

## COMPLETION REPORT

### **Technology and Taste: The Making of Dried Skipjack Tuna Products and the Evolution of Taste in Modern Taiwan**

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My research explores the production of dried skipjack tuna (known as 鰹節, hereinafter ‘katsuobushi’) in the Keelung area of Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era (1895-1945). To conduct this research, I first examined the evolution of katsuobushi in Japan. Between August 20 to 27, 2019, I visited Makurazaki in Kagoshima Pref., where I spent time at a factory (的場水産株式會社) specializing in the production of katsuobushi and then familiarized myself with the specific procedures for the production of katsuobushi flakes.

After conducting my research, I found there are 3 main reasons why Japanese imperial government considered Keelung to be the most important city for the production of katsuobushi. First, with its natural marine surroundings, Keelung simplified producers’ access to skipjack tuna; second, Keelung had an attractive harbor, which convinced Japan to build Taiwan’s first factory devoted to the production of katsuobushi; third, in considering the distribution network for katsuobushi products, Japan concluded that, of all the cities under consideration, Keelung was the best one for shipping katsuobushi products to Nagasaki, Fukuoka, Kobe, and other Japanese cities. Consequently, during the Japanese colonial era, over 70 percent of all katsuobushi products from Keelung were shipped to Japan .

However, because Taiwan was new to the business of making katsuobushi, Japanese in Keelung encountered 3 major types of hardship related to the production process: first, in contrast to Japanese skipjack tuna, Taiwanese skipjack tuna was very fatty and thus would easily decay, even when dried; second, because Japanese demand for Taiwanese skipjack tuna was so high, the product was sometimes in short supply for Taiwanese market; third, Keelung’s skipjack-tuna sector lacked funds to invest in efficient processing facilities and to hire sufficient workers.

I also found , during the Japanese colonial era, the Institute of Katsuobushi located in the Bachimen area (八尺門) of Keelung, played a significant role in this Taiwanese industry. Established on August 18, 1923, the institute conducted experiments in the production of katsuobushi: the most important experiments involved the removal of fat from skipjack tuna to ensure a uniformly high-quality product. Also, the institute was a major source of internships for Taiwanese students attending the local aquatic school. The institute’s existence reflected the special importance that Japanese colonial government assigned to the task of improving the quality of katsuobushi in Taiwan. In fact, government officials held seminars on the subject to instruct workers at processing facilities regarding how to make good-quality products that would meet Japanese standards for katsuobushi.

In conducting this research, I made 4 central findings. First, I found that Keelung during Japanese colonial era had been a pioneer in the production of katsuobushi. Second, I found the Institute played a crucial role in promoting the business of katsuobushi. Third, I found that the problem of removing skipjack tuna’s fat had attracted considerable attention in the industry because of the fat’s negative effects on the quality of dried Taiwanese skipjack tuna. Finally, I found colonial Taiwan shipped tremendous amounts of locally caught skipjack tuna and katsuobushi to Japan to meet the country’s ever-growing demand for the product.

My research on colonial Taiwan’s production of katsuobushi reflects the fecund technological, economic, and intellectual interactions between Taiwan and Japan at the time. My trip to Makurazaki in Kagoshima in 2019 has convinced me that Japan holds many more secrets about various important issues related to my research. Of these issues, perhaps the most fascinating concerns the migrant workers involved in the production of katsuobushi in colonial Taiwan. Thus, when the COVID-19 pandemic is under control, I plan to visit Miyazaki, Shizuoka, Kochi, and Okinawa, where I will conduct more research on the katsuobushi industry.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, all conferences (e.g., AAS in Asia) have been cancelled, so I have not attended any conferences. However, I will prepare to present my research for conferences in 2022.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

I will be ready to submit a paper to international peer-reviewed journals in 2022.

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

I am going to write a chapter on this subject for publication in an edited book devoted to the history of food in East Asia.