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Pepper to sea cucumbers: Chinese gustatory revolution in global history, 900-1840

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Pepper to Sea Cucumbers

Chinese Gustatory Revolution in Global History, 900-1840

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Completing this dissertation took four years (2017-2021), but the journey leading towards it was much longer. The idea of combining Chinese cultural history and Southeast Asian economic and social history originated in my M.Phil. study of sugar trade along the eighteenth-century China Coast at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (2014-2015), which was advised by Chi-cheung Choi. Turning that nascent idea into a book-length work, however, demanded far more training.

It was Leonard Blussé who offered mentorship and guided me through different programs at Leiden. Following his suggestion, I first took two-year intensive BA and MA course works in the Cosmopolis program (2015-2017) directed by Jos Gommans. Through this program, I learned to read Dutch colonial archives with help from Ton Harmsen, Rene Wezel, Peter van Summeren, Norifumi Daito, and Tristan Mostert; learned to approach Indonesian history with help from Blussé, Koh Keng We, Esther Zwinkels, Tristan, Simon Kemper, Maarten Manse, Alicia Schrikker, Sander Tetteroo, Ariel Lopez, Ligia Giay, Mark van de Water, Bente Leede, Melinda Susanto, Shohei Okubo, Philip Post, Alexander van der Meer, Sanne Ravensbergen, and Atsushi Ota; to speak basic Bahasa Indonesia with help from Surya Suryadi, Aone van Engelenhoven, and Nazarudin Nazarudin; and to engage with the ongoing debates about Indian Ocean history with help from Gommans, Mahmood Kooriathodi, Archa Neelakandan Giriya, Tom Hoogervorst, and Archisman Chaudhuri. Besides that, I also benefited immensely from scholarly discussions with Catia Antunes, Wei-chung Cheung, Wu Xiao An, Ulbe Bosma, Ryuto Shimada, and David Henley.

While the Cosmopolis program was driving me towards the history of the VOC in Asia, several meetings with Anne Gerritsen and Fan Lin in 2016 and 2017 rekindled my interest in Southeast Asian things in Chinese material culture. They encouraged me to apply for a four-year Ph.D. fellowship (2017-2021) sponsored by the Hulsewé-Wazniewski Foundation. With this generous financial support,

Anne and Fan Lin undertook to train me as a student of cultural history. They admitted me to their courses in material culture and art history. Anne further invited me to the UK for making presentations on medical history, China and global history, and global micro-history. Fan Lin let me present in several workshops in Leiden about cultural and material history. These activities witnessed how I gradually grew into a researcher of Chinese medical and food history.

Besides unfailing support from Anne, Fan Lin, and Blussé, my progress received continuous attention from Gommans, Hilde De Weerd, and the committee members of the Hulsewé-Wazniewski Foundation, especially Maghiel van Crevel. I also found that my interest in food history was shared by Françoise Sabban, Kathleen Burke, and Alice de Jong. My studies of Chinese medical history were encouraged by Xi Gao, Bridie Andrews, Xiaomeng Liu, and Nandini Bhattacharya. My talks about the materiality of pepper and sea cucumbers received many feedbacks from Fresco Sam-Sin, Doreen Müller, Ching-ling Wang, Yu-chih Lai, and Neilabh Sinha. My search for recently published Chinese primary sources was supported by our librarian, Marc Gilbert. Besides that, I benefited from joining workshops organised by the Dutch National Research School for Cultural History (the Huizinga Institute) and from participating in Manchu classes taught by Fresco and Juul Eijk. I was fortunate enough to conduct field work in Makassar with help from Amrullah Amir, Xiangzheng Chen, Ziqi Wu, and the staff of the EFEO library in Jakarta exactly before the global outbreak of COVID-19. By the final stage, He Bian, De Weerd, Gommans, and Eric Tagliacozzo joined the Promotiecommissie and provided constructive comments that remain crucial for developing this dissertation into a book or articles. Meimei Zhang helped polish my translation of Chinese poems. Juul helped edit the Dutch summary. I am alone responsible for all the remaining errors.

Writing the dissertation was but part of my six-year life in Leiden. I found joy in countless dinners with my friends, like Yujing, Zexu, Yixiu, Archa, Norifumi, Jialong, Simon, Jiayi, Ruixuan, Mengxing, Tzu-Yi, Xiao Ma, Xinrong, Jing Hu, Yiyun, and Sanhua. I had many online meetings with

a group of friends interested in Chinese material culture, including Meimei, Yu Yan, Pei-hsuan, Ted, Yunshuang, Wanmeng, You Wang, Lin Du, and Huijun. I was weekly visited by Peter who paid so much attention to me and my small family.

My wife, Hui Ji, joined me in 2016 and our daughter, Jiqiu, was born in Leiden in August 2020. We lived in a cosy apartment near the archaeological park of Matilo. I may never forget that the newborn Jiqiu was resting on my desk while I was preparing for teaching a BA course sometime in late September 2020. Indeed, to my wife and myself, the most wonderful outcome from our life in Leiden is not this dissertation but Jiqiu. She was one-year-and-eight-day old when I was notified by Fan Lin that the Promotiecommissie had recommended this work for public defence.

Note on Dates, Transliterations, and Measures

- ❖ All dates have been converted to accord to the Common Era. The date of each dynasty, book, and person is indicated on its first occurrence in the dissertation. If they occur in two places far apart, their dates will be noted again.
- ❖ Chinese book titles are all translated into English in the main text, but their pinyin transliterations are used in the footnotes. In the bibliography, their original Chinese characters, pinyin transliterations, and English translations are all presented.
- ❖ Traditional Chinese characters are used for primary sources and for research published in traditional Chinese. Simplified Chinese characters are only used for modern research published in mainland China.
- ❖ Chinese names of persons and places are all transliterated according to the pinyin system, except for modern authors who follow the Wade-Giles or Cantonese systems.
- ❖ Money, weights, and measures are all presented in the original units.
- ❖ The following conversions are used particularly for the trade of sea cucumbers in Makassar:

Picul: 120 catties or 133.3 pounds.

Tael (silver): 0.7 Spanish dollar.

Rijksdaalder: In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a rijksdaalder had a similar silver content as a Spanish dollar, but the latter was more valuable in Asia because of the local preference.¹ In Makassar, the Spanish dollar, known as “*rijksdaalder Spaans*”, was a common current, while the rijksdaalder was the “money of account”.²

Foot (Rijnland): The Rijnland standard was used in the early modern Dutch Empire in Asia. 12 Rijnland inches are 1 Rijnland foot. 1 Rijnland foot is 31.40 cm.

¹ Wolters, “Heavy and Light Money in the Netherlands Indies.”

² Sutherland, “Trepang and Wangkang,” 453, note 3.

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