

From Export- to Import-oriented: Production and Consumption of Marine Products in Nineteenth-century Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Taiwan is an island with rich marine resources. As early as the sixteenth century, Han Chinese had followed schools of mullet to the western coast of Taiwan; some stayed, reclaiming land and forming the earliest Chinese settlements. Research of Nakamura Takashi and Ts'ao Yung-ho indicated that under the rule of the Dutch East India Company, marine products were frequently exported and constituted one of the major exports of Taiwan. During the early Qing era, shark fin from Taiwan remained an important export item to Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces. However, by late Qing, export of marine products from Taiwan had become insignificant; instead, large quantities of salted fish and other marine products were imported. Under Qing rule, trade between Taiwan and the economic zone in southeastern mainland China involved mainly Taiwan exporting agricultural products in exchange for handicrafts from across the Strait. Hence, the agricultural sector in Taiwan was export-oriented while the fishing industry shifted to be import-oriented; revealing two distinct development trajectories. With reference to primary historical materials, this paper reconstructed the shift in trade orientation and accounted for such change from the perspectives of consumption and production in marine product market of Taiwan.

Keywords: Fishing Industry, Salted Fish, Shark Fin, Imported Products, Division of Labor in Regional Trade, Globalization, North-south Regional Difference