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The Truth and Evils of Opium: The Anti-Opium Activities of British Missionary to China John Dudgeon (1837–1901)

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Abstract In order to purify the environment in which they planned to convert, from the 1860s onwards British Missionaries in late Qing China started to carry out anti opium campaigns. It was these campaigns that became the life work of British Medical Missionary John Dudgeon. Dudgeon was of the opinion that it was the ferocious opium trade that was destroying the morals, traditional culture, society, and economy of the Chinese, turning China into the West's greatest market and in turn affecting China's own economic benefits. Based on his surveys made on the wards, from a medical perspective, Dudgeon announced that "an opium-smoker's family become extinct in the third generation." Dudgeon drew up the "Dudgeon Plan" in the hope that Sino-British governmental cooperation could bring about the end of the opium trade. Nevertheless, these campaigns met with stiff opposition and suppression, and lost support from the Missionary Society. John Dudgeon's plan was ultimately a failure.

Keywords John Dudgeon, opium, missionary, Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade

The year 1858 saw Britain and China sign the *Treaty of Tianjin* that gave businessmen and missionaries the freedom to practice opium trade in China. As a result, the missionaries came to discover the extent to which businessmen had

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already muddled the water and ruined the reputation of Christianity and the British. Chinese people were known to say to missionaries: “you preach strict morality to us, but many of your people are not moral... you exhort us not to smoke opium, but why do you bring it here, and sell it to us.”¹ In the 1860’s Dudgeon noted that “In Peking there are opium shops in almost every lane—2 or 3 in larger lanes.”² John Griffith (1831–1912) of the London Missionary Society saw opium as one of the biggest obstacles faced by missionaries, as Chinese people would say to them: “First get rid of opium and then we will trust you.”³ From 1864–1869, in just one of the missionary hospitals in Beijing they received 643 victims of opium.⁴ The hospital manager and missionary of London Missionary Society John Dudgeon (1837–1901) stressed that: “The dangers caused by opium have already soaked down to the bone of the empire and is in the process of undermining the very foundation of this nation: the bodies of the Chinese, their social morals, and their economic and military strength.”⁵

Everywhere that missionary tried to spread the word of the Lord it was pervaded by poisonous opium smoke. This was the reason that the abolition of opium in China and the cleaning up of the missionary environment was one of the main activities of missionaries in both Britain and China from the 1860s onwards. It was due to the united anti-opium activities of missionaries in China that the half-century (since the 1858 signing of the *Treaty of Tianjin* to the final banning of the sale of opium by the British government in 1906) saw a special era in the work of missionaries attempting to carry out change within China.⁶ John Dudgeon from Britain was one of the main protagonists in these anti-opium campaigns and was one of the missionaries in China that recognized the violence inflicted by his own country on the Chinese economy, culture, and people. Thus, he bravely waged anti-opium campaigns, criticized the British government, and accused them of masterminding the trade of opium that was a “most heinous sin,” requesting that the government take the lead by banning the sale of the drug.

¹ *The Chinese Recorder*, 1868, 33.

² Dudgeon, “On the Extent and Some of the Evils of Opium Smoking,” 204.

³ John Griffith, a member of the London Missionary Society, was the first missionary to reach central China (Hankou–Wuhan) and gained the nickname “The street missionary.” See Thompson, 95–96.

⁴ Dudgeon, “On the Extent and Some of the Evils of Opium Smoking,” 204.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The first to highlight the dangers of opium and to advocate its banning was American missionary Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801–1861). Bridgman used *The Chinese Repository* over the course of 15 years between 1832–1847 to publish over 16 articles and translations on opium discussing the history, use and trade of the drug. He especially singled out British government’s immoral behavior. See Wong Chi-Kei, 20–21.

John Dudgeon arrived in China in 1863 in the capacity of a missionary of London Medical Missionary Society and in 1865 opened the Peking Hospital, which was the former of the Peking Union Medical College Hospital, where he worked as a medical missionary. In the same year he was medical officer of the Imperial Maritime Customs in Beijing and in 1871 was recruited as a professor of the Tongwenguang (Imperial College) and implemented a new model for medical instruction in China. In 1884, Dudgeon resigned from the London Missionary Society and concentrated his efforts in the medical education and studying of medical culture. He died in Beijing in 1902. Those years in the capital, “from the emperor and officials down to the commoners, there was practically no one who did not know about his good work in establishing hospitals.”⁷

Revealing Opium as a Danger and an Evil

In 1868, John Dudgeon called for missionaries, overseas charities, and businessmen to fight together against opium:

If this stumbling block (opium) is not gotten rid of, missionaries, charity workers and businessmen will hardly have any bright future in this country. If this obstacle is not overcome, no goal whatsoever can be reached.⁸

In 1868, Dudgeon made summaries of the various “evils” of opium consumption based on his 5 years’ experience of living and doing medical work in the Chinese capital. He collected statistics on the situation of opium smoking in Beijing, and highlighted the harm of opium to every level of Chinese society and the fact that opium addicts could be found in every walk of life. As an appendix to the article there was a table pertaining to the situation of Chinese opium smokers, in which it is stated that: 40% of *yamen* petit officials, 20% of the merchants, and 30%–40% of the attendants and servants to government officials had opium habits. The rate among the literary classes and fighting soldiers was given at 20%–30%, with the highest rate being found among the Bannermen and servants at 70%–80%, and according to Dudgeon they made up the core addicts in Chinese society. The survey discovered that 50% of eunuchs had an opium habit. An addict even informed Dudgeon that within the Forbidden City there were around 3 000 opium addicts and that within the palace, at the very foot of the throne, there was an opium shop. The rate of addicts in the ranks of the army was not low either and among the Manchu Bannermen and reserve

⁷ Edkins, 1870, 7.

⁸ *The Chinese Recorder*, 1868, 33.

troops the figure stood at around 30%–40%. Among farmers in opium-producing provinces, the amount of smokers stood at 40%–60%, with the rate being the lowest in areas where it was not grown, at around 4%–6%. Dudgeon even witnessed the Beijing police patrols smoking opium.⁹

Towards the end of the 1860s, calls from the London Missionary Society for the banning of opium became more and more intense, with the missionaries focusing on two main points: one is the opium trade undermines Christian morals and the other is the trade is in the process of damaging the political and culture image of Britain. Their plea was taken up by the Archbishop of Canterbury and others in the church, who petitioned parliament to ban the sale of opium. Parliament then had a vote on whether or not to forbid the sale of opium with a debate in the house. “Since the signing of the Treaty, British missionaries have been traveling through every province and seen the damage inflicted upon the Chinaman by the drug opium and there are those that have returned home to report these matters. Last spring parliament debated these matters and our Society, along with a great many charity organizations, petitioned the government. Nevertheless the prime minister at the time was only concerned about the tax that could be levied from it and in the face of opposition rallied many people behind the East India Company, calling those who opposed the opium trade to be traitors to Britain.”¹⁰ Dudgeon went onto call for those who oppose opium to gather evidence and outlined the two major dangers of the drug, that of economic and moral corruption.

Those smokers lost their possessions, wasted their life, their reputation being ruined and morals corrupted. Their heroism and strength diminished and they sink to the lowest level of society, down to the gutters. Chinese people say of opium that its crimes are too great to mention and that not even all the water in the North Sea could wash away the stains opium has left on their hearts.¹¹

For Dudgeon, “the evils of opium were enormous”¹² and from the point of view of faith and morality Dudgeon said, “We made a mockery of Chinese law through our greed and lack of compassion. No matter what opium does, by introducing opium to the Chinese it only served to build a wall against Christianity.”¹³ Opium first brought about damage to the civilized reputation of

⁹ Dudgeon comments on the cold of Beijing winters and that at night the police patrols resort to the drug as the only means of keeping warm, see Dudgeon, “On the Extent and Some of Evils of Opium Smoking,” 204.

¹⁰ Dudgeon, “Jinyan shuolüe,” 404.

¹¹ Dudgeon, “On the Extent and Some of Evils of Opium Smoking,” 207.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Christians, showing a less than virtuous side to Westerners, and secondly started to destroy Chinese moral values.

Time, wealth, skill, respect, self control, integrity, frankness, and honesty—all of these have been sacrificed under the searing burn of the torch of opium. Those opium addicts, from the selling or pawing of their worldly possessions and loose all sense of self respect and status, are then driven to suicide or selling their wives and children or abandoning their families and losing all control on life.¹⁴

From the point of trade and economy Dudgeon was of the opinion that the Chinese could become the best consumer markets of British goods, and that in turn could produce a large amount of cheap goods for the West. However, opium had destroyed the Chinese will, together with the spending power and labor power there. He argued that opium had destroyed the value of Western products in Chinese market, and was a block to more money spent by Chinese people on Western made items, upsetting the balance of trade. In other words, less opium would mean more money to spend on Western goods, and it was this argument that Dudgeon used to convince people of how opium was actually harming British trade profit.¹⁵ Dudgeon accused the East India Company of being “bent on destroying the economy as well as Anglo-Chinese friendship.”¹⁶ Dudgeon represented the anti-opium missionaries in China. On the one hand, they tried to persuade the British government to ban the import of opium to China, and on the other to convince the Qing government of the need for a law banning the domestic growth of opium. The market at the time had plenty of Sichuan and Yunnan opium, known as “native opium.”¹⁷ In July 1869, Dudgeon wrote an article on opium for the Chinese newspaper *Jingbao* 京报 (Capital Newspaper) in which he made an honest appraisal of the “local opium” and warned British traders that soon the trade may become purely Chinese, resulting in nothing but the loss of a market for Britain.¹⁸

Refuting the Views of “Indian Opium is Harmless”

The anti-opium activities of missionaries based in China were not only debates in parliament but also came to the attention of some Chinese people, who in turn

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Dudgeon, “Further Notes on Opium,” 46–48.

¹⁷ On domestic opium growth, see Qin Heping, 1998; 2001.

¹⁸ Dudgeon, “Further Notes on Opium,” 46–48.

joined in with the missionaries in the fight against opium. In 1874, three missionaries based in China, T. S. Turner, James Legge and William Lockhart, established in London the Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade and it was the aim of this society to unify all the anti-opium efforts of other missionaries into one body that had some social muscle and start to promote the anti-opium cause back in Britain. John Dudgeon was one of their most vehement supporters and became known to them as “Our very dear friend.”¹⁹ Dudgeon report in Chinese news of the formation of the society in Britain: “On the 8th August this year (1874) public goodwill towards the banning of opium has brought an anti-opium society, with sixty-five names initially signing up.”²⁰ In turn, the Society showed towards Dudgeon the utmost respect: “Dr. Dudgeon is intimately acquainted with the views and feelings of those great Chinese statesmen upon the opium question. The interview at our office was therefore one of unusual interest.”²¹

When in 1875 John Dudgeon returned to Britain on leave he discovered that the mainstream media was pushing the message that opium is “harmless” and that: (1) There is no evidence as to the harmful nature of East Indian opium; (2) As proof that smoking opium is not detrimental to one’s health, the vast majority of Chinese opium smokers are still alive; (3) Opium has medicinal qualities and in some regions can be used as a defense against certain tropical diseases; (4) Opium is the best medicine for creating a generally good mood and sense of well being. They even argued that in some environments opium is a necessary tool. All of this was based on the evidence provided by the East India Company and their doctors and was lack of other evidence, and without much of a counter argument that the vast majority of the British public were taken in. On the subject of Chinese debates on opium, Dudgeon published an article over three editions attacking the theory that opium is harmless. The article was titled “The Opium Traffic from a Medical Point of View” and the first part appeared in the March 1876 edition of *The Friend of China*.²²

Dudgeon used the proverb “Chinese opium is like kindling wood and Indian opium is like coal” to counter the argument that “Indian opium is harmless.” Even though one kind might be more harmful than another, the point was not to

¹⁹ Whenever the society mentioned Dudgeon, he was always crowned with the epithet “Our very dear friend.” This comes from readings of articles related to Dudgeon in *The Friend of China*—a monthly periodical published by the Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade. The magazine ran for 31 years from 1875 to 1906 when parliament finally banned the trade in opium.

²⁰ Dudgeon, “Jinyan shuolüe.”

²¹ *The Friend of China*, January 1876, 274.

²² Dudgeon, “The Opium Traffic from a Medical Point of View,” 328–329; 345–349; 12–17.

compare types, it was that regardless of type it was all harmful. As for the argument that smoking an acceptable amount was not harmful, Dudgeon questioned what was considered an “acceptable amount.” Dudgeon’s argument was that if one could not determine how much of a certain drug could be taken safely then any amount of opium must be dangerous and destructive. One should not, according to Dudgeon, judge that opium is safe based on smoking it in small amounts. On the contrary one should take into account the overall health effects and damage done by opium. For addicts smoking an acceptable amount varies from person to person. Once a person is addicted, it is only a matter of time before danger is unavoidable.

The third problem was that opium was used in the treatment of malaria. This point of view was very fashionable at the time in both Britain and China, and was hotly debated in both sides.²³ The London Missionary Society missionary and Sinologist Joseph Edkins (1823–1905) states through a study of Chinese medicine that the Chinese were using opium in the treatment of malaria and diarrhea.²⁴ Indeed, Chinese clinics did use opium for treating malaria and on this point Dudgeon expressed his agreement:

The Chinese have already been using opium as medicine for a long time, but no matter whether in theory or in practice, opium is not a wonder drug for malaria, nor it really be used for treating the sick. Opium should never be used as a preventative; however, opium (as many local doctors are left with no choice) can be used as a pain killer and sedative and in general to stop diarrhea, dysentery, cough, coughing up blood, and other ailments.²⁵

Opium was allowed to fill the needs of medical treatment in China and it was this line that pro-opium traders stuck to.²⁶ Dudgeon was totally opposed to opium as a malaria preventative measure, he used two cases taken from his medical practice proved that other than as a sedative, opium has no treatment properties and that its poisonous effects could not be prevented whatsoever. While working on the front line in a malaria-infected area Dudgeon remarked that over the course of 3 or 4 years, he treated over one thousand malaria patients and among those a significant number were opium addicts. In short, the opium in patients’ bodies did nothing to lessen the poison of the malaria. Dudgeon noted

²³ Booth, 74.

²⁴ Edkins, 1889.

²⁵ Dudgeon, March 1876, 328–329.

²⁶ The East India Company provided certificates stating that the opium they were carrying was for medical use. *The Friend of China*, January 1876, 264–275.

that China is a mountainous country and that malaria was unheard of in many areas, nevertheless, opium consumption was found across the whole country.

Finally, Dudgeon utterly opposed the idea that opium was necessary for moral. He argued that: "Were opium a necessity of human life then it would be beneficial to one's health and our wise ancestors would have relied on it and its benefits would have been discovered long ago instead of only now becoming popular."²⁷

During the on going debates between the Anti-Opium Society and the mainstream of British opinion on whether opium is in fact dangerous or not, Dudgeon came out with a new warning that opium is harming the next generation of Chinese. In September 1877, the British medical journal *Edinburgh Medical Journal* published Dudgeon's article "Opium in Relation to Population."²⁸ The study was carried out after examining and charting the progress of over one thousand opium smokers, Dudgeon stressed that smoking opium was leading to impotence in men and infertility in women and concluded that it was starting to harm the growth of the Chinese population. Dudgeon pointed to the fact that opium's effect on population growth was a new problem that had yet to be addressed by the medical community. As early as in 1871, Dudgeon examined 48 opium addicts in his own hospital and after one year of treating and interviewing them he concluded that opium addicts on the whole show the following traits: those who first turned to opium to increase sexual satisfaction make up the biggest number of smokers, with 60% saying they took up smoking because a friend told them that opium could improve their performance in bed. A further 20% started smoking as a social activity to while away the time, the same as Europeans drinking alcohol. Only 10%–20% claimed to have started smoking to cure a disease. The effects of opium on the male sex drive were well written about in both Western and Chinese medical textbooks and clinical tests had also shown that smoking opium could increase male sexual abilities. However, according to Dudgeon's studies on smoker's physical state, reproductive organs, and their family lives, he was able to disprove this theory. After prolonged smoking men become impotent and women infertile:

I do not say positively that the confirmed use of opium is directly an aphrodisiac, but certainly it appears to become so at least indirectly, by lowering the whole tone of the constitution. The Chinese affirm that an opium-smoker's family becomes extinct in the third generation.²⁹

²⁷ Dudgeon, "The Opium Traffic from a Medical Point of View," March 1876, 329.

²⁸ Dudgeon, "Opium in Relation to Population," 239–250.

²⁹ Ibid.

Dudgeon even used medical reports from Singapore, Turkey, Shanghai and Hankou as examples to prove that opium addicts gradually lost sexual potency. The report was reprinted in the *Friend of China* as a warning to the British medical world that opium will harm the third generation of Chinese.³⁰ In the 1890 report to the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held in Shanghai, Dudgeon summarized the ways in which opium is detrimental to one's health: (1) injury to health; (2) shortens lifespan; (3) danger in sudden abandoning of the drug; (4) long-continued use of the pipe leads to impotence and sterility.³¹

Making Known the Truth of Opium

By 1882, in the face of fiercer opposition to opium within Britain, the imperial government of India collected a series of essays supporting opium and published a book called *The Truth about Opium*,³² supporting the opium trade and arguing that opium is not harmful. The author, William H. Brereton extolled that: "The general public retain certain myths about opium problem that missionaries ought to be held account for." This was, in Brereton's opinion due to the fact that missionaries had exaggerated the dangers of opium. Brereton was especially opposed to Dudgeon's claims that the medicinal use of opium leads to addiction, therefore he wanted to "set the record straight" when it came to opium.³³

The so-called truth by the imperial Indian government meant the following: (1) The Chinese have always been in the habit of smoking opium, and this did not start with the introduction of Indian opium; (2) The British government has never forced the Chinese to buy or smoke opium; (3) The Chinese grow their own poppies for self consumption, and the rate of which exceeds that of the imports from India; (4) The Chinese government has not enforced bans on the growing and selling of her own domestic opium; (5) A modest use of opium is not as harmful as alcohol abuse; (6) Banning the growing of Indian poppies will damage the economy and livelihoods of Indian farmers, leading to civil unrest and putting India at a disadvantage; (7) If Britain relinquishes the sale of opium, her place will be taken by another country and the sale will continue on regardless.³⁴ At that time, the publication caused quite a stir and was taken in by

³⁰ *The Friend of China*, May 1878, 165.

³¹ Dudgeon, "The Evils of the Use of Opium," 333–336.

³² Brereton, 1882a.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1882b.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1882a.

the majority who knew little about the facts of the matter. The pro-opium side even received the backing of *The Times* newspaper, a definite setback for the anti-opium lobby.³⁵

This enraged Dudgeon, he said “I have never read such a book full of lies and falsehoods.... The highest judgment I could make of it is false, ill informed and lacking in logic, not even worth judging.” Going onto comment on how this so-called “truth about opium” was “error and wrong, not truth, will suffer from agitating the dirty pool.” Thus, the anti-opium lobby collected their own essays and published their own work: *The Truth about Opium Smoking*.³⁶ In 1882, Dudgeon published an article titled “Opium and Truth,”³⁷ in which he pointed out that the surveys carried out by the Indian government were all taken from the foreign diplomats and businessmen in the concession areas, and included data from very few Chinese people, thereby lacking a true account of the realities of Chinese life. Given that foreign diplomats have nothing to do with their Chinese counterparts (as the later would never bare their souls), the report is totally void of truth. Dudgeon stressed that the report could never paint a true picture of the damage done by opium on the Chinese, and only missionaries and doctors were qualified to speak on the matter. Dudgeon argued that:

Firstly, Dudgeon pointed out that to put the blame on the long-standing Chinese knowledge and use of opium as an important reason for British government and businessmen taking opium trade was hardly imaginative. No one could deny that opium was first brought to China by the Dutch and Portuguese. He went on to say that during the 17th century China did not domestically grow opiates and was generally unheard of them. By the end of the 18th century, apart from medicinal use, other uses were not common. It was not until the beginning of the East India Company’s opium trade with China that the use of opium became widespread. The enraged Dudgeon even laid into his mother country, saying that Britain had sinned and had been acting as a pimp in a brothel by introducing opium as a drug.

Secondly, on the question of China’s native opium production, Dudgeon supported the year 1839 for the start of Chinese opium growth, and no earlier. As for claims that no one in the province of Sichuan smokes Indian opium but their own homegrown opium, Dudgeon stressed that it was the Indian trade that kicked off the domestic growth of opium in China. Dudgeon described how the Chinese saw that: “Our Emperor draws a revenue from the foreign drug, he

³⁵ Three attempts were made in 1880, 1881 and 1883 to lobby parliament to ban opium, but in vain. See Wong Chi-Kei, 85–86.

³⁶ Broomhall.

³⁷ Dudgeon, “Opium and Truth,” 217–232.

cannot stop it, why should we be debarred from growing it too and reaping some of the high profits? Must all our silver go to the foreigner?" He also stated that the figures used by the pro-trade lobby were full of errors and therefore their argument cannot stand.

Thirdly, on the point of the Qing government not banning the opium in earnest, Dudgeon did not see the good in pointing fingers at the Chinese government. From Dudgeon's perspective, the attitude of the Chinese government was a patriotic one:

If the Dutch in view of invasion from a foreign power, whom they were unable to wear or drive out, they would flood their own country, and, after the departure of the enemy, they set windmills to pump out the water, what should we say of their patriotism, sincerity and power? What motive leads the Russians to burn Moscow? In China, why are houses pulled down to prevent conflagration spreading?³⁸

Dudgeon related his discussion with Li Hanzhang (Li Hongzhang's elder brother) on the policy of the Qing government towards opium. He supported China standing up for herself, knowing that no matter what they did they could not stop the Western trade of opium to China, and thus in its own way domestic opium had become a bargaining chip for the Chinese, as already Chinese grown opium was starting to win, with the domestic crops weakening the profits of imports.³⁹ Dudgeon was unlike most British politicians and businessmen, as he took great joy in this fact.

Fourthly, as for the use of opium as a stimulant, no worse than that of Europeans drinking wine and the detrimental effects of opium being exaggerated by missionaries, Dudgeon asked how bad something has to be before it is considered a sin. From Dudgeon's several decades in China, he was able to tell the British that the Chinese often use tea as a stimulant and not opium, in fact long exposure to opium acts as a depressant.

Finally, Dudgeon did not forget to criticize *The Times*, Britain's most popular newspaper, which he said displayed a very thin understanding of the opium problem. Dudgeon insisted that their running of the article "The Harmlessness of Opium" misled the populace.⁴⁰ In 1883, Dudgeon once more published an article in this vein titled "The Opium Problem: Review." For Dudgeon, the British and Indian government's further insistence that opium is harmless was a dressing up

³⁸ Ibid., 225.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 232.

of the opium problem for morale, especially the argument that compared opium smoking with wine drinking in Europe. It was not only nonsensical but showed a complete lack of historical knowledge. "When Britain solved its drinking problems, gains were made in terms of tax revenues and a reduction in crime, as well as improvements to society. As for opium, India is the beneficiary and for China there is nothing but suffering."⁴¹

Also in 1883, Dudgeon once more tackled the problem of local grown opium in Sichuan and the use of the drug in the west of China, refuting British civil servant Spence's report "Sichuan Native Opium" based on his survey in Yichang City. Dudgeon used the US medical missionary William Hector Park's report as well as the agriculture and farmer's lives in Sichuan as his refuting evidence. The basic point was that the opium can only be grown seasonally and luckily for Sichuan farmers, this season does not clash with the usual agricultural season. Opium was therefore much needed extra income for local farmers. In other words, for Sichuan farmers the opium problem was not a question of morals but of money. Just as the Indian government worried that the opium ban would cause a revolt among the peasantry, so the Chinese government worried about the destabilization of Sichuan should they ban its growth.⁴²

In 1881, after the return of 20 surveys carried out by customs officials in ports around the Chinese coastline,⁴³ the Head of the Customs Tax Office, Robert Hart commissioned a report on opium in China, in which the estimated number of Chinese smokers of foreign imported opium stood at 1 million people, that is 0.33% of the population of China at the time.⁴⁴ This figure is tiny. Even if one doubles it, the figure would still only be 0.67%, suggesting that the damage done to the Chinese by opium was nowhere near to the extent proposed by the missionaries and anti-opium lobby.⁴⁵ Dudgeon, however, remained suspicious of the quality of such statistics and according to him, Chinese addicts comprised of three different categories: upper, middle and lower. Dudgeon argued that the statistics only account for the middle layer of smokers, the respectable everyday class of people such as small businessmen, shop owners, Bannermen who were generally ruined because of their addiction. Nevertheless, nothing was said as to the figures of the upper and lower groups, who had no desire or were unable to quit smoking opium. The lower classes that had no recourse to medicine and were thus addicted, such as beggars, itinerant artists, prostitutes and thieves, made up 40% of the urban population. While opium smoking was much less

⁴¹ Dudgeon, "The Opium Question-Review," 108–120.

⁴² Dudgeon, "Szechuen Native Opium—A Review," 216–235.

⁴³ Dudgeon, *Review of the Customs Opium Smoking Returns*, 1–2.

⁴⁴ Hart, 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

common in the countryside, about 20% of farmers were addicted. The upper echelons of addicts had never even considered giving the drug up and were untroubled by ailments or financial difficulties. They did not fear the government attempting to ban opium. Both these two groups (highest and lowest) remained beyond the reach of foreigners. Another reason that the figures cannot be trusted is that they were based purely on the customs import rates. It therefore excludes all the people addicted to home-grown opium and smuggled opium. Only by taking into account all of that, argued Dudgeon, could one “come to a realistic figure.”⁴⁶

According to Dudgeon’s own statistics, there were around 12 million opium smokers in China at the time, over 10 million more than Hart’s figure. The key to Dudgeon’s article was the list of sources he gave for his surveys. *The Chinese Recorder* remarked that “We hope that Dudgeon’s notes might become common knowledge and these facts known to all.”⁴⁷ Sadly, researchers at the time took little notice of Dudgeon’s findings and it was Harts statistics that became the accepted standard.

The Failure of Dudgeon’s Plan

Even though the Missionary Society had said it would work hand in hand with the missionaries in China in trying to persuade the authorities in Britain and China to ban opium, as well as helping addicts on the ground to give it up, nevertheless, on Nov. 17, 1886, Dudgeon held a meeting at the Beijing Missionary Society in which he expressed his disappointment at the Chinese government. He said that the Chinese government had clearly “backed away from strong opposition to opium,” “the Chinese government says it could do nothing.” It was with this that Dudgeon suggested an audacious plan. “Now is the time for action,” he announced.⁴⁸ After several amendments the plan was finally published on Dec. 18, 1886 and again republished in the *Friend of China* under the title “Dudgeon Plan” in July 1887. The aim of the plan was for “the concept of hygiene to be established in China and promote its teaching.” The contents also included: (1) Those in power must first apply pressure, using all the power they could and found ways to stop local people from growing and selling opium. (2) On the subject of any opium related problem, accurate information should be gathered as to the amount of local production, medicinal use, government policies and local government actions, each region should provide

⁴⁶ Dudgeon, *Review of the Customs Opium Smoking Returns*, 1–2.

⁴⁷ *The Chinese Recorder*, 1882, 399–400.

⁴⁸ *The Friend of China*, July 1886, 7.

timely reports and maintain in constant contact with anti-opium committees. (3) There should be set meetings at Missionary Centers, inviting local dignitaries and foreigners to give demonstrations on how to quit smoking. (4) Members should wear badges and draw up charts, they should then sell small handbooks and put up advertisements on the streets and send memos to foreign missionaries, foreign and Chinese officials about the meetings. (5) To publish a monthly Chinese language and quarterly English language anti-opium journal, with detailed figures of local opium production, foreign opium imports, names of officials that still smoke opium, smoking free zones and opium related crimes, to alert people and officials of its dangers and remind the government to the needs of higher taxes against Indian and local opium, as well as ways to stop smoking, so that local poppies would not be turned into opium. (6) To prevent smokers from taking the government examination and name and shame officials who smoked. (7) To use whatever means to encourage local powers and dignitaries to come out against opium and highlight those local organizations that grew poppies.⁴⁹ Despite meeting with the approval of the Missionary Society, the plan was never put into action due to a lack of funds.

In May 1890 during the 3rd meeting of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held in Shanghai Dudgeon proposed a 50-page report titled “The Evils of Use of Opium.”⁵⁰ This document could be said as all out war on opium and included details on the history of opium smoking in China, the evils of opium, the dangers (to health, economy, and social morals), the origins of smoking (instincts and fashions), analysis of the smoking demographic (age, class, smoking location and style), the addictiveness of opium and how it led to suicidal tendencies, Chinese people’s views on opium, and policies in place by the Chinese government. The whole text approached opium from the fields of history, archeology, medicine, sociology, ethics, politics, economics and statistical studies and showed in detail the evil inflicted by opium. Dudgeon requested that the committee pass the following:

(1) As reliable statistic in regard to the full extent of the evils of the use of opium were absent, the disastrous effects of opium to China could only be exposed to public knowledge by gathering all voices: reports of Mission Hospitals and Opium Refuges, observations of medical and clerical missionaries everywhere, the fair expression of the views of diplomatists, travelers and others, and the universal testimony of the Chinese themselves, whether smokers or non-smokers;

⁴⁹ “Dr. Dudgeon’s Proposal,” *The Friend of China*, July 1886, 125–129.

⁵⁰ Dudgeon, “The Evils of Use of Opium,” 315–357.

- (2) The conference should admit that the use of opium is deleterious to the reputation and character, morality and virtue, wealth and property, shamefacedness and modesty, and health and longevity;
- (3) That suicides by the use of opium had been rendered dangerously easy and more frequent;
- (4) The conference desired to express and continued to maintain its attitude of unflinching opposition to the trade in opium;
- (5) All efforts should be made to establish opium refuges for the cure of the addicted, and members of such societies should themselves take a pledge to abstain from it and use all their efforts to prevent others from falling into the habit;
- (6) The attitude of hostility by missionaries to opium was favorable to the reception of the religion and civilization of Christianity;
- (7) The progress of Christianity, education, civilization, was incompatible with a widespread use of opium;
- (8) A full and careful study should be conducted of the whole question;
- (9) It was unlikely that China would take the first step of banning opium. The evil habit of opium smoking could only be stopped by banning all opium, rather than banning only local grown opium;
- (10) There were numerous patriotic high officials who would memorialize the throne to stop the native growth;
- (11) It was wise for the Conference to convince the British Imperial government and Chinese imperial government to consider means for mutual prohibition;
- (12) The Conference should confirm that poppies were not originally grown in China, that China was not an addicted country in earlier times, and that opium had been used in China first for medicinal purposes;
- (13) The best solution to the opium problem was that Britain and China join hands in banning opium, and that resolutions of the Conference be passed through all channels to the British House of Commons, the President of the US, and also to Li Hongzhang and the *Tsung-li Yamen* (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).⁵¹

This did not meet with the Committee's approval and was called "unrealistic" and "harmful." Although six of the points were eventually adopted, words like "evil" and "harmful" were omitted. The Conference only reiterated the rhetoric of "taking a stand against opium."⁵² From this moment, Dudgeon must have lost

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Boone, ii.

all hope and after 25 years of anti-opium activities, his name was not heard of again in connection with opium. The reasons for Dudgeon's failure are thus:

Firstly, in the 19th century neither China nor the rest of the world were prepared to ban opium, as there was too much profit being made from both sides, and politically speaking the trade was too valuable a gambling chip. Even though Dudgeon stressed that over use of the opium trade could destroy Britain and the West's capitalist system, he could only reach the traders and not the root of the problem—Britain. "The villainous tradesmen of Britain were looked down in times past for their opium trading. However, with the passing of *The Treaty of Tianjin* they have become beyond reproach and although now we wash our hands of these pirates we cannot avoid sully the name of Britain and invoking the rage of the Chinese."⁵³ Dudgeon remonstrated strongly with the British government, arguing that Britain could easily use her power to overthrow the Indian opium trade, if not ban it, "despite the Chinese people growing their own and the Chinese government not yet signing a treaty to bring about a coinciding ban."⁵⁴ Just as Britain had banned the sale of Black Africans, thus proving that Britain does have a heart and is therefore a "moral and upstanding" race. Dudgeon was of the opinion that the task of banning opium lay with both Britain and China, "I only wish that the emperor's ministers pass a rule that forbids the growing of opium and instead only allows for the growth of grains and things that will benefit smokers and the country as a whole."⁵⁵

Secondly, the Qing government, argued Dudgeon, found it hard to ban opium because too many rich and powerful people in China smoked it. It was a well-known secret that the empress dowager Cixi smoked opium, therefore it was very difficult for missionaries to obtain mainstream support; the anti-opium cause was fighting an up hill struggle. Dudgeon used his own personal connections with the upper echelons of the Qing court to observe these people and saw first hand the extent to which the court was full of opium.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Dudgeon very rarely criticized this group, even praising them in public as patriotic.

Thirdly, by the end Dudgeon had lost even the support of the Missionary Society. In 1884, Dudgeon left the London Missionary Society and carried on working in Beijing as a doctor and never mentions "God" again in his writings, imploring only that "The United Protestant church pray to God for the wisdom to ban the trade in opium."⁵⁷ Dudgeon's suggestion still encroached too much on

⁵³ Dudgeon, "Jinyan shuolüe," 403.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Dudgeon, "The Notes on Opium on the Report of Peking Hospital," 172.

⁵⁶ Dudgeon, "The Evils of Use of Opium," 325.

⁵⁷ Boone, ii.

profit and instead of banning opium from the 1880s onwards, missionaries sold morphine as a medical substitute for opium. Dudgeon was utterly opposed to this, as missionaries lacking in medical knowledge, not knowing how to administer morphine, this could lead to another drug crisis. Dudgeon appealed for guidelines to be set out concerning morphine, stating that only qualified doctors should handle the drug,⁵⁸ yet this really would have threatened the majority of missionaries. In addition, Dudgeon had a long running grudge with certain members of the missionary society,⁵⁹ it was these people that blocked Dudgeon's report to the Society discussed above. Morphine was to become known in the 19th century China as "Jesus' opium,"⁶⁰ which indeed it was.

In 1906, Emperor Guangxu of the Qing proclaimed a ten-year ban on opium and in the same year, Britain ceased the trading of opium. By the time international gathering in Shanghai of 1909 declared a total ban on the drug, Dudgeon had been dead for 8 years and a battle that the missionaries had began in the 1860s finally ended.

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⁵⁸ *The Chinese Recorder*, 1890, 516; Dudgeon, "Is Morphia Volatilizable," 56–61.

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⁶⁰ Boone, 357.

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