

Completion Report

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Subject of Research Project :

Trade between Karafuto and Korea: Focusing on the Introduction Shochu into Karafuto and Its Control

This study investigates the historical introduction of Korean soju (Chosen Shochu) to Karafuto (Southern Sakhalin) and the responses of the Karafuto government and local sake producers. Using research from the Karafuto Nichinichi Shimbun, it reveals that in the 1930s, demand for affordable alcohol among immigrant workers in Karafuto grew, shifting from sake to soju. Korean soju, made primarily from molasses, was introduced in small quantities in 1930, and by 1931, it had overtaken locally-produced shochu. Cheaper than the island's domestic shochu, workers preferred Korean soju, which could be diluted to make it more affordable. This caused local shochu producers to lose market share, prompting them to petition the Karafuto government to regulate imports under the "Support Local Products" slogan. In response, the Karafuto government began discussing import taxes on Korean soju to protect local production, although this posed political challenges due to Korea's status as part of imperial Japan. Ultimately, in 1932, higher import taxes were imposed on Korean soju, reducing its imports and enabling local producers to increase production. This study provides insights into the economic and political factors that shaped alcohol production in Karafuto and offers valuable context for understanding the history of Korean soju today.

The findings from this research have been partially presented in oral academic presentations: “Things that crossed from Korea to Sakhalin: The Case of Korean restaurant (Chosen Ryoriya) and Chosen Shochu” (August 23, 2023) and “The history of migration of Korean population in 1920-1930s and features of South Korean historiography” (December 5, 2023). These findings are also scheduled for publication in an academic paper.