

天主教輔仁大學英國語文學系學士班畢業成果
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FU JEN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
GRADUATION PROJECT 2017

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Taiwanese Dishes: The geological impacted dishes

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Chinese Culture through Foreign Languages-English

Final Paper

2017/06/20

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Motivation for paper and mini project:

When I took this course, I knew that I could learn more about my own country. I myself am a foodie, so I really wanted to learn more about the culture behind our own food. In the Cross-Cultural Communication: Art and Handicraft Project section, our group wanted to present a local dish, so we decided to present 潤餅, or popiah. But during recipe research, I found out that it was actually a 福建 dish. This motivated me to research Taiwanese dishes that are geologically impacted. By doing so, I could in the future, explain the origins of Taiwanese dishes to my foreign friends. They are often interested in Taiwanese food and as a self-taught chef, I tend to cook for them. This semester, my friend Lea Wonders wanted to make dumplings. We made the dumplings and also filmed a “How To Make Series” video on dumplings for a course. I wanted to present Taiwanese food to people all over the world, and by uploading the videos to YouTube, people around the globe will then have access to the recipe.

Taiwanese people have been eating rice for a long period, but I want to look at dishes that utilize different staple foods. So the dishes that I researched in this project include different ingredients and dishes that utilize other staple foods.

Research strategies:

Discuss the dishes that foreign friends might encounter during their visit to Taiwan. Looking into their origin may be a problem because it is hard to find academic sources for them. Most of the information may come in the form of word of mouth. But I can focus on the geological location of certain ingredients to somewhat

get an idea of where certain dishes came from. Watch documentaries that were conducted by big companies like National Geographic. By doing so, I can learn more about the dishes.

Presentation methods:

1) A written paper 2) YouTube videos on how to make the dish 3) In class presentation

Videos Made:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1X_H9EFGdexJsZwhFhSpIrM7yXycOkgp

Introduction:

When looking at Taiwan, we can clearly see that it is a small island surrounded by many different countries. Taiwan “was inhabited by Taiwanese aborigines before the 17th century, when Dutch and Spanish colonies opened the island to mass Han immigration. After a brief rule by the Kingdom of Tungning, the island was annexed by the Qing dynasty, the last dynasty of China. The Qing ceded Taiwan to Japan in 1895 after the Sino-Japanese War. While Taiwan was under Japanese rule, the Republic of China (ROC) was established on the mainland in 1912 after the fall of the Qing dynasty. Following the Japanese surrender to the Allies in 1945, the ROC took control of Taiwan. However, the resumption of the Chinese Civil War led to the ROC's loss of the mainland to the Communists, and the flight of the ROC government to Taiwan in 1949” (Wiki). The colorful historical background of Taiwan is mainly caused by its geological location. Taiwan is on the Pacific sea, more precisely, the west side of the Pacific Ocean. It neighbors China, Japan and many other countries.

When foreigners come to Taiwan, they would often want to try authentic local food. But what is “authentic local food”? Does beef noodle count? Or should we tell them to eat grilled wild boar meat? Taiwanese cuisine culture has been influenced by

many countries, and it is hard to separate them after all these years. In this essay, I am mainly focusing on the dishes that were brought in by other cultures, mainly the dishes that were brought in when the ROC government fled to Taiwan. By understanding how to make the dish itself, we may be able to understand how it was impacted geologically before it came to Taiwan, and how it changed after it came to Taiwan.

Dish Research:

In this project, I have researched several Taiwanese dishes that were geologically impacted. I am talking about the dish and its background story/origin. I have listed the ingredients of the dish, then focus on certain ingredients that represent the impact caused by geological elements. By pointing out the evolution of the dish, we can see the difference between the original dish and our local versions of it.

宮保雞丁, or Kung Pao chicken “is believed to be named after Ding Baozhen (1820–1886), a late Qing Dynasty official, and governor of Sichuan Province”(Wiki). The main ingredients are chicken meat, spring onions, dried chili pepper, garlic, bean curd sauce, peanuts, potato starch, sugar and zanthoxylum. You may be wondering, what is zanthoxylum? Well it is one of the crucial ingredient that makes Sichuan cuisine special. Sichuan cuisine “has bold flavours, particularly the pungency and spiciness resulting from liberal use of garlic and chili peppers, as well as the unique flavor of the Sichuan pepper”(Wiki). Zanthoxylum, also known as Sichuan pepper, is the seed of a fruit from a tree, and once the fruit is sun dried, the seed can be used as spices. According to 《神農本草經·注》, zanthoxylum was discovered around Qin dynasty and is a local plant. The other crucial ingredient is the bean curd. 郫縣豆瓣 is a special type of bean curd, and it’s main ingredient is fava beans. Fava beans are not from Sichuan, they were rumored to be brought into China by Zhang Qian(張騫) from Xiyu (西域) when he was the imperial envoy for Han dynasty.

麻婆豆腐, or Mapo Tofu, is a dish named after an old lady who had pockmarks over her face. The main ingredients for Mapo Tofu are minced beef/pork, tofu, ginger, chili peppers, spring onions, zanthoxylum and potato starch. In the original recipe, it calls for minced beef. But the recipe that people use in Taiwan opts for minced pork. This made me think about the myth of Taiwanese people not eating beef. It was said that Taiwanese people use cows when farming and didn't eat the cows because they were grateful and thankful that the cows worked for them. But according to the summary of a paper on the situation of cows in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era (1895-1945), 高橋恂, the author of the paper says that most people don't eat cow meat because they use cows as a farming tool or a labor unit.¹ He also mentioned that a breed of edible plowing cow can be promoted to increase the cow population.² I decided to do some research on cows and when did they appear on Taiwan. According to 陳第, a general from the Ming dynasty, he wrote in 《東番記》 and said “ 畜有貓、有狗、有豕、有雞，無馬、驢、牛、羊、鵝、鴨”³. It was not until 1628 when the Dutch colonized Taiwan did cows made an appearance. They were used for farming purposes only. During the Japanese colonial era, the Japanese introduced milk cows, also known as Holstein, to Taiwan.⁴ Beef cattle was introduced to Taiwan by the Taiwanese government around 1970's⁵, while certain breeds of pigs were introduced to Taiwan in 1948 and promoted by the government around 1963.(汪) As for the hybrid breed that 高橋恂 suggests, there is no documentation that I could find that

¹由於大部分台灣人不吃牛肉的習慣，可以發揮的經濟價值已經達到極限。其在產業上的需求程度就像是在日本當地或其他地區將牛做為家畜、搬運農耕物質的勞力一樣。

²推廣優良品種的牛隻以提高經濟價值，以可食用與耕作的兼用牛種取代經濟價值較低的水牛

³中華科技史學會學刊第 17 期（2012 年 12 月）楊蘇之明萬曆三十年底（1603 年初），致仕游擊將軍陳第隨都司沈有容追剿倭寇親履斯土，因而寫下最早較具體記述今臺南、高雄沿海地區情況的《東番記》。他說：「畜有貓、有狗、有豕、有雞，無馬、驢、牛、羊、鵝、鴨。」

⁴日治時期，日本人將荷蘭牛由日本引進台灣，開啟台灣乳牛的畜養事業。二次世界大戰後，台灣擠乳業隨著日本人的撤退幾乎消失。至光復後，民間又開始陸續引進荷蘭牛。

⁵行政院農業委員會全球資訊網，畜牧處 汪玉貞。（至於肉牛產業，則是自民國 61 年起設立肉牛專業區、63 年開放牛肉進口，直到 67 年起國產牛肉與進口牛肉逐漸產生區隔，國產牛肉市占率近十年來一直穩定維持於 7-8% 之間。）

suggests the Japanese government importing said breed to Taiwan. I concluded that the working cows were tools, not food and the ordinary people weren't rich enough to eat beef, and thus they opted for pork, which was already a common animal.

水餃, or dumplings, is a dish that was originally meant to cure people who have frost bitten ears. Zhang Zhongjing(張仲景) “treated these poor people by stewing lamb, peppers, and some warming medicines in a pot, chopped them, and used them to fill small dough wrappers. He boiled these dumplings and gave them with the broth to his patients, until the coming of the Chinese New Year” (Wiki). The main ingredients are minced pork, dough wrappers, seasoning and vegetables. The dough wrappers are made from flour, which comes from grinding wheat. And wheat, according to 曾雄生, a researcher from ‘The Institute For The History of Natural Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences’, “小麥在古代中國的擴張始自西北，它經歷了一個自西向東，由北向南的歷程”(曾). He also says that certain parts of China isn't suitable for wheat planting. Land that is southern to Huai River tends to have low ground and lots of rain, all are characteristics that would not aid in the planting of wheat. Thus the planting of wheat started in the northern part of China and gradually influenced the south. There was no wheat in the south before Han dynasty⁶. From the information above, we can assume that dumplings were originated from northern China. The exact time which Taiwan started planting wheat is not documented, but Taiwan received lots of wheat after WW2. “當中華民國政府在台灣穩定之後，美國依據戰後計劃給予台灣軍事與經濟援助”(麵粉袋內褲) America sent flour as food supply for the military and also for the civilians. Due to the fact that Taiwanese flour industry wasn't very well developed, the flour union in Taiwan asked for wheat

⁶淮河以南的中國南方，地勢低窪，濕潤多雨，並不適合於小麥的生長。所以小麥在南方的種植較之北方要晚許多，並且是在北方的影響下發展起來的。漢以前江南無麥作

instead, in hopes that by doing so, it would help the local flour industry develop⁷.

牛肉麵, also called beef noodles, is a staple dish in Taiwanese cuisine. It was commonly believed that beef noodles were created by 外省人, which are a group of people that arrived in Taiwan after our government lost the war against communists. The main ingredients are beef, noodles, vegetables, Chinese spices and soy sauce. Since I have discussed the beef eating myth and the livestock history background briefly in Mapo Tofu, I will not discuss it again here.

When looking at the dishes above, we can see clearly that some foods are indeed strongly influenced by geological and historical elements. Some dishes cannot be made if certain ingredients weren't present. Other dishes will never be invented if Taiwan wasn't located next to China. There are many more dishes that share the same aspect, but I personally think that these commonly seen dishes partially represent Taiwanese cuisine culture.

Reflection:

Dish	Expectations	Activities	Things that I learned	Video links
宮保雞丁	Thought it was a chicken dish that was named after a guy called 公保	Watched a documentary about 左宗棠雞 Made a video	Named after Ding Baozhen. Zanthoxylum was discovered around Qin dynasty and is a local plant. Fava beans are not from Sichuan, they were rumored to be brought into China by	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URdvrEAFBMI&list=PL1X_H9EFGdexJsZwhFhSpI_rM7yXycOkgp&index=2

⁷其中一項是以美國剩餘農產品當作糧食援助。當時台灣的麵粉工業尚未興起，美國直接將麵粉運送至台灣供應軍民所需。後來經過麵粉公會向美援會副主任委員尹仲容先生說明爭取，要求美國以小麥援助，讓麵粉工廠得以有小麥原料研製成麵粉，一方面降低成本，一方面可以培植台灣的麵粉工業

			Zhang Qian(張騫) from Xiyu (西域).	
麻婆豆腐	Thought it was only made with pork + tofu and other ingredients.	Made a video	Beef consumption habits in Taiwan. When did meat cow and pigs come to Taiwan The cow industry history in Taiwan	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1Dtb1372Zc&index=1&list=PL1X_H9EFGdexJsZwhFhSpIrM7yXycOkgp
水餃	Thought that it originated from northern China.	Made a video Made a website Watched a documentary on frozen dumplings	Taiwan imported wheat and had to promote it America provided Taiwan with lots of flour after WW2.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiy3mKK0wr4&list=PL1X_H9EFGdexJsZwhFhSpIrM7yXycOkgp&index=4
牛肉麵	Thought it was a Taiwanese dish.	Made a video	Created by 外省人 Can be cooked in many different ways	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8Uo06Lgvyo&list=PL1X_H9EFGdexJsZwhFhSpIrM7yXycOkgp&index=3
潤餅+湯圓	Thought that 潤餅 was	Taught the whole class	潤餅 is from 福建 潤餅 with 甜辣醬 South	

	originated from the 寒食 festival.		潤餅 with sugar and powdered peanuts North.	
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After this course, I have learned a lot about Taiwanese culture and cuisine. This project made me think about the definition of 台菜. What kind of dish should be considered as Taiwanese cuisine? What elements should be taken into consideration when defining? I personally think that only dishes that were invented in Taiwan can be called 台菜, as for other dishes that have been influenced by Taiwanese culture, I would classify them as “foreign dishes with a Taiwanese twist”.

When I was preparing for the presentation on 潤餅, I was amazed by the diversity of ingredients that can be added to the dish, and was even more surprised that the sauce also varies from region to region. Beef noodle soup also has this “diversity” trait. Different variations can occur, and I would like to look into that in the future.

潤餅 in the south will be eaten with 甜辣醬, but people in the northern part of Taiwan prefer sugar and powdered peanuts. The occurrence of these decisions and diversities of certain ingredients are meaningful, but it is hard to find documentations of food culture in general. The historical background of certain ingredients interest me a lot and I do hope that related documents could be accessed by the public more easily. It is hard to locate articles relating to such subjects, and I do hope that the government actively document such information.

Taiwan is known for its great food and night market culture, but when I went to the night market to do some field research, I was highly disappointed by the fact that it was very dirty. I wish that the Taiwanese government can put more effort in preserving and presenting our food culture to foreigners and to the locals as well. The

government could work with the MRT station and provide information to tourists.

Tainan was one of the few cities that did actively promote their food culture. The government provided travel guides at the train station and at their night markets.

The promotion of locally grown ingredients/staple foods still needs some help from the government. When looking at certain dishes and ingredients, I cannot help but notice that government aid in promoting local ingredients is scarce. It is essential that we promote our locally grown ingredients and make it well known to foreigners. By doing so, Taiwanese food culture can be known worldwide.



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