



**Sichuan ten-tael silver ingot**

Produced in Mingshan County in Sichuan Province, this ten-tael (about 374 grams) silver ingot was made of 96% silver in the 20th year of the reign of Emperor Guangxu (AD 1894).

Silver ingots produced in Sichuan Province were mostly round and weighed ten taels. They were mainly produced in Chengdu, Chongqing, Luzhou and Wanxian. The markings on the ingots usually state the location and year of production, the name of the mint or the silversmith, and the purpose of producing the ingot.

The purposes of producing ingots included payment of various taxes, such as those on salt, tea and silk, and for "donations". One of the more interesting donations is that to obtain civil service positions. Depending on the amount of the donation, the donor might get a position with real administrative power, or an alternate position with no power.

The Qing Government solicited such "donations" in Hong Kong once in 1910, through the Hong Kong Branch of the Ta Ching Bank and a local Chinese Nam Pak Hong trading firm.

In the 19th century, some Sichuan silver ingots were in circulation in Hong Kong. A ten-tael silver ingot bought about 500 catties of rice at the time.



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