

Historical Statistical Monographs
on commercial crops of India
Poppy (Opium)

Gokhale Institute of Politics
and Economics

For limited circulation

Historical Statistical Monographs
on Commercial Crops of India

Poppy (Opium)

April 1981

Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics,
Pune 411 004

The Economic History Section of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics proposes to prepare a series of historical statistical monographs on commercial crops of India. The first drafts are for limited circulation for scholarly comments, and the revised versions may later be brought out in appropriate form for general use.

The principal commercial crops that will be covered will be: Poppy, Tobacco, Tea, Coffee, Spices, Oilseeds, Cotton, Jute and Indigo, Sugarcane etc.

Ampler but much scattered statistical data are available on Indian commercial crops. Much of the available data are repetitive, and there are likely to be gaps in some series. It is attempted through the proposed monographs to locate as many relevant series for each crop as possible and present the selected ones in a meaningful order. In order to be more useful, the monograph will include a historical introduction, crop maps, explanatory appendices etc. The historical introduction to the crop will confine itself mainly to the statement of facts and figures, and broader issues like impact of colonialism on aspect of Indian economy etc. will be dealt with only briefly.

From a perusal of the relevant material it appears that the subjects covered by available series generally relate to: Area under cultivation; Yield; Production; Prices; Internal and External trade; and Revenue. The closing year for the series for these monographs will generally be about the year 1950. The starting year may vary from series to series depending on the availability of material. Indian crop statistics in stray form are broadly available in different works from about 1800 A.D. Statistics in the form of series, however, are available only from about 1850 A.D. and the starting year of a series differs for different crops depending on the commercial importance, in point of time, of each crop, and/or its revenue yielding capacity.

As the sources of data, or the methods adopted in computation,

The Economic History Section of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics proposes to prepare a series of historical statistical monographs on commercial crops of India. The first drafts are for limited circulation for scholarly comments, and the revised versions may later be brought out in appropriate form for general use.

The principal commercial crops that will be covered will be: Poppy, Tobacco, Tea, Coffee, Spices, Oilseeds, Cotton, Jute and Indigo, Sugarcane etc.

Ampler but much scattered statistical data are available on Indian commercial crops. Much of the available data are repetitive, and there are likely to be gaps in some series. It is attempted through the proposed monographs to locate as many relevant series for each crop as possible and present the selected ones in a meaningful order. In order to be more useful, the monograph will include a historical introduction, crop maps, explanatory appendices etc. The historical introduction to the crop will confine itself mainly to the statement of facts and figures, and broader issues like impact of colonialism on aspect of Indian economy etc. will be dealt with only briefly.

From a perusal of the relevant material it appears that the subjects covered by available series generally relate to: Area under cultivation; Yield; Production; Prices; Internal and External trade; and Revenue. The closing year for the series for these monographs will generally be about the year 1950. The starting year may vary from series to series depending on the availability of material. Indian crop statistics in stray form are broadly available in different works from about 1800 A.D. Statistics in the form of series, however, are available only from about 1850 A.D. and the starting year of a series differs for different crops depending on the commercial importance, in point of time, of each crop, and/or its revenue yielding capacity.

As the sources of data, or the methods adopted in computation,

or the weights and measures often differ in different works, one comes across, not rarely, inconsistencies in corresponding figures for the same crop, and for the same period, resulting in the diversity of available data, and a possible confusion therefrom. For the purposes of the present monographs, statistical series, collected from different sources will be presented with necessary changes, and edited with explanatory notes.

The present monograph consisting of about 140 pages on poppy, includes in all 59 statistical tables collected from 25 different sources and covers a period of 150 years, viz., from 1775 to 1927 A.D. It also includes five historical maps relating to poppy tracts, three of them (maps) being prepared specially for the present work. Extracts from the Report and minutes of evidences of the Royal Commission on Opium, 1893 are included in the Appendix because of their significance for better understanding of the subject.

Hema Rairkar assisted in the location of statistical data and the writing of historical introduction; and Anjali Nilangekar typed the entire draft diligently.

Scholarly comments and suggestions relating to the monograph are welcome, and may please be addressed to:

V.D.Divekar
Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics,
PUNE 411004

CONTENTS

	Page
1. Introduction of poppy in India	1
2. Area under cultivation	3
3. Poppy yield	7
4. Opium monopoly	8
5. Trade	10
6. Opium revenue	15
7. Prices	16
8. Consumption	16
References	21
List of sources with abbreviations	22
Appendix : Great Britain, Royal Commission on Opium, 1893. Report with minutes of evidence and appendices - Extracts	
Maps : 1) Opium Tract of India (C. 1750-1925)	
2) Princely States of Rajputana Producing 'Malwa Opium' (C. 1750-1925)	
3) Princely States of Central India Producing 'Malwa Opium' (C. 1750-1925)	
4) Benares Opium Agency (1893)	
5) Bihar Opium Agency (1893)	
Statistical Tables	51-144

Poppy (Opium)

Poppy cultivation and opium trade constituted important aspects of British colonial policy in India. The "opium period" in India lies roughly between 1757, the year of the battle of Plassy and 1925 when the second opium conference was held in Geneva. This period of a century and three quarters also corresponds with the expansion of imperialism in different parts of the world.

The history of poppy cultivation and opium trade in India and China, and the dominant role played in it by British trading interests offers a typical case of trading and administrative policies of British economic imperialism in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The present monograph, however, has confined itself to the statement of relevant facts supported by available historical statistics. Discussion on broader issues like aspects of British economic imperialism and its impact on Indian economy are generally kept outside the scope of this monograph.

The present monograph is divided into two parts. Part I traces the history of opium in India and part II brings together the available historical statistics on opium.

In the case of opium no reliable figures are always available. The figures at time differed from one another, mainly because no reliable data could be gathered either by official or non-official agencies due to the element of adulteration and smuggling at each stage, viz., the cultivation of poppy, production of opium, and its trade. Smuggling of opium was prevalent both in export trade and in internal distribution.