



從乾貨
海參
How
Sea Cucumbers
Sweep the World 看世界

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香港除了是世界金融中心，還是全球海參集散地，而南北行可算是乾貨海味的華爾街。二零零七年，香港從世界五十八個國家和地區進口了五千二百九十六噸乾海參。儘管港人鍾情於海味，但這樣大量的乾海參不可能全都消耗在香港的餐桌上。據二零零七年香港貿易統計，來港的乾海參會轉口到包括中國在內的十三個國家。仔細看看，由香港轉口的乾海參達四千一百四十九噸，其中對中國的出口量一枝獨秀，為三千五百七十六噸（佔轉口總量的八成六以上）。然而，香港的乾貨業內人士指出，由於統計上仍有未呈現的部分（在香港流通的計有一千一百四十七噸），筆者認為仍有相當數量是經過不同途徑輸出到中國大陸。

Hong Kong, well known as the global business centre, is also the biggest sea cucumber trading centre in the world, with a "Wall Street" for dried seafood trade around the Nam Pak Hong. In 2007 alone, 5,296 tonnes of dried sea cucumbers were imported to Hong Kong from 58 countries and regions. Such magnitude is not likely to be all swallowed all by Hong Kong diners. The Hong Kong trade analysis in 2007 suggested that imported sea cucumbers are re-exported to 13 countries, including China - 4,149 tonnes of sea cucumber are diverted to other places through Hong Kong, out of which 3,576 tonnes goes to China (86% of the total re-export amount). The figures have hidden something, say dried seafood insiders in Hong Kong (there should be 1,147 tonnes staying in the Hong Kong market). I believe some of them have been transported to mainland China by various means.

香港·南北行

Hong Kong·Nam Pak Hong

要數對香港的印象，首先想到是聯繫香港島和九龍半島的天星渡輪碼頭，以及尖沙嘴和中環兩岸的高樓群。但說到最具香港特色，還是在中環以西一個站牌外的上環地區，因為它正好印證了香港在十九世紀中葉開始扮演的國際貿易樞紐地位。今日在上環所見的，是乾燥海產批發店與中草藥乾果批發店鱗次櫛比的南北行。

My first impressions about Hong Kong were of Star Ferry Pier linking Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, and the high-rises on both side of the harbour. But you only find the most quintessentially local tastes in Sheung Wan, one MTR station west of Central. Hong Kong is now an international trading hub, and it all began in Sheung Wan since the mid-19th century. Nowadays, if you set foot on the Sheung Wan pavement and see retail shops of dried seafood, Chinese medicines and dried fruits one after another, you have probably entered the realm of “Nam Pak Hong”.

一般稱之為南北行的地區，主要以永樂街、文咸東街和文咸西街為界；而商舖的角色以進口商和批發商為主，構成南北行和世界的貿易橋樑。南北行以百年歷史的「南北行公所」為首，加上日本海產進口商組成的日本海產香港有限公司等，有七個作用不同的行會（同業組合）。其中最積極參與海參保全活動的，是魚翅海產進出口商會有限公司 (SMPA)。於二千年在肯亞吉吉召開的第十一次華盛頓公約締約國會議 (CoP11) 上，鯊魚的魚翅成為討論議題，該公司則藉機成為世界性的鯊魚保全組織；而在隔年的 CoP12 (二零零二年於智利聖地牙哥)，該公司趁海參成為議題，成立海參部門作為下屬機構。

We call the area enclosed by Wing Lok Street, Bonham Strand East and Bonham Strand West the “Nam Pak Hong” area. Shops within this area are mostly import merchants and wholesalers, bridging the world of Nam Pak Hong and worldwide dried seafood market. The century-old Nam Pak Hong Association includes 7 guilds of different trades, including the Japanese Marine Products Hong Kong Traders’ Association Limited. Among other members is SMPA (Sharkfin and Marine Products Association Limited), the most active body in sea cucumber conservation campaigns. In 2000, when shark fins were on the agenda of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) CoP11 held in Gigiri, Kenya, SMPA took advantage to become a global conservator of sharks. Two years later, during the CoP12 in Santiago, Chile, sea cucumber was the focus of discussion, and SMPA responded by setting up a sea cucumber subdivision.



當時的海參部門負責人——兆豐行的葉先生提到，他們正利用出口海參到香港的各國商社的捐款，委託生物學者調查海參的資源狀況。此外，該組織還向遍佈世界各國的客戶發出思考資源保全與商業平衡的倡議書，呼籲永續發展海參產業。或許與商業機密有關，南北行的商社從未公開客戶名單。不過，鯊魚和海參成為華盛頓公約的條目，使封閉且各自行動的進口商逐步團結起來，關於這一點還是應該給予讚許的。

At the time, Mr. Yip of Shiu Fung Hong (one of the dried seafood shops), who was in charge of the sea cucumber subdivision, said that they had appointed biologists to investigate the statuses of sea cucumber resources with sponsorship from worldwide sea cucumber suppliers. They had also drafted a proposal, encouraging global clients to keep an ecological balance between conservation and business benefits, and for a sustainable growth of the sea cucumber industry. Probably a commercial secret, this list of clients has never been disclosed. In any case, the shark fin and sea cucumber trades are now partially regulated by the CITES. Importers who used to take their own isolated actions come slowly into unison. Regarding this, SMPA deserves a credit.

同時，香港的批發商向近年來沉浸在海參泡沫中的日本漁業者、加工業者與流通業者敲響警鐘。這項行動源於香港批發商憑藉經年累月的經驗，直覺地認為日本如今正在捕撈幾年前不會捕撈的極小海參。經營海參出口的林先生表示，在二千年前後，重量少於五克的海參很普遍，但近年來每隻約一公克左右的極小海參也開始流通，他認為資源濫捕是大海參越來越少的原因之一。

Meanwhile, Hong Kong wholesalers are ringing the alarm to the Japanese fishermen, processors and distributors, those who are still playing with the carefree bubble of sea cucumber trade. With years of experience in the industry, their intuitions have told them that their Japanese counterparts are now depleting tiny sea cucumbers, which they would spare before. Mr. Lam, a sea cucumber exporter, said sea cucumbers below 5g became more visible in the market around 2000, but now even tiny sea cucumbers of 1g have been seen in the market. Heavy fishing is the reason for the decline of large sea cucumbers, according to Lam.

此外，消費傾向的改變也有造成影響。以前大隻海參較受顧客青睞，如今一斤有五十五至一百五十隻的海參反而比較好賣，大海參卻不太賣得出去。以前人們通常會以肉厚大隻的海參作料理，盛入大盤再上桌分切，但隨著新中國料理風行，香港人也開始將單隻海參盛上菜盤。也就是說，假設海參零售價是一斤（六百公克）十萬日元，其中有三十隻大海參，單隻海參價值三千三百日元，那麼單隻裝盤的價格勢必更高。另一方面，一斤有四百隻的極小海參，每隻才二百五十日元左右，適合作為單品端上餐桌。

Consumers have altered their preference in the years. Large sea cucumbers were once the first choice, but now those that weigh between 55-150 pieces per catty are the most popular. People used to consume fleshy sea cucumbers, place them on a big dish and slice them on the table. Changes in Chinese cuisine brought smaller sea cucumbers into fashion, and Hongkongers began to dine on individual, smaller sea cucumbers. If the retail price for 1 catty (600 grams) of 30 large sea cucumbers is 100,000 Japanese Yen, then each sea cucumber costs 3300 Yen, and it is more expensive if a single one of it is served as one dish. If there are 400 tiny sea cucumbers in 1 catty, each of them is only 250 Yen, reasonable to present alone as one single course.



大連·海參食療

Dalian·Sea Cucumber Tonic

回顧從前，自二零零四年起，在瀨戶內海和北陸地區的海參產地，就經常聽到「大連人」欲收購海參的耳語。當時我認為，他們或許只是想跳過南北行和廣州一德路的路徑中介，開拓產地直銷路線，以確保商品價格低廉，因而未加留心。

Back in 2004, there were rumours in the Seto Inland Sea and the Hokuriku region (the breadbaskets of Japanese sea cucumbers) that people from Dalian of China wanted to purchase the local sea cucumbers. I thought that the Dalian sea cucumber traders were just trying to open up a cheaper and direct retail channel instead of patronizing the middlemen of Nam Pak Hong in Hong Kong or those of Yide Road in Guangzhou.

然而，二零零七年度後，根據日本農林水產省召開的農林水產技術會議，筆者由於負責「開發乾燥海參出口的計畫性生產技術」一環，須密集往返北海道和青森縣各地，此時我已無法忽視「大連人」的存在。他們不僅改變商品的流通途徑，對乾海參製法的變化也有明顯影響。過去十年，我走訪東南亞多國，試圖從海參的捕捉、加工和集散網絡關係，對商品在跨國貿易背後的族群動因加以分析和了解。但近年由於中國市場的變化，特別是大連等新興海參產地和消費市場，使我無法不正視自己至今遺漏的問題，這或可說是我對「中國觀」的鴻溝。

In 2007, I was appointed by a committee under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Japan to develop the plans and technology of dried sea cucumber exports, and had to travel frequently around Hokkaido and Aomori. At that time significance of Dalian people in Japanese sea cucumber industry had become obvious, as they have changed the distribution channel of sea cucumbers and obviously, the way that people prepare dried sea cucumbers. I have visited a number of Southeast Asian countries in the past 10 years to analyze and understand the population momentum of trans-national commodities through their catching, processing and distribution networks. Yet, with a changing Chinese market, especially the emergence of new sea cucumber production and consumption markets such as Dalian, I was forced to reckon with an issue that had long been ignored - my mistaken concepts about China.



這麼說的原因是，因東南亞研究而著迷於海參學的我，認為所謂「中國」就是香港及其延長線上的廣州，或是向東南亞輸出眾多移民的廈門，無非都是中國南部的港市世界。在東南亞大都市或巴黎、紐約、洛杉磯的唐人街，都是在「中國」的延長線上。但藉著訪問大連的機會，我到現在才看見與我熟悉的中國不同、應形容為「北方中國」的面貌。

My obsession with “sea-cucumberology” is derived from my studies on Southeast Asia. I used to relate “China” to Hong Kong, Guangzhou (and their vicinities) and Xiamen (hometown of many Chinese migrants to Southeast Asia), all port cities in southern China. The “China” in my mind even included China Towns in major Southeast Asian cities and Paris, New York and Los Angeles. My opportunity to visit Dalian had just brought me to a totally different China, or what I should call the “Northern China”.



不論在超市的食品賣場、市場、餐館，大連人都浸沉在一片可稱之為「海參熱」的熱烈氣氛中。在香港和新加坡的宴會上，我印象中不只「鮑參翅肚」（號稱「四大海味」的高級乾貨），還有整尾活魚下鑊蒸的「清蒸」料理等，所有多采多姿的食材都被視為珍寶。受惠於大量水產的大連，則只有海參格外受人珍現，即使不一定像清代的「海參席」，海參的有無仍與宴會的檔次有關。

In Dalian, whether you are in the supermarket, wet market or a local restaurant, you feel like everyday is “sea cucumber festival”. I have attended banquets in Hong Kong and Singapore, where I remembered that sea cucumber is only one of the priced ingredients alongside with abalones, shark fins, fish maws and steamed whole fish. In Dalian, a place blessed with rich aquatic products, sea cucumber is like the only honourable item on banquet tables. Not always as extravagant as the “sea cucumber feast” in Qing dynasty, but the absence of sea cucumber means that your banquet is not slap-up.

此前我聽香港批發商說過，大連人相信「從冬至開始的八十一天，每天早晨空腹服用一隻海參，就不會感冒」，實際上人們也真的這樣做。事實上，大連快到冬至時，不難見到提醒大家吃海參進補的廣告。他們吃海參並不像廣東人般，一早出門去茶樓享受美味的精緻小點心。在大連，海參不烹調也不調味，浸發後就這麼吃下去。有時也會來點變化，蘸糖、醬或味噌來吃。海參不是早餐，吃完海參後吃的饅頭或粥才是他們的早餐。之前聽說「要整隻吃下去」，但大連人其實也不拘泥，太大隻的當然要切開食用。

A Hong Kong wholesaler had once told me a story. "The Dalian people believe that if you want to keep yourself away from the flu, swallow a sea cucumber with an empty stomach every morning for a consecutive 81 days from the winter solstice." And they do take it for real. When winter solstice nears, sea cucumber promotion posters are everywhere in Dalian. This peculiar morning snack is not savoured as how Cantonese go for early "yum cha" in dainty restaurants. Dalian people do not cook it nor add any seasonings - they just soak the dried sea cucumbers and swallow the whole. Sometimes they may dip it in sugar, sauces or miso, then again swallow the whole. Still it is not their breakfast - steam buns or congee after the sea cucumber is their real breakfast. I heard that they have to gulp the entire sea cucumber but no, they are happy to cut a giant one into mouth-sized pieces.

大連周邊地區的人認為食用海參（特別是刺參）是保持健康的秘訣，在「乾海參」飲食文化圈中，大連的地位非常獨特。例如，除了這裡討論的一般乾海參，大連人還開發出容易浸發的半乾燥品「半乾海參」、冰鮮的「凍乾海參」等乾品，以及可即食的密封袋食品——「即食海參」或「鹽漬海參」，扮演擴大市場的角色。海參熱早已超越「飲食文化」的範疇，因它已發展到出現營養口服液、補給品、海參酒（蒸餾酒）等各種保健食品。人們認為海參對健康有益，是長生不老的秘訣，這應該可說已深化為一種「海參信仰」。

People in and around Dalian believe that eating sea cucumber (thorny sea cucumbers in particular) is the key to maintain good health. Dalian hence has a very special status in dried sea cucumber market. Besides common dried sea cucumbers, they have invented "half-dried sea cucumbers" which are more easily soaked and softened, "freeze-dried sea cucumbers", and pouch food such as "instant sea cucumbers" or "salted sea cucumbers". This sea cucumber mania has even brought tonic drinks, dietary supplements and distilled sea cucumber wine. Conceptions of sea cucumbers with good health and immortality have transcended this little marine creature into the object of unexplainable fervor.

