

Imitation, industrialization and quality in the candle market in China from the 1890s to the 1940s

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Introduction

Modern “small goods” were introduced to China in the mid-19th century. While native small goods such as umbrellas, candles, soap had been consumed by general consumers for their routine everyday life activities, it appears that the market of modern small goods expanded after the introduction.¹ What was the cause of the expansion? This paper will consider the role of imitation and trademark counterfeiting in market expansion through a study of a candle.

Candles, alongside oil have been used as a light source for many centuries. In villages peasant families used a candle and oil for light and had dinner or did housework at night. The light was used for working rather than for enjoying spare time. Moreover, light was also used for the Chinese traditional holidays

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¹ As for small goods, see Kazuko Furuta, and Linda. Grove, (eds.), *Imitation, counterfeiting and the quality of goods in modern Asian history* (Singapore : Springer, 2017)

and festivals or in the celebrations of weddings and birthdays.

In more recent times, the discovery of artificial electric light has enabled us to enjoy ourselves at night as well as to work. However, although electricity was introduced in Chinese settlements from the middle of the nineteenth century, there were rarely electric lamps on the streets because there were no electricity plants in rural areas. Instead of electricity, in the village modern small goods were introduced as light sources. One of these new sources was modern candle.

Rawski pointed out that the penetration of foreign goods created opportunities for introducing new products and materials into China's economy.² However, it is certain that it was not easy for producers to introduce the new products to consumers, for consumers to consume the products which they had never used, and for both to expand the markets. What was the catalyst that led Chinese to use new products ?

Moreover, it is well known that the import of machine-made goods impacted handicraft manufacturing. For example, as for the machine-made cotton goods imported from England and so on, it was pointed out that the influx of cotton materials sometimes led to the decline of the rural cotton textile industry in China.³ In addition, it is also emphasized that the difference of quality between machine-made cotton goods and hand-made cotton goods generated the bipolarization of consumption in the Chinese cotton cloth market.⁴ Some native small goods also had been already consumed in urban and rural areas before the flow of modern small goods.

² Thomas G. Rawski, *Economic growth in prewar China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 344.

³ Zhongping. Yan, *Zhongguo Mianfangzhishi Gao* [*The history of the cotton spinning and weaving industry in China*] (Beijing: Kexuechubanshe, 1955), Nobuteru. Soejima, " Nippon bosekigyo to Chugokushijyo " [The Japanese spinning industry and the Chinese market] in: *Jinbungakuho*, 33: 77-149 (1972)

As modern small goods were machine-made goods and native small goods were handcrafted products produced by handicraft manufacturing, there were differences in quality as well as cotton goods. Therefore, we need to consider questions of quality when we examine the markets for modern small goods.

Based on this background understanding, this paper will identify the characteristics associated with the expansion of the candle market from the 1890s to the 1940s in China. In the candle market from the 1890s to the 1940s, candles were broadly classified into two types: native candle which was made from animal oils and vegetable oils, and modern candle, which was made from stearin or paraffin. Additionally, there were two types of modern candle: modern candle imported and modern candle produced in China. Moreover, there were two types of modern candle produced in China: modern candle produced by foreign firms and modern candle produced by Chinese firms. Therefore, it can be said that the candle market situation was complex.

1 The native candle market from the end of the nineteenth century

1.1 Native candle and the use

It is generally believed that candles were already commonly used in the period of the Tang Dynasty. These candles, which have been called native candle, was used at least until the middle of the twentieth century. The use of native candle was deeply associated with Chinese daily life, culture, society, and religion. Al-

⁴ Heita. Kawakatsu, The emergence of a market for cotton goods in East Asia in the early modern period in Latham, A. J. H. and Kawakatsu, Heita eds., *Japanese industrialization and the Asian economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)

though the candle was also employed by those who could afford it,⁵ artificial illumination in China (in the form of lanterns) was generally procured by vegetable oils. For example, in many homesteads in Sichuan Province, where the candle was formerly the only lights, kerosene had been introduced, and it was now only when lighting was required outside (for there was no public lighting in China, outside the treaty ports, worthy of the name) that the candle was employed by those who found it necessary to leave their homes after nightfall.⁶ However, the candle and oil often complemented each other and eventually, if the price of oil was higher, the candle would be chosen as a light source.

The candle's one of the necessities in religious ceremonies. Therefore, candles at one time were used in religious ceremonies rather than as a light source, or for indoor lightning. The gods could not be acceptably worshipped without a candle. For example, Chinese lit some candles on family Buddhist altars to pray to their ancestors every day. In particular, during the New Year's Holiday, they had to keep incense and the fire of a candle burning at a Buddhist altar through the night.⁷ The quantity of a candle consumed was therefore very great and the cost of candles was one per cent of the average total living expenses for a year.⁸

⁵ For example, " in many homesteads in Sichuan province, where candles were formerly the only lights, kerosene had been introduced, and it was now only when lighting was required outside (for there was no public lighting in China, outside the treaty ports, worthy of the name) that candles were employed by those who found it necessary to leave their homes after nightfall " (" Chinese Insect Wax " in *Millard's Review of the Far East (1917-1919)*, 17 May 1919, p. 457)

⁶ The China Weekly Review (May 17, 1919) " Chinese Insect Wax " in *Millard's Review of the Far East (1917-1919)*. Shanghai, p. 457.

⁷ Kiyoshi. Uchiyama, *Boeki jo yorimitatu Shina fuzoku no kenkyu [Research for customs regarding trade in China]* (Shanghai, 1915) p. 345.

Native candle was made from bean oils, rape-seed oils, white wax produced from insects and the fat of animals. Briefly, there were two kinds of raw materials: vegetable oils and animal oils. However, native candle was usually made of what Chinese classified as vegetable oils.⁹ Especially, Bean oils were *piyou*, *muyou*, and *ziyou*, which were oil from seeds or fruit of a Chinese thuja and peasants preferred the oil to produce native candle.¹⁰ The candles were dipped into melted white wax which melted at 160 °F. A coating was then given to candles, to prevent them from guttering when lighted.¹¹ As mentioned later, native candle was produced in urban and rural areas and consumed. More importantly, the nature of the raw materials contributed to the continual use of native candle: the raw materials of the candles used in a religious ceremony were limited to vegetable oils.¹² The reason for this is that gods were thought to be strict vegetarians and to dislike the smell of the blood of slaughtered animals.¹³

1.2 The manufacture of native candle

Native candle was produced in small mills, not only in rural areas but also in urban areas. In 1915 there were 43,911 plants and the number of workers producing

⁸ Toa dobunkai ed., *Shina keizai zensho* [Complete book on Chinese economy], 1907, pp. 395-396.

⁹ 'The tallow-tree and its uses, with notices of the peh-lah, or insect wax of China' in *The Chinese Repository*, 1 Jul. 1851, p. 422.

¹⁰ "Hankou Shuchu Baiyou [The export of bean oils (Oriental arborvitae oils) from Hankou]", *Hubei shangwu bao*, 138 (April, 1903), p. 3.

¹¹ The China Weekly Review (May 17, 1919) "Chinese Insect Wax" in *Millard's Review of the Far East (1917-1919)*. Shanghai, p. 457.

¹² Uchiyama, *Boeki*, p. 347.

¹³ "Some industries of Soochow: Many quaint Chinese customs" in *The Shanghai Times*, 10 April 1918, p. 3.

native candle reached approximately 160,000 in China. For example, in Yichang, which was one of the treaty ports in the middle Yangtze valley, there were more than 80 candle mills in the 1920s.¹⁴ These plants produced not modern candle but native candle. Most of the mills were privately managed and producers relied on hand-labor rather than the new equipment of the advanced technology. Therefore, there was a variety in the standards of the candle produced.

Next is to look more closely at the circumstances surrounding native candle production using the example of the candle production in Wujin, which was a city in the vicinity of Shanghai. Wujin prefecture was famous for its cotton industry and was one of the local cities where industrialization progressed after the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Around 1940 there were 11 candle shops in Wujin producing native candle for use in homes and in shrines and temples, and for celebrations and sorrowful occasions. The candles produced for use in rituals had patterns, such as flower designs on the face of candles. The producers of such ritual candles carved flower patterns on the face of the candle. This required extra hours, and advanced skills in carving. To become an accomplished craftsman, it was necessary to train for seven and a half years. There were 40 to 50 craftsmen in Wujin and each craftsman could produce about 12 kg of candles a day. All of the candles were consumed in Wujin.¹⁶

From this case, we can see that local production of native candle for local consump-

¹⁴ Gaimusho tushokyoku [Commercial Affairs Bureau Ministry of Foreign Affairs] *Gisho jijo [Yichang affairs]* (Tokyo: Gaimusho tushokyoku, 1925), pp. 10–11.

¹⁵ Tokihiko. Mori, *A study of the history of cotton industry in modern China*, Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2001, pp. 99–126.

¹⁶ Chushi kensetu shiryo seibi iinkai, *Kososhō Bushin kogyō chosha hōkoku [Investigation report on industry in Wujin city in Jiangsu province]* (Nanjing: Chushi kensetu shiryo seibi jimusho hensanbu, 1941), pp. 14–16.

tion was taking place in areas like Wujin even in the 1940s.¹⁷ Some candles produced there were consumed for religious ceremonies, and producers relied on handicraft methods because of the special production process.

Although the candles used for celebrations and sorrowful occasions had an attractive appearance, the decoration was gradually being simplified. Reports indicate that by the 1940s candle makers were no longer carving the designs on to the face of the candle, but rather were attaching candles artificial flowers, which could be alternately attached and detached. More importantly, in the same period, local producers started to manufacture modern candle and it began to substitute for native candle. In the next section, I want to explore modern candle.

2 Imported candles and the candle industry in China

2.1 Candles imports

Modern candle was a product manufactured in factory. Price's Patent Candle Company started manufacturing modern candle in England in 1830 (Price's Patent Candles Limited) The company discovered new materials to replace animal oils and vegetable oils and started to produce candles using stearin or paraffin as the raw material. They were called modern candle. By the end of the nineteenth century the company was the largest producer of candles in the world and they were exported to overseas and started to be consumed all over the world.

In China the import of modern candle expanded from the 1880s. Table 1 shows

¹⁷ For example, local production of native candle for local consumption took place in Hankou, too (JACAR (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records National Archives of Japan), Ref. B11100838900, Miscellaneous items about foreign chemical industry and products, 1914, p.0387 (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan))

Table 1 The quantity and value of trade of modern candles in Shanghai and Hankou

	Shanghai				Hankou	
	Net import		Re-export		Net import	
	Quantity (picul)	Value (haiguan tael)	Quantity (picul)	Value (haiguan tael)	Quantity (picul)	Value (haiguan tael)
1893-1894	4803.0	57828.5	3922.0	54704.0	0.0	0.0
1895-1899	4506.2	72090.4	7287.2	88489.6	812.0	11541.0
1900-1904	8175.2	158238.6	16067.0	271796.8	1237.0	22304.4
1905-1909	14343.6	235468.2	26531.4	440108.0	2108.2	35512.8
1910-1914	7951.0	105505.6	13906.4	187769.8	4954.4	64436.8
1915-1919	7214.2	128579.6	31382.0	403302.5	5850.8	98925.4
1920-1924	7713.2	148543.2			5134.2	94856.2
1925-1929	227.6	10282.4			241.0	4091.6
1930-1931	118.5	11817.5			62.0	1727.0

Source: China. Imperial Maritime Customs, *Returns of trade at the treaty ports and trade reports*, 1890-1919, Shanghai and Hankou ; China. Imperial Maritime Customs, *Trade returns*, 1920-1931.

the quantity of foreign candle imports and re-exports to two domestic ports, Shanghai and Hankou. In Shanghai, the candle started to be imported from overseas from the late 1870s. The growth of candle imports reached a peak from 1905 to 1909; the quantity of imports began to decrease from the 1910s and sharply decreased from 1925. After the candles were imported to Shanghai, some were re-exported to other domestic ports. One of the most important of these ports was Hankou. As Table 1 shows, in Hankou modern candle started to be imported from the late 1890s; the growth of the candle imports reached a peak in the 1910s, and sharply decreased from 1925 as well as Shanghai.

On the other hand, Table 2 shows the quantity of modern candle imports and exports in Hankou and Shanghai. As mentioned below, modern candle in Table 2 was not imported from overseas but manufactured in domestic factories. In

Table 2 The quantity and value of trade of modern candles produced in Shanghai and Hankou

	Shanghai		Hankou			
	Export		Net import		Export	
	Quantity (picul)	Value (haiguan tael)	Quantity (picul)	Value (haiguan tael)	Quantity (picul)	Value (haiguan tael)
1893-1894	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
1895-1899	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
1900-1904	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
1905-1909	2761.3	39417.7	139.0	2091.0	0	0
1910-1914	22663.0	385121.6	2982.2	50490.6	93.5	1823.75
1915-1919	39589.6	783688.6	3345.6	68420.2	4098	96215.4
1920-1924	43537.6	696379.2	5634.6	124387.8	8703.4	174869.6
1925-1929	77961.4	1325276.6	7002.2	155092.8	31338.4	508464.0
1930-1931	82644.5	1570016.0	10846.0	199933.0	1134.5	17949.0

Source: China. Imperial Maritime Customs, *Returns of trade at the treaty ports and trade reports*, 1890-1919, Shanghai and Hankou ; China. Imperial Maritime Customs, *Trade returns*, 1920-1931.

Hankou the imports of modern candle produced in China expanded from the 1910s. As the exports of them expanded from the 1910s in Shanghai, the modern candle in Hankou was probably imported from Shanghai. Additionally, the quantity of exports of modern candle from Hankou to domestic ports also expanded.

From Table 1 and 2, we can see that the import of modern candle decreased beginning from the 1910s; at the same time, the trade in modern candle produced in China continued to expand, greatly exceeding the reduced number of modern candle imported. For this reason, it appears that the candle market in China was growing at least at the beginning of the twentieth century.

This discussion suggests that some companies started to produce manufactured candles and increased production at the same time. Therefore, in the next section, I will discuss the modern candle industry.

2.2 Candle industry in Shanghai

The use of imported modern candle gradually spread from Shanghai across the entire country until the late years of the first decade of the 1900s. At the same time, the candle industry expanded in Shanghai. Available records show that five enterprises appeared in Shanghai between 1909 and 1916.¹⁸ The raw materials came from foreign sources: stearin from England and America, and lamp wicks from South East Asia. As we have already seen, there were different raw materials and different production methods for modern candle and native candle.¹⁹

British Prices Patent Candle & Co. was one of the producers of candles established in Shanghai. The company began operations in 1910 and the factory building and the production equipment were of the latest pattern.²⁰ The company in Shanghai, one of the branches of British Prices was the biggest candle company in China until the 1940s. In fact, most of the modern candle imported after the 1880s in China were products made by British Prices or its overseas branches. The decrease in the import of modern candle shown in Table 1 was the result of a change in the production site from overseas to China, rather than the result of import substitution.

The Ship was the trademark of British Prices. The trademark contributed to the expansion of the candle market in Shanghai and “import substitute” of the foreign candle was progressing in the 1910s. Moreover, these candles were exported to

¹⁸ Toa dobunkai chosa hensanbu, ed., *Shina no kogyo [Manufacturing industry in China]* (Tokyo: Toa dobunkai chosa hensanbu, 1917) p. 310–311. In addition, there was *Sanyojitugyoshakoushi*, which established a factory and produced wicks for candles in Shanghai.

¹⁹ Xuelinshe ed., *Jin sanshinian lai Zhongguo zhi huaxue gongye [The chemical industry for thirty years in China]* (Shanghai, Kaiming shudian, 1941) p. 6.

²⁰ Guangdongshiyetuan, “Zhonghua zaozhugongsi zhi kaishi (The origin of China Soap and Candle Co. Ltd.)” in: *Shiyezazhi (Business magazine)*, 32: 92–9 (1920) p. 95).

the vicinity of Shanghai, or the lower Yangtze valley.

2.3 The candle industry locally

In addition to foreign capital enterprises, Chinese firms were also established in Shanghai and in some cities in the lower Yangtze valley.²¹ *Guangming zhuzao gongsi* (Guangming Soap and Candle Company) was the first company to be established by Chinese or foreigners. In 1906, it was established with capital of 20,000 yuan in *Ningpo*. Guangming produced both soap and modern candle. The raw materials were supplied by Standard Oil Company. Although the products were manufactured by copying modern candle and using its design, the quality of the modern candle produced by Chinese firms was inferior to that of the modern candle produced by foreign firms. However, the price of modern candle produced by Chinese firms was cheaper than that of modern candle produced by foreign firms. Therefore, the sales were brisk and consequently Guangming paid a dividend of 20 percent to stock holders in about 1906.²²

In addition to the imitation of products, Chinese imitated registered trademarks in the Chinese market. A source has reported that “ The well-known “ Ship ” brand of candles manufactured by Price’s Patent Candle Company, has probably received more attention from fraudulent imitators than any chop on the China market ”.²³ In other words, imitation of the trademarks also took place in the candle

²¹ In Shanghai, *Xiangsheng Zhuzao gongsi* was established; the founder was *Hong Desheng*.

²² Toa dobunkai chosa hensanbu, ed., *Shina kaikojo shi 1 [Document about treaty ports in China 1]* (Tokyo: Toa dobunkai chosa hensanbu, 1922-24), p. 1071.

²³ “ Meetings: Shanghai general chamber of commerce ” in *The North - China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette (1870-1941)*, 10 October 1908, p. 77.

market.

Although it is well known that the imitation of products and trademarks contributed to the expansion of the market at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a characteristic about the imitation of products and trademarks in the candle market. For example, the company in Ningpo also imitated the Ship brand and sold “Ship Brand Candles”. However, the candles were not sold in the Shanghai market: they were offered for sale in remote villages and out of-the-way places.²⁴ In brief, the Chinese company developed the candle market in areas in which candles manufactured by British Price’s were not yet sold. At least by the 1900s, in the lower Yangtze valley, the modern candle market had been divided into a market for candles produced in Shanghai, which were consumed in Shanghai, and that for candles produced locally, which were consumed locally.

Moreover, in another case, the general similarity of the packets and cases was also intentional. The color of the wrapper and label and the general appearance of the label gave consumers the impression of the genuine article.²⁵ However, consumers in China preferred to purchase and use the product. It appears that the sale of counterfeit products or imitations contributed to the expansion of the modern candle market in the initial stage, especially in the late 1900s.

2.4 The candle industry in Hankou

It is well known that a number of lesser goods of originally foreign manufacture came increasingly after about 1915 from Chinese producers.²⁶ Candle also was

²⁴ “Trade marks” in *The North - China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette (1870-1941)*, 10 October 1908, p. 88.

²⁵ “Meetings: Shanghai general chamber of commerce” in *The North - China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette (1870-1941)*, 10 October 1908, p. 77.

one of such goods and as shown in Table 3, the number of the candle company increased after about 1915 in areas other than Shanghai. For example, the import and consumption of large quantities of modern candle in the Hankou market en-

Table 3 Candle companies in 1930

City	Company's name	Date of fundation	Capital (Yuan)
Shanghai	British Prices Patent Candle & Co (白禮氏洋燭公司)	1910	10,000,000
	中国肥皂洋燭公司	1917	
	British Asiatic Petroleum & Co. (亞細亞公司)	1910	
	Xiangsheng zhuzao gongsi (祥生燭皂公司)	1908	
	Nanyang zhuzao gongsi (南陽燭皂公司)		
	Huataichang (華泰廠)	1915	
Hankou	Xierongmao zhuzao gongsi (謝榮茂)	1915	6,000
	Hanchang gongsi (漢昌)	1915	
	Songmao gongsi (松茂)	1916	
	Tongmao zhuzao gongsi (同茂燭皂公司)		
	Shengmao zhuzao gongsi (生茂燭皂公司)		
Ningpo	Guangming zhuzao gongsi (光明燭皂公司)	1906	20,000
Nantong	Tongyao gongsi (通耀公司)	1919	30,000
Nanchang	Zhangjiang zaozhu gongsi (章江皂燭公司)	1924	20,000
Suzhou	Shuanglongzaohang (雙龍皂行)		
Jiujiang	Songdaren zhuzao gongsi (松大仁燭皂公司)	1919	20,300
Jinan	Yihua zhuzao gongchang (益華燭皂工廠)		50,000
Jining	Jidong zaoyi gongsi (濟東造胰公司)	1920	30,000

Source: Toa dobunkai chosahensanbu, ed., *Shinakogosoran [Complete guide to manufacturing industry in China]* (Tokyo: Toa dobunkai chosahensanbu, 1930) pp. 382–383.

²⁶ Murphey, Rhoads. The treaty ports and China's modernization in Elvin, Mark and Skinner, G. William eds. *The Chinese city between two worlds*, pp. 17–71, (California, Stanford University Press, 1974) p. 30.

couraged production of imitation goods by native industry.²⁷ *Liu Rongji* purchased a machine to produce candles from overseas and established the *Xierongmao zhuzao gongsi* (*Xierongmao Soap and Candle Company*) in 1915. The firm employed 16 or 17 workers, produced 60 cases a day. Each case contained 25 packages in which were six candles, and consequently the output achieved about 10,000 piculs a year. Moreover, *Liu Rongji* also established *Songmao gongsi* in 1916.²⁸

Figure shows a *Xierongmao* advertisement. As shown in Figure, the company sold “ *Kongque yangla* (*Peacock Brand Candles*)”, “ *Juhua yangla* (*Chrysanthemum Brand Candles*)” and so on and there were two types of candle, white and red. This shows that the company did not imitate the *Ship* brand. The firm established branches in cities such as *Shashi* in *Hubei Province* and *Changsha* in *Hunan province*, and the candles were sold through them in the middle *Yangtze valley*.

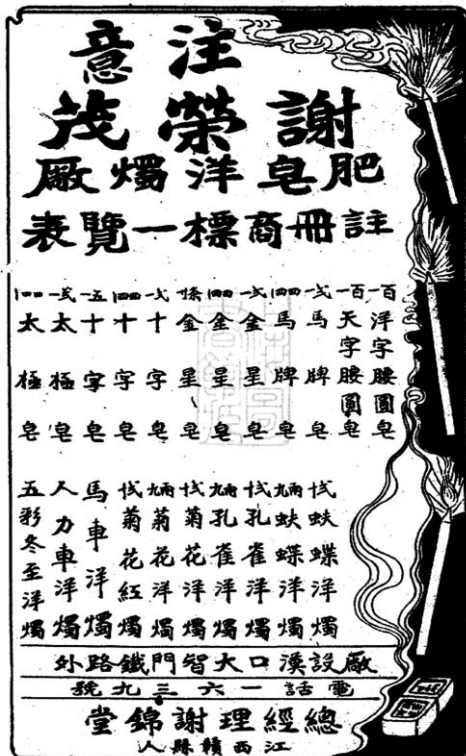
Regarding the quality and the price of modern candle produced by Chinese firms in *Hankou*, reports of the time noted: “ Although Chinese companies start to produce modern candle, the quality is not good ” and “ The price of modern candle produced by Chinese firms is cheaper than that of other modern candle produced by foreign firms ”.²⁹ For example, the price of white “ *Peacock Brand Candles* ” was 2.3 taels and the price of red “ *Peacock Brand Candles* ” was 2.35 taels and compared to modern candle produced by foreign firms, the Chinese manufactured

²⁷ “ *Hankou Candle Manufactory* ” in *Peking Daily News*, 31 May 1915, p. 3.

²⁸ *Gaimusho tusho kyoku, Zaikanko teikoku soryojikan kankatu kuiki naijijo [Circumstances in the area in Japanese Consulate General in Hankou]* (*Tokyo; Gaimushotsushokyoku, 1924*), p. 173.

²⁹ *Japan Center for Asian Historical Records National Archives of Japan (JACAR)* (1918) Ref. B11100816300, Miscellaneous items about general merchandise the ninth volume (*Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*) p. 146.

Figure Xierongmao zhuzao gongsi advertisement



Source: Wuhan shuye gonghui, ed., *Hankou shanghao minglu* [Catalogue of companies in Hankou], (Wuhan: Wuhanshuyegonghui, 1920) p. 507.

candles were 1.5 to 2 taels cheaper.³⁰

In Hankou, although the candles were not affected by the sale of the imitation brands on the market, cheaper candles of a poorer quality contributed to the ex-

³⁰ Gaimusho tusho kyoku, *Zaikanko teikoku soryojikan kankatu kuiki naijijo* [Circumstances in the area in Japanese Consulate General in Hankou] (Tokyo; Gaimushotsushokyoku, 1924), p. 173.

pansion of the candle market. The case of Hankou might show that the lower price was a motivation to consume modern candle. Briefly, consumers who did not want to purchase an expensive and high-quality candle could try to buy the candle not only for religious ceremonies but also for use of modern candle which will be shown in the next section.

3 The quality of candles and the candle market

3.1 Relationship between uses and quality in the candle market

It is certain that the candle market expanded rapidly at the beginning of the twentieth century because of the flow of modern candle from overseas and the establishment of candle factories. This is evidenced by the fact that 97 million modern candle produced by foreign firms and 81 million modern candle produced by Chinese firms were consumed in the Chinese market in the middle of the 1910s.³¹ Moreover, as shown in Table 3, there were many candle companies which handled modern candle in China in the 1930s.

Modern candle was promoted as a way to make life more enjoyable. For example, the candles were used to decorate dinner tables. An article in *The North China Herald* suggested that “The gleam they shed was softly golden, making the rest of the room dim and shadowy.”³² Moreover, the light cast by the candles made people appear more attractive: “The full charm grows in a lighted candle” and “The candle’s beam was like a good deed in a naughty world.” And “A

³¹ Toa, *Shina no kogyo*, p. 314.

³² “The Candle Light: Charm now being realized” in *The North - China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette (1870–1941)*, 9 March 1929, p. 427.

room lit with candles becomes mysteriously imbued with the spirit of romance. Positively a candle is an aid to beauty, much more so than are many of the adjuncts of a beauty parlour.³³ In particular, it appears that many candles were used at wedding ceremonies.

These uses led to the expansion of the market. The reason for this is as follows. The light cast by modern candle was brighter than that of other light sources.³⁴ Additionally, their burning time was longer and their strength was greater. Therefore, in some cases, modern candle was also preferred as a light source.

Let us now look at the relationship between modern candle and native candle will be considered. Could modern candle take the place of native candle? As we have seen above, when the raw material for native candle was not animal oils, Chinese preferred the native candle in religious ceremonies. But modern candle was likewise not made from animal oils. Therefore, in theory, it would have been possible for Chinese to use them in a religious ceremony.

However, modern candle had some problems when it came to taking the place of native candle. Previous research has pointed out that in the case of small goods, the factor of the distance of the place of manufacture offered effective protection for local producers, even if their costs were considerably higher than those of larger and better equipped, but distant, rivals. High transport costs for imported goods helped domestic producers to withstand international competition.³⁵ The distance modern candle produced in cities such as Shanghai had to travel in order to be consumed in local areas also restricted demand. In order to keep transportation costs low, factories were established locally, or else local candle shops started to

³³ 'The Candle Light', p. 427.

³⁴ Uchiyama, *Boeki*, pp. 323-324.

³⁵ Rawski, *Economic growth*, p. 122.

produce modern candle alongside native candle as in Wujin.

Moreover, modern candle was easily melted by high heat and were frequently found to be deformed during the summer season.³⁶ In religious ceremonies, native candle was preferred to modern candle because native candle was bigger and more resistant to heat.³⁷ Among modern candle those produced by Chinese firms were inferior because of the poor quality of the raw materials and the production process. In order to take the place of native candle and expand the market for modern candle quality problems had to be resolved.

3.2 Regulation and the quality of candles

It appears that a regulation related to the candle industry that was passed in Shanghai in the 1930s contributed to the resolution of the quality problem in the candle market. Although the regulation was established by the candle trade association, all those engaged in the business had to observe the regulation, whether they were regular members of the association or not.

Naturally, the regulation had many articles. Some examples of these articles follow. The gap between the retail price and wholesale price should be 85 percent (Article 4). The candle trade association determined the price of candles and transmitted the information to members (Article 5). The regulations also included

³⁶ JACAR (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records National Archives of Japan), Ref. B11100838900, Miscellaneous items about foreign chemical industry and products, 1914, p.0387 (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)

³⁷ JACAR (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records National Archives of Japan), Ref. B11100838900, Miscellaneous items about foreign chemical industry and products, 1914, p.0387 (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)

a few articles relating to quality. The members could not mix and use inferior oils as raw materials to produce candles (Article 6). The candle trade association held an exhibition three times a year (8th April, 13th May, and 13th September)

At these times, the association required members to bring and exhibit their candles at the exhibition and the members compared each group of goods to each other (Article 7)³⁸. Market participants displayed the quality of their candles at the exhibitions, imitating each other's products. In this way, members were encouraged to improve the quality of candles. As a result, it appears that these candles were exported to rural areas and took the place of native candle for religious ceremonies.

Conclusion

In modern China, candle factories ranged from large, automated operations employing 100 workers to tiny workshops using only a minimum of equipment. Therefore, there were various kinds of candles and various uses. The flow of modern candle and establishment of candle factories led to the industrialization of the candle industry in China.

From the late years of the first decade of the 1900s, Chinese companies were established and they imitated the appearance of modern candle and their trademarks. The characteristics of the Chinese products were of poor quality and they were sold at a low price. Imitation and the willingness of Chinese customers to sacrifice quality to obtain low-priced goods contributed to the expansion of the market for modern candle produced by Chinese firms.

³⁸ Esheng. Yan, *Shanghaishangshiguanli [Commercial custom in Shanghai]* (Shanghai: Xinshengtongxunshechubianbu, 1933), pp. 233-236.

The appeal of modern candle to Chinese consumers ensured a ready demand for inferior goods by consumers willing to accept poor quality in exchange for low price. This demand for cheap candles provided ample marketing opportunities for small-scale producers, who used inferior raw materials and equipment to turn out candles that, although less attractive than expensive factory products, appealed to poor customers.

However, imitation of modern candle took place only temporarily in the earliest stage of expansion, especially in the late years of the first decade of the 1900s and the early 1910s. Moreover, from the middle of the decade of the teens we see no reports of imitation products in the Hankou market. As we have seen from the account of regulations by the association in the 1930s, Chinese firms stopped imitating the trademarks of imported modern candle and local producers began to share information about the quality of their products. As a result, domestically manufactured modern candle took the place of native candle. At the same time, even rural consumers could enjoy better quality goods.

The change in the direction of the strategy, from imitation to information sharing, contributed to the improvement of quality and consequently expansion of the market.