

Environment, Military Needs, and Moving Population: History of Penghu Catering Business and Research on “Island Foodways”

Yu-jen Chen

ABSTRACT

As an archipelago of islands and islets in the Taiwan Strait with significant military importance, Penghu has developed its unique foodway under the conditions of seriously limited natural resources and large migrating population. This article examines the factors shaping daily meals of Penghu and the transformation of Penghu catering business in history, exploring how different political regimes and policies influenced the catering business of Penghu. By analyzing the case of Penghu, this paper further highlights the research scheme of “Island Foodways,” aiming to provide an innovative and comparative perspective to scrutinize the foodways of small islands.

Penghu had long been an important military base since the 13th century, but its poor soil, windy climate, and a shortage of rain led to frequent famine in history. During the Japanese colonial period, Penghu was taken as a Japanese naval base. Japanese restaurants and other dining establishments emerged to meet the needs of Japanese officers and navy, along with other military-related businesses. With the end of the WWII, military forces migrating from Mainland China became the chief customers of dining business, reshaping the food scene of Penghu. Until the 1970s, when tourism developed with important transportation constructions and advanced fishery industry, seafood restaurants substituted other dining choices, marking the growing importance of the new “moving population”: tourists. This article suggests that environment, military needs, and moving population are significant factors influencing the “island foodways” of Penghu, which merit further comparative research in the future.

Keywords: Penghu, Island Foodway, Post-war Transformation, Migration, Military Needs