

Emergence of Pig Trade: Development of Commercial Economy in North Taiwan, 1881-1900

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ABSTRACT

Through tracing the emergence of pig trade in north Taiwan in the late 19th century, this article examines the importance of pigs and pork in the agricultural production and daily consumption of Han people in Taiwan; and more importantly, investigates the influence of the opening up of the port trade on the economy and living standard of local people in late-Qing Taiwan.

This article shows that the production and consumption of pig had been flourishing in Qing Taiwan. Pig husbandry was the most popular household sideline, and its considerable commercial value made it an important business at that time. Factors accounting for the popularity of pig husbandry included the low cost of raising pigs for peasant households, the high commodification of pigs, and the contribution of pig rearing to rice cultivation. Another major reason is the Han's preference for pork. Not only was pork consumed a lot in daily diet of Han Taiwanese, it was also used at banquets and religious worships as well as sent as gifts.

Despite the widespread production and consumption of pig on the island, north Taiwan also had swine imports from Fujian and Zhejiang between 1880 and 1900. This article argues that the emergence of pig trade was an important feature of the transformation of economy after the opening of ports in north Taiwan. On one hand, pork prices rocketed because of inflation; on the other hand, after the opening of ports, north Taiwan has become the political center, leading to restructure of its local agricultural production. While domestic pig husbandry decreased, the demand for pork increased as a result of rising local consumption with better financial conditions. In sum, this article shows that the development of commercial economy in north Taiwan in the late

nineteenth century resulted in distinctive changes in the economy and daily life consumption of Taiwanese people.

Keyword: Pig, Pork, Port-opening, Junk Trade, Daily Consumption, Household Sideline