

From *Bangka* Canoe to *Shechuan* Junk: Commercial Activities along Northeastern Coastal Route (1650s-1750s)

Hung-yi Chien

ABSTRACT

The Basay, ethnic aboriginals of northern Taiwan are good at trading and cooperating with foreigners. Studies of early Taiwan history in the last two decades have examined their enterprising character and their role as business intermediaries, as evidenced in Dutch historical materials. However, there is a lacuna in existing research on the history of northern Taiwan: the period between Dutch colonization of Taiwan and early Qing rule, roughly equivalent to the mid-seventeenth to early eighteenth century.

This study attempts to fill this gap by examining the records of a Dutch official's visit to Cavalangh (or more commonly "Kavalan", today's Yilan) and Terraboang Gold River (in today's northern Hualien) in 1657. These records reveal that the Basay controlled trade along the northeastern coast of Taiwan and remained the dominant business power in the area until the early eighteenth century despite of persistent penetration of the Hans. As early as the 1710s, there was trade cooperation in northeastern Taiwan between the Hans and the aborigines, most likely the Basay.

This study also explores the relations between Ming loyalists and the Ho family, who might have been active in land reclamation in northern Taiwan from the late Cheng regime to early Qing rule. The Basay-Han cooperation led to the introduction of *Shechuan*, a group of officially registered Chinese junks, for trading merchandise between China and Taiwan along the northeastern coast of Taiwan. The *Shechuan* signified a technology upgrade from indigenous canoes to Chinese junks for higher efficiency and larger capacity of shipping and trade. The *Shechuan* brought to China rice exported from northern Taiwan and carried back imported clothes, ironware, tobacco, and daily goods. Such trade evidenced the gradual infiltration of Chinese merchants in business of northeastern Taiwan. In 1754, when the Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang suspended the *Shechuan* to increase the reserve of rice in Taiwan, trade nevertheless continued outside government control. Such

clandestine trade contributed to the Han penetration into Cavalangh in the late eighteenth century and merits further investigation.

Keywords: Basay, Chinese Merchants, *Shechuan* Junks, Aboriginal-Han Cooperation, Ironware