

## COMPLETION REPORT

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Chunghao Kuo

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

My research explores the characteristics, breeding evolution, and consumption of eels in modern Taiwan. Consumable eels (*Anguilla japonica*) rely on a specific migratory pattern. After spawning near the west side of the Mariana Trench in the West Pacific Ocean, eels migrate with both the Kuroshio current and its branches, all of which lead to toward the East Asia ocean. Both traditional China and Japan had their respective dietary customs for eels. While Chinese dietary customs focused on the principles of food supplements, Japanese dietary customs focused on the cooking of kabayaki. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan launched a project for the breeding of eels, and after Taiwan became Japan's colony in 1895, Japanese also developed a system for breeding eels in Taiwan, hoping to provide a sufficient supply of this fish for both Japan and Taiwan. After the end of the Second World War, the Japanese colonizers of Taiwan fled the island and the eel industry almost came to a standstill in the 1950s. Starting in the 1960s, aquatic experts started engaging in research pertaining to the breeding of eels. Fortunately, by 1964, Japan had opened its imports of eel products from Taiwan, a decision that encouraged Taiwan to fully engage in the breeding of eels. Indeed, Taiwan even a reputation for the Kingdom of Eels. By the 1990s, while China competed with other countries for a top place in the export of live eels to Japan, Taiwan competitively changed its policies regarding the breeding of eels. Rather than try to undersell all of its Chinese competitors with the cheapest Japan-friendly product, Taiwanese producers have offered good-quality, healthy, and nutritious kabayaki eel to domestic (Taiwan) markets. The historical and cultural examination of eels in modern Taiwan can give us multiple perspectives of the eel business, extending from breeding to consumption.

After conducting my research, I have analyzed primary sources (e.g., government aquatic archives, newspaper, and business report) and have conducted fieldwork to study the evolution of eel-breeding methods of aquatic farmers and the eel-consumption patterns of the general populations in modern Japan and modern Taiwan. By analyzing primary sources, I understand how the Japanese brought eel-breeding knowledge and technologies to Taiwan during the colonial era, including the establishment of eel ponds throughout Taiwan and the experimental innovation of baits for wild eels. With regard to post-war Taiwan, I employ both primary sources and fieldwork to explore how Taiwanese used the eel-breeding technology that they had inherited from their former Japanese colonizer.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

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

Date: 2022/10/21-23.

Venue: Chiang Ching-Kuo Presidential Library, Taipei.

Name of Conference: Chinese Food Culture in Biological and Ecological Perspectives

Title: The Voyages of Eels: The Characteristics, Breeding Evolution, and Consumption of Eels in Modern Taiwan

Presenter: Chunghao Kuo

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

I (Chunghao Kuo) will be ready to submit a paper entitled 'The Voyages of Eels: The Characteristics, Breeding Evolution, and Consumption of Eels in Modern Taiwan' to *Global Food History* in Dec 2023.

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

So far, I have no plan to write a chapter on this subject for publication in an edited book.