governing the central nation, and for holding in submission all the surrounding barbarians, rules exist perfect in their nature and well fitted to attain their end. And in regard to opium, special enactments were passed for the prohibitions of its use in the first year of Jiaqing [1796]; and since then, memorials presented at various successive periods have given rise to additional prohibitions, all of which have been inserted in the code and the several tariffs. The laws, then, relating thereto are not wanting in severity; but there are those in office who, for want of energy, fail to carry them into execution.

Hence the people's minds gradually become callous; and base desires, springing up among them, increase day by day and month by month, till their rank luxuriance has spread over the whole empire. These noisome weeds, having been long neglected, have become impossible to eradicate. And those to whom this duty is entrusted are, as if hand bound, wholly at a loss what to do.

When the foreign ships convey opium to the coast, it is impossible for them

to sell it by retail. Hence there are at Canton, in the provincial city, brokers, named "melters." These engage money changers to arrange the price with the foreigners and to obtain orders for them, with which orders they proceed to the receiving ships, and there the vile drug is delivered to them. This part of the transaction is notorious, and the actors in it are easily discoverable. The boats that carry the drug and that are called "fast-crabs" and "scrambling-dragons" are all well furnished with guns and other weapons and ply their oars as swiftly as though they were wings. Their crews have all the overbearing assumption and audacity of pirates. Shall such men be suffered to navigate the surrounding seas according to their own will? And shall such conduct be passed over without investigation? . . .

It is said that the opium should be admitted, subject to a duty, the importers being required to give it into the hands of the hong merchants in barter only for merchandise, without being allowed to sell it for money. And this is proposed as a means of preventing money from secretly oozing out of the country. But the English, by whom opium is sold, have been driven out to Lintin (a small island in the Pearl River estuary) so long since as the first year of Daoguang (1821), when the then governor of Guangdong and Guangxi discovered and punished the warehouses of opium: so long have they been expelled, nor have they ever since imported it into Macao. Having once suppressed the trade and driven them away, shall we now again call upon them and invite them to return? This would be, indeed, a derogation from the true dignity of government. As to the proposition to give tea in exchange, and entirely to prohibit the exportation of even *foreign* silver, I apprehend that, if the tea should not be found sufficient, money will still be given in exchange for the drug. Besides, if it is in our power to prevent the extortion of dollars, why not also to prevent the importation of opium? And if we can but prevent the importation of opium, the exportation of dollars will then cease of itself, and the two offenses will both at once be stopped. Moreover, is it not better, by continuing the old enactments, to find even a partial remedy for the evil than by a change of the laws to increase the importation still further? As to levying a duty of opium, the thing sounds so awkwardly, and reads so unbeseeingly, that such a duty ought surely not to be levied.

Again, it is said that the prohibitions against the planting of the poppy by natives should be relaxed and that the direct consequences will be daily diminution of the profits of foreigners and in course of time the entire cessation of the trade without the aid of prohibitions. Is it, then, forgotten that it is natural to the common people to prize things heard of only by the ear and to undervalue those that are before their eyes—to pass by those things that are near at hand and to seek after those that are afar off—and, though they have a

thing in their own land, yet to esteem more highly such as comes to them from beyond the seas? Thus, in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong, they will quietly be guided by the laws of the empire, but must needs make use of foreign money; and this foreign money, though of an inferior standard, is nevertheless exchanged by them at a higher rate than the native sycee silver, which is pure. And although money is cast in China after exactly the same pattern, under names of Jiangsu pieces, Fujian pieces, and native or Canton pieces, yet this money has not been able to gain currency among the people. Thus, also, silk and cotton goods of China are not insufficient in quantity; and yet broadcloths, and camlets, and cotton goods of the barbarians from beyond the place of the empire are in constant request. Taking men generally, the minds of all are equally unenlightened in this respect, so that all men prize what is strange and undervalue whatever is in ordinary use.

From Fujian, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Shandong, Yunnan, and Guizhou, memorials have been presented by the censors, and other officers request that prohibitions should be enacted against the cultivation of the poppy and against the preparation of opium; but while nominally prohibited, the cultivation of it has not been really stopped in those places. Of any of those provinces, except Yunnan, I do not presume to speak; but of that portion of the country I have it in any power to say that the poppy is cultivated all over the hills and the open campaign and that the quantity of opium annually produced there cannot be less than several thousand chests. And yet we do not see any diminution in the quantity of silver exported as compared with any previous period, while, on the other hand, the lack of the metal in Yunnan is double in degree to what it formerly was. To what cause is this to be ascribed? To what but that the consumers of the drug are very many and that those who are choice and dainty, with regard to its quality, prefer always the foreign article?

Those of your majesty's advisers who compare the drug to the dried leaf of the tobacco plant are in error. The tobacco leaf does not destroy the human constitution. The profit too arising from the sale of tobacco is small, while that arising from opium is large. Besides, tobacco may be cultivated on bare and barren ground, while the poppy needs a rich and fertile soil. If all the rich and fertile ground be used for planting the poppy, and if the people, hoping for a large profit therefrom, madly engage in its cultivation, where will flax and the mulberry tree be cultivated or wheat and rye be planted? To draw off in this way the waters of the great fountain, requisite for the production of goods and raiment, and to lavish them upon the root whence calamity and disaster spring forth, is an error that may be compared to that of a physician who, when treating a mere external disease, should drive it inward to the heart and center of the body. It may in such a case be found impossible even to preserve *life*. And shall

the fine fields of Guangdong, which produce their three crops every year, be given up for the cultivation of this noxious weed—those fields in comparison with which the unequal soil of all other parts of the empire is not even to be mentioned?

To sum up the matter—the widespreading and baneful influence of opium, when regarded simply as injurious to property, is of inferior importance; but when regarded as hurtful to the people, it demands most anxious consideration: for in the *people* lies the very foundation of the empire. Property, it is true, is that on which the subsistence of the people depends. Yet a deficiency of it may be supplied, and an impoverished people improved; whereas it is beyond the power of any artificial means to save a people enervated by luxury. In the history of Formosa we find the following passage: “Opium was first produced in Kaoutsinne[?], which by some is said to be the same as Kalapa (or Batavia). The natives of this place were at the first sprightly and active, and being good soldiers, were always successful in battle. But the people called Hongmao [*Red-hairs*, a term originally applied to the Dutch] came thither, and having manufactured opium, seduced some of the natives into the habit of smoking it; from this the mania for it rapidly spread throughout the whole nation, so that in process of time, the natives became feeble and enervated, submitted to the foreign rule, and ultimately were completely subjugated.” Now the English are of the race of foreigners called Hongmao. In introducing opium into this country, their purpose has been to weaken and enfeeble the central empire. If not early aroused to a sense of our danger, we shall find ourselves, ere long, on the last step toward ruin. . . .

Since your majesty’s accession to the throne, the maxim of your illustrious house that horsemanship and archery are the foundations of its existence has ever been carefully remembered. And hence the governors, the lieutenant governors, the commanders of the forces, and their subordinates have again and again been acted to pay the strictest attention to the discipline and exercise of the troops, and of the naval forces, and have been urged and required to create by their exertions strong and powerful legions. With admiration I contemplate my sacred sovereign’s anxious care for imparting a military as well as a civil education, prompted as this anxiety is by desire to establish on a firm basis the foundations of the empire and to hold in awe the barbarians on every side. But while the stream of importation of opium is not turned aside, it is impossible to attain any certainty that none within the camp do ever secretly inhale the drug. And if the camp be once contaminated by it, the baneful influence will work its way, and the habit will be contracted, beyond the power of reform. When the periodical times of desire for it come round, how can the victims—their legs tottering, their hands trembling, their eyes flowing with childlike

tears—be able in any way to attend to their proper exercises? Or how can such men form strong and powerful legions? Under these circumstances, the military will become alike unfit to advance to the fight or in a retreat to defend their posts. Of this there is clear proof in the instance of the campaign against the Yao rebels in the twelfth year of our sovereign’s reign [1832]. In the army sent to Yongzhou [Hunan], on that occasion, great numbers of the soldiers were opium smokers, so that although their numerical force was large, there was hardly any strength to be found among them. . . .

At the present moment, throughout the empire, the minds of men are in imminent danger; the more foolish, being seduced by teachers of false doctrines, are sunk in vain superstitions and cannot be aroused; and the more intelligent, being intoxicated by opium, are carried away as by a whirlpool and are beyond recovery. Most thoughtfully have I sought for some plan by which to arouse and awaken all but in vain. While, however, the empire preserves and maintains its laws, the plain and honest rustic will see what he has to fear and will be deterred from evil; and the man of intelligence and cultivated habits will learn what is wrong in himself and will refrain from it. And thus, though the laws be declared by some to be but wastepaper, yet these their unseen effects will be of no trifling nature. If, on the other hand, the prohibitions be suddenly repealed, and the action that was a crime be no longer counted such by the government, how shall the dull clown and the mean among the people know that the action is still in itself wrong? In open day and with unblushing front, they will continue to use opium till they shall become so accustomed to it that eventually they will find it as indispensable as their daily meat and drink and will inhale the noxious drug with perfect indifference. When shame shall thus be entirely destroyed, and fear removed wholly out of the way, the evil consequences that will result to morality and to the minds of men will assuredly be neither few nor unimportant. As your majesty’s minister, I know that the laws of the empire, being in their existing state well fitted to effect their end, will not for any slight cause be changed. But the proposal to alter the law on this subject having been made and discussed in the provinces, the instant effect has been that crafty thieves and villains have on all hands begun to raise their heads and open their eyes, gazing about and pointing their finger, under the notion that, when once these prohibitions are repealed thenceforth and forever, they may regard themselves free from every restraint and from every cause of fear.

Though possessing very poor abilities I have nevertheless had the happiness to enjoy the favor of your sacred majesty and have, within a space of but few years, been raised through the several grades of the censorate, and the presidency of various courts in the metropolis, to the high elevation of a seat in the Inner Council. I have been copiously imbued with the rich dew of favors yet

have been unable to offer the feeblest token of gratitude; but if there is aught within the compass of my knowledge, I dare not to pass it by unnoticed. I feel in my duty to request that your majesty's commands may be proclaimed to the governors and lieutenant governors of all the provinces, requiring them to direct the local officers to redouble their efforts for the enforcement of the existing prohibitions against opium and to impress on everyone, in the plainest and strictest manner, that all who are already contaminated by the vile habit must return and become new men—that if any continue to walk in their former courses, strangers to repentance and to reformation, they shall assuredly be subjected to the full penalty of the law and shall not meet with the least indulgence—and that any found guilty of storing up or selling opium to the amount of 1,000 catties or upward, the most severe punishment shall be inflicted. Thus happily the minds of men may be impressed with fear, and the report thereof, spreading over the seas (among foreigners), may even there produce reformation. Submitting to my sovereign my feeble and obscure views, I prostrate implore your sacred majesty to cast a glance on this my respectful memorial.

Imperial Edict, September 1836

The councilor Zhu Zun has presented a memorial, requesting that the severity of the prohibitory enactments against opium may be increased. The subcensor Xu Qiu also has laid before us a respectful representation of his views and, in a supplementary statement, a recommendation to punish severely Chinese traitors.

Opium, coming from the distant regions of barbarians, has pervaded the country with its baneful influence and has been made a subject of very severe prohibitory enactments. But, of late, there has been a diversity of opinion in regard to it, some requesting a change in the policy hitherto adopted and others recommending the continuance of the severe prohibitions. It is highly important to consider the subject carefully in all its bearings, surveying at once the whole field of action, so that such measures may be adopted as shall continue forever in force, free from all failures.

Let Deng [Deng Tingzhen, the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi] and his colleagues anxiously and carefully consult together upon the recommendation to search for, and with utmost strictness apprehend, all those traitorous natives who sell the drug, the hong merchants who arrange the transactions in actions in it, the brokers who purchase it by wholesale, the boatmen who are engaged in transporting it, and the naval militia who receive

bribes; and having determined on the steps to be taken in order to stop up the source of the evil, let them present a true and faithful report. Let them also carefully ascertain and report whether the circumstances stated by Xu Qiu in his supplementary document, in reference to the foreigners from beyond the seas, be true or not, whether such things as are mentioned therein have or have not taken place. Copies of the several documents are to be herewith sent to those officers for perusal; and this edict is to be made known to Deng and Ke, who are to enjoin it also on Wan, the superintendent of maritime customs. Respect this.

NOTES

John Slade, *A Narrative of the Late Proceedings and Events in China* (Canton: Canton Register, 1839).

1. The author means Turkey.
2. This was also a serious issue for peasants, since they normally used copper cash but had to pay taxes in silver. It is not clear that the rise in the price of silver was entirely due to the opium trade.