

**Mullet, Narrow-Barred Spanish Mackerel
and Milk-Fish:
Multiple Contextual Developments of Three Certified
Sea-Food Specialties in Taiwan, from the Dutch Period
to the Initial Years of Qing Rule**

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ABSTRACT

In the second decade of 18th century, “Mullet (烏魚), Narrow-Barred Spanish Mackerel (土魷) and Milk-Fish (虱目魚)” were certified in a local gazetteer as sea-food specialties in Taiwan by the Qing literati. This article clarifies the multiple historical contexts in which each kind of fish developed into a specialty acclaimed by the Chinese settlers, who sometimes shared a common palate with the European colonizers. These multiple historical contexts are: 1) mullet fishery, which explains how Chinese migratory fishery developed into residential fishery under the changing policies of the Dutch colonization and the Zheng Regime that followed. 2) Narrow-Barred Spanish Mackerel reveals how the Chinese name of this mackerel, “to-to”, was derived from “dorado” as a borrowed fish name situated to the European colonial encounter scene. 3) Milk-Fish suggests a hypothesis that the Zheng regime’s activities on the coast of East Java could have introduced brackish water fish-farming to Taiwan thereby initiating Milk-Fish aquaculture. In sum, the Dutch policy of importing Chinese settlers greatly contributed to the expansion of local fish consumption and became the agent behind the transformation of migratory into residential fishery. The Chinese citizens who lived among the Dutch in Zeelandia town partook of similar fish dishes and even accepted the European names of fish and recipes that were passed down even after the Dutch left. The introduction of brackish water fish-farming from Java was resulted from both above contexts. Although those multiple contexts were ignored by the Chinese literati after Taiwan was incorporated by the Qing, their traces were unintentionally preserved in the local gazetteers for the generations to come.

Keywords: Mullet, Narrow-Barred Spanish Mackerel, Milk-Fish, Colonial Encounter, Migratory Fishery