

## 關於海味

All  
about  
dried  
seafood...

© P.64 《香江道貌：香港的早期電車路風光》，鄭寶鴻

約一九一二年三角碼頭前（現永樂街）向西望德輔道西。十字型的電線桿旁為素有南北行街之稱的文咸西街。單層電車的前方為皇后街及高陞街。Des Voeux Road West looking west from the "Triangle" Wharf (now Wing Lok Street), c. 1912. Next to the crossed-shape utility pole was Bonham Strand West famous for south-north trade. In front of the tram lies Queen Street and Ko Sing Street.

不過，德輔道西的店舖一開始並非以經營海味生意為主。二十世紀初，德輔道西是一個專門售賣鹹魚的地方，俗稱鹹魚欄（「欄」是指批發貨物的地方）。當時的鹹魚店大多以「上宿下舖」的形式經營：它們身處三、四層高的舊式大廈，地面是店舖，樓上是工場及宿舍，而天台則用來曬鹹魚。直至五十年代，鹹魚業仍十分興盛，西營盤一帶的鹹魚店曾高達二百多間。但隨著城市發展，這些三、四層高的舊式大廈逐一被清拆，重建成一幢幢高樓大廈，不再適合鹹魚店經營。加上本地漁獲減少，經營鹹魚生意的人越來越少，鹹魚欄的東主紛紛把店舖轉型為海味店，以覓得另一生存空間。與此同時，海味業也開始興旺起來，見證著香港幾十年來的發展和轉變。

## 所謂「海味」

是指經乾燥脫水等加工程序製作而成的海產類食品，如蝦乾、蠔豉及瑤柱。海味業在香港歷史悠久，早於十九世紀中，中國發生內亂，大批難民紛紛逃難到香港。這些難民中有不少是商人，他們在上環及西營盤設立了很多南北行，專營南北貿易生意。海味是南北貨的其中一種，在文咸西街、永樂街一帶便有不少海味店。而德輔道西更因街道兩旁海味店林立，被稱為「海味街」。

**Hoi-mei** is dried and dehydrated seafood. Dried shrimps, oysters and scallops are important and common ingredients in Chinese cuisine. The production and trade of hoi-mei have a long history in Hong Kong. In mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Hong Kong saw an influx of refugees from mainland China due to civil disorder. Among them there were quite a number of businessmen, who established numerous Nam Pak Hongs ("South-North Trading Houses") in Sheung Wan and Sai Ying Pun, and traded dried seafood with their Southeast Asian and Mainland Chinese counterparts. Dried seafood shops abound around Bonham Strand West and Wing Lok Street. Des Voeux Road West is renowned as "Dried Seafood Street" for its great number of shops along both sides of the road.

Instead of dried seafood, the major trade on Des Voeux Road West at first was salted fish. It was a specialized wholesale market of salted fish in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each building (3 or 4 storeys high) on the street was a functional salted fish workshop and shop - the shop on the ground floor, family-sized factory and dormitory in on the second and third floors, and the roof was for drying salted fish. Salted fish was still very popular in 1950s, and there were once over 200 shops of its kind around Sai Ying Pun. As time passes, these old buildings were demolished and reconstructed into high-rises. With dwindling local fish catch, many shop owners shifted their business from selling salted fish to dried seafood. The rise of dried seafood industry reflected decades of development and changes of the city.



海昌號的東主麥澄波先生（波叔）  
Mak Ching-po (Uncle Po), owner of Hoi Cheong Ho.



波叔，十七歲入行，經營海味生意至今已近六十年，可謂海味業的老行尊。現在我們一提起「海味」二字，躍入腦海的不外乎是鮑魚、花膠等貴價海味。但據波叔說，以前一般市民負擔不起昂貴的鮑參翅肚，主要吃的是

魷魚、蝦米、章魚和大地魚等較便宜的海味。自六、七十年代起，香港的工商業發達，經濟起飛，人們才開始有能力購買價格較高的魚翅、瑤柱。此外，除了海味，從前的海味店也會兼賣涼果和雜貨，而現今海味店的貨物種類則更趨多元化：在海味以外，我們不難在不少店內發現急凍海產、鹹魚、臘味及藥材等不同貨物。

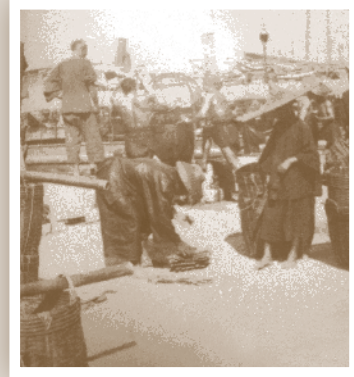
一如德輔道西的大部分海味店，波叔的海味店海昌號兼營批發和零售生意。據筆者翻查資料所知，海味業按南北行的規定，有一個「九八抽佣」的抽佣制度。例如貨物本售一百元，扣除佣金後，實際只收九十八元。不過，抽佣的形式和扣數的多寡，其實還會視乎海味店與其他商戶的協議而定。海味業也保留著其他傳統交易方式，如為了保密，行家在交易時會用密底算盤議價。此外，他們的生意多靠熟客維繫。波叔說，有些客人到店內，只會跟某個相熟伙計買東西。他又補充，他們的客人有些住在附近，有些則遠至新界。在訪問期間，筆者便看到不少熟客跟波叔打招呼及查詢貨物行情，可見主客關係對於海味業而言是頗為重要的。



現今貴價海味大行其道，分佈在海味店的每一角  
Pricey dried seafood nowadays dominates every corner of the shop.

鹹魚欄內的一樁交易  
Trading in the old Salted Fish Hood.

© P.71 《我們的香港：珍貴相片集》，文桂珍（資料編集）



Uncle Po entered the business at the age of 17 and is now a veteran of dried seafood. Dried seafood is not limited to pricey items such as abalones or fish maws. Uncle Po remembered that abalones, shark fins or sea cucumbers were too expensive for most people to afford. Squids, dried shrimps, octopuses and flounders were more to their taste. It was till 1960s and 1970s when Hong Kong experienced rapid industrial and commercial development that shark fins and dried scallops became affordable. Dry fruits and groceries were also sold in dried seafood shops. Nowadays these shops sell a much greater array of products: frozen seafood, salted fish, cured meat and Chinese medicine.

The majority of dried seafood shops on Des Voeux Road West caters for both wholesale and retail businesses, and Uncle Po's "Hoi Cheong Ho" Seafood is no exception. The dried seafood industry adopts a "ninety-eight commission" system under Nam Pak Hong's rule - if the good is sold at \$100, \$98 would be the actual proceeds minus the commission. But the net amount depends on the agreement made with the other shops. Some trading traditions are also seen in today's dried seafood business. For example, merchants would make secret negotiations when dealing with each other by using bottom-tight abacuses. Dried seafood business relies heavily on regular customers, as some of them would only make purchases from the salesmen they know. Some of Uncle Po's customers live near, while some of them live in the New Territories. During the interview, from time to time, Uncle Po greeted his old customers and helped them to choose what they wanted.

除了跟客人關係良好，海味店的主雇關係也十分融洽。以海昌號為例，每位員工都是老伙計，他們大部分均在店內工作了二、三十年，有些人甚至工作了五、六十年，可說是「打足大半世工」。平時，老闆會跟員工像家人般一起在店內吃飯。在一些特定的節日和時令，如做「牙」（即每月的初二、十六）、中秋節、端午節、做冬，還有過年的團年飯和開年飯，全店的上上下下又會聚集一起吃飯。以前他們會留在店內吃，店內亦有廚房可以煮食，不過現在則多數上酒樓吃。像海味店這樣緊密的主雇關係，在今時今日這個商業社會而言，可算是很難得的了。

The relationship between employers and employees in this industry is very close. Each employee at Hoi Cheong Ho has worked there for over 20 years, a few even 60 years. Most of their lives are spent in the same shop. Normally the owner and all staff have dinner together in the shop, just like an ordinary family. There are some special times in the year which they would gather at the table, such as the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> days of the month in the Chinese calendar (when they offer sacrifices for the God of Wealth), Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Winter Solstice, Chinese New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year. In the past the feasts were prepared in kitchen at the shop, but now they usually go to restaurants.



每逢傳統大型節慶，不少香港人都會吃海味過節。海味之所以能成為香港人的應節食品之一，正因為一些海味的名稱在粵語中與吉祥字詞同音或諧音，即俗語所說的「好意頭」，符合節日的喜慶氛圍，最著名的例子莫過於發財好市（髮菜蠔豉）這道菜。據波叔所言，每年海味店生意最旺的時間，是接近農曆新年的時候；冬至、端午節和中秋節的營業額亦會上升。可是時移世易，過去的十年八年，已經很少人在中秋節特地到海味店買海味，而端午節則為數更少。由此，我們亦得以窺見節日文化在香港的一些轉變。

Dried seafood plays an essential role in traditional festive dishes, as some of their names in Cantonese pun on auspicious phrases. The most notable dish is “Fat Choy Ho See” (black moss with dried oysters), signifying “good fortune and flourishing business”. Days before Chinese New Year are the peak season for dried seafood shops, including Uncle Po’s. Winter Solstice, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival also bring abundant business. However, for the past 8 or 10 years, less people are buying dried seafood for Mid-Autumn Festival, not to mention Dragon Boat Festival. It somehow reveals a changing festive culture in Hong Kong.



在過去幾十年，海味業的發展經歷了不少轉變。海味業是南北行業的一環，在二十世紀初時已出現，不過於戰後的和平時期才真正發展起來。六、七十年代，隨著香港經濟起飛，市民的消費能力提高，每逢時節前後，尤其是農曆新年，人們對海味的需求亦大大增加，海味業也漸趨蓬勃。到了八十年代，海味業踏進了它的全盛期，海味生意持續穩步上升。一九八零年，海味業的總營業額一度高達約十億港元。儘管八、九十年代可謂海味業的極盛期，但這段時期亦為海味業的衰落埋下伏線。集團式經營的海味店開始出現，雖然吸引更多顧客光顧，但亦加劇了行內競爭。此時，香港經濟由工業轉型為金融和商業，轉口港貿易已經不合時宜。南北行不再是香港的經濟重心，文咸西街亦無復昔日的熱鬧。八十年代後期、九十年代初持續低增長、高通脹，大大削弱了市民的消費能力，海味業的前景並不樂觀。自八十年代起，香港旅遊發展局開始協助海味店宣傳，希望將海味街塑造成一個必遊的景點，吸引更多遊客來港消費，這個策略及至九十年代開始奏效。近十年來，許多中國內地的自由行旅客也會來港購買海味。海味業的發展雖然不復當年勇，但仍能維持平穩的發展。

事實上，海味業的發展史也正正反映了香港經濟的許多重要轉變。上環、西營盤一帶作為香港早期商業——尤其是轉口業的中心，海味業在此興起，跟香港的經濟發展幾乎是同步展開。海味作為一種南北貨，與香港之進出口業又有密不可分的關係。此外，海味業的發展實有賴市民的消費能力，這又與工業、金融業對香港經濟的貢獻緊緊掛鉤。更甚者，現今海味業有穩健發展，亦跟旅遊業有相輔相成的關係。透過海味的買與賣，我們可以看到香港由一個小漁村，一步步變成轉口港，工業中心，以至國際知名的金融中心及旅遊勝地。透過研究海味店的經營模式，我們可以看到傳統行業的一些習俗和人情味；透過認識海味在節日中的應用，也可以窺見香港節日文化的轉變。✦

In retrospect, dried seafood industry emerged in early 1900s, but it did not take shape until after the Second World War. Thanks to rapid economic development in 1960s-70s, Hong Kong people had greater consumption power and hence increasing demand for dried seafood. 1980s was the golden age of the industry where trade grew steadily - the gross revenue of the whole industry reached HKD\$1 billion in 1980 alone. Dried seafood trade saw its heyday in 1980s-90s, but over-expansion (e.g. chain stores) and keen competition marked its subsequent downfall. At the same time, the shift of Hong Kong's economy from industry to finance and commerce marginalized entrepôt trade. The hurly-burly of Bonham Strand West gradually dwindled. Slow economic growth and high inflation so hammered general consumption power. From 1980s onwards, Hong Kong Tourist Association (now Tourism Board) marketed streets of dried seafood shops as must-sees for visitors in Hong Kong, and since 1990s these local sights became popular to tourists. In the last decade, visitors from the mainland China are reliable source of income for the industry. The golden days of dried seafood industry has passed, but it still sustains in its own ways.

Dried seafood is almost parallel with changes of the Hong Kong economy. Sheung Wan and Sai Ying Pun were Hong Kong's earliest business (especially entrepôt) hubs, and naturally dried seafood trade began here. The development of the business throughout the years is closely related to entrepôt trade between China and the rest of the world, consumption power of local residents (and hence industrial, commercial, and financial development of Hong Kong), and even tourism. This transition is exactly what Hong Kong has experienced over the century.

By studying the business styles of dried seafood shops, we appreciate the customs as well as human touches in a traditional industry. The significance of dried seafood in local festivities also unfolds the transforming festive culture in Hong Kong. ✦

