

Prelude: On food supply – Central Government and the Colonial Government

- a) the 3 direct trains that brought foods from the mainland to Hong Kong (1962 - 2010)
- b) greeting Hong Kong farmers in 1967

"Today I invite you all to express my special thanks. In the recent turbulent months, you have given great support to the government personally or on behalf of agricultural organizations. And you all protected the peace and stability by concrete actions. ... it is also a fact that Hong Kong has to maintain a strong and reliable agriculture sector to cope with any challenges from incidents when importation of outside products is disrupted."

– Head of the Agricultural Department (quoted from Chiu and Hung 1999)

1. VMO and Cooperative Ordinance – the kinder of governmentality

- 1.1 the problem faced by the colonial government immediately after WWII
 - influx of migrants from mainland China, a.k.a. the threat of communists infiltration
 - huge demand of fresh greens by urban population
 - development of the New Territories without adequate capital: housing, jobs, welfare, etc.

The question was: how to employ the measures of provision of fresh vegetables to the urban industrial population, as the strategy to "develop" the New Territories, and at the same time deepen the governance of the immigrants from China?

1.2 VMO and cooperatives.

- a) VMO
 - established in 1946, under the Defence Regulations of 1940 and then Agricultural Products (Marketing) Ordinance in 1952
 - a centralized market of vegetable trades
 - collects and transports vegetables from local farmers at various depots in the New Territories
 - trades only with registered retailers
 - different salesperson for members and non-members' produces

- b) Vegetable Marketing Cooperatives
 - established since 1947 under the Co-operative Societies Ordinance
 - collect and transport vegetables
 - facilitate saving and credits
 - collective purchase of agricultural resources

1.3 Significances and implications – how to incorporate biological and economic processes under governance

- conceptual linkage between famine, chaos, communist infiltration since mid 1940s
- establishment and registration of the Co-operative Societies and their members, records of sales and accounts contributed to a partial database of modern government
- through the self-interests-motivated activities as members, vegetable gardeners voluntarily participated in government's regulatory mechanism
- the vegetable markets monopolized, hence illegalized any and all trades of vegetables within its jurisdiction (e.g. no carrying of more than 25 catties of unlicensed vegetable in Kowloon) c.f. hawkers
- an government attempt to eliminate the laan system and black market
- a kinder egg to the post-war and cold-war situation c.f. Dai Pai Dong

1.4 unending issues

- between "trust" and rules/procedures
- monopoly market and black market, or farmers' choices of marketing
- the "secret" of falling productivity: the "route" of members' production and methods of accounting

2. The rice trade case: from colonial stability to "market efficiency"

- 「糴」 and 「糶」

2.1 brief history of regulation on rice

- first rice trade regulation in 1919
- establishment of government rice monopoly in 1941 (「米穀統制局」)
 - stock equivalent to 8 months consumption for 1.5 millions population
- ration system from Japanese occupation to 1954
- from government food rationing to oligarchy
- 29 importers responsible for the rice import since Jan 1, 1955
- 38 in 1957, to 45 in 1976 and 50 in 1996
- rice market liberalized in 2003, 170 rice importers in 2012

2.2 from staple to just another commodity

- total amount of import peaked at early 60s at 300,000 tons for around 3 millions of population, approximately the same at 2012
- personal annual consumption 43kg (figure of 2012), about 5.97 catties per month; c.f. British ration of about 24 catties per month
- the productivity of local paddy in early 20 century is equivalent to the annual consumption of more than 400,000 people
- reserved rice stock drop from 45,000 tons in 1998 to 13,600 tons in 2012 (from 45 days to 15 days)
- the import price of Thai rice rose from HK\$ 2.84 in 2002 to HK\$8.72 in 2012

2.3 rice trade and Hong Kong

- cultural memory of "treacherous" merchant and unregulated "free" market
- early 20th century social elites, philanthropist and rice merchants
- the role of Thailand rice in Hong Kong

Reference:

- Aijmer, Goran (1980), *Economic Man in Sha Tin: Vegetable Gardeners in a Hong Kong Valley*. London and Malmo: Curzon Press.
- Aijmer, Goran (1972), "A note on agricultural change in Hong Kong", in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, Vol. 12
- Airriess, Christopher A. (2005), "Governmentality and power in politically contested space: refugee farming in Hong Kong's New Territories, 1945-1970" in *Journal of Historical Geography*, No.31
- Chiu, S.W.K. And Hung H.F. (1999) "State Building and Rural Stability" in Ngo, Tak Wing (ed) *Hong Kong's History: State and Society Under Colonial Rule*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lee, Seung-joon (2010), *Gourmet in the Land of Famine: The Culture and Politics of Rice in Canton*. Stanford and California: Stanford University Press
- 陳煜禮 (2007) 《香港農業合作運動研究：以蔬菜產銷合作社為例 (1945 - 1997)》。歷史課程哲學博士論文。香港：香港中文大學。
- 鄭宏泰，黃紹倫 (2005) ，《香港米業史》，香港：三聯。