

Title	On the fishing of the Pacific and Indian Ocean in 15th century informed by Fei Xin (費信)
Sub Title	
Author	可兒, 弘明(Kani, Hiroaki)
Publisher	三田史学会
Publication year	1960
Jtitle	史学 Vol.33, No.1 (1960. 12)
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	Abstract
Genre	
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00100104-19601200-0124

慶應義塾大学学術情報リポジトリ(KOARA)に掲載されているコンテンツの著作権は、それぞれの著作者、学会または出版社/発行者に帰属し、その権利は著作権法によって保護されています。引用にあたっては、著作権法を遵守してご利用ください。

The copyrights of content available on the KeiO Associated Repository of Academic resources (KOARA) belong to the respective authors, academic societies, or publishers/issuers, and these rights are protected by the Japanese Copyright Act. When quoting the content, please follow the Japanese copyright act.

On the Fishing of the Pacific and Indian Oceans in 15th C. informed by Fei Xin 費信

Hiroaki KANI

“Fei Xin” (費信) was a Mussulman in Ming Dynasty, who was sent abroad several times as one of the interpreter of “Chêng Ho” (鄭和), an envoy of the Imperial China. Based on his observations of foreign land, he wrote a book entitled “Xing Cha Sheng Lan” (星槎勝覽), the preface of which was dated A. D. 1436.

His book abounds in comments of salt-making, saying, “they boil down the brine and get salt” (煮海爲鹽). But he says nothing about evaporation of sea water under the fiery rays of the tropical sun. Salt-making might be the important way of sustenance of daily life for the southerners. Exactly the same information is given in “Dao Yi Zhi Lue” (島夷誌略), a work of 14th century by “Wang Ta-yüan” (汪大淵). He has the following discourse under the heading of Tanjang Datu (都督岸) of Burneo. “Prohibit the people from boiling down the brine to get salt during the first three days of New Year”. I think that the salt-manufacture was not only purely economic pursuit but also had its social and religious meaning.

Treating of the dugout canoe, the comment is so piecemeal as to be not worth special mention for us.

About ambergris which was highly prized as one of the exotic perfume in Sung and Ming Dynasties, he explains as follow, “Steering the dugout canoe, the inhabitants go to Bras isl. (龍涎嶼) where they collect ambergris”. Moreover, he records the names of place which is famous for its production of ambergris. Amongst them, we can name al-Aḥsā, Zafar, Jubb, Brawa and Maldives.

In reference to net fishing, only the fragmentary informations are found in his book. “The Natives of Cap Varella, Malacca, Samudra and Nicobar catch sea fish by using net”. But he does not explain anything about detailed resources. Merely under the heading of Samudra, he says “To net fish is their daily life; fishermen get into canoe at dawn, setting sail on open sea, homeward bound at sunset”. Judging from this passage, net fishing was observed by the whole members who were obliged to live together.

As to the fishing for pearls, there are several places of production such as Ceylan, Sulu, Bangala, Mecca and Ormuz. According to his commentary on Ceylan (錫蘭山國), the book gives the following information; “there is a sea where the pearl oysters congregate; they use to net oysters; the pearl oysters are put into the pond to expedite the process of rotting”, (其海傍有珠簾

沙。常以網取螺蚌。傾入珠池內作爛淘珠)。 The fame of Ceylon pearl banks goes back in the T'ang (唐) or Sung (宋) period for the Chinese. Statement concerning the fishing for pearls in Ceylon is also found in another Chinese sources. "Wang Ta-yüan", author of "Dao Yi Zhi Lüe", has the following explanation. "The diver holds a stone to aid him in his rapidly descent to the bottom, where he rakes the oyster by hand and put them in the basket" (繫石於腰放墜海底。以手爬珠蚌入袋中)。 Pearl fishing, anywhere and anytime, depends not so much on net as on divers. Fei Xin's information, saying "To net the pearl oyster (以網取螺蚌)", is not correct. Perhaps he confounds the net with the basket in which the pearl oysters are brought to the surface.

It is also misrepresentative that tells us "Oysters are placed into the pond". Chau Ju-kua (趙汝适), in his *Chu Fan Chi* (諸蕃志), in 1225, has the following discourse on this subject under the heading "pearl". They make a pit in which the pearl oysters are piled. At the end of a month, knead and wash the refuse to find the pearl. According to Woolf, B. S., in Ceylon to-day, to expedite the process of rotting, so that the pearls may be more easily extracted, the oysters are piled into dugout canoe and covered with matting for a week. Wang, in his work, has a explanation as follow. "The oysters are piled into canoes. These canoes heel over under the weight of pearl oysters. Shipping the cargo—pearl oysters, government officers in his boat escort them. At the end of several days little is left except slime, pearls, shells. Then they wash the refuse in which the pearls are imbedded", (以珠蚌傾舟中。既滿載則官場週回皆官兵守之。越數日候其肉腐爛則去其殼以羅盛腐肉旋轉洗之。則肉去珠存)。 The representation expressed in *Dao Yi Zhi Lüe* is shared by Fei Xin in his work. When he cites the passage from *Zhi Lüe*, he mistakes that "boat heels under the weight of pearl oyster (以珠蚌傾舟中)" for "pearl oysters are put into the pond"

Beside, according to Woolf's report, an Arab diver in Ceylon fishery wears a nose-clip when diving, the Tamil hold his nose with finger and thumb. The only Chinese author who has treated of this kind of method is Chau Ju-kua, saying, "they fill their nose and ears with wax" (以黃臘塞耳鼻)。