

BOOK REVIEW

Butchering and Curing Meats in China. Carl O. Levine. Canton Christian College Bulletin, No. 27. Canton, China. Canton Christian College Press. 1921. Pp. i, 41; 9 figs. Available from the Asian Comparative Collection, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho.

"Butchering and Curing Meats in China" by Carl O. Levine is an obscure monograph recently located by Julia Longnecker (University of Idaho), and currently being appraised as a source of information for Overseas Chinese zooarchaeological research. Zooarchaeologists studying faunas from historic sites ordinarily use ethnographic or historical sources to identify food preparation techniques and the animals used. However, such references to Overseas Chinese in America during the 19th and early 20th centuries are uncommon and usually lack detailed information on subjects of interest to faunal analysts. In contrast, Levine's monograph is systematic and detailed, describing meat processing and food species selection. The shortcomings of this monograph for zooarchaeological research are discussed below.

Levine's monograph is an early publication of Ling-nan University (originally Canton Christian College), Canton, China. The title is deceiving since the principal subject of the monograph is not a description of Chinese butchering practices. The author's preface more accurately describes the monograph as a discussion of different methods, Chinese and non-Chinese, of butchering and curing meats. The monograph was written for use by the public and students in the "Meats" courses offered at the college. Its content and organization are primarily that of a manual to be used as a training guide for students.

The principal domestic Chinese food animals are the subject of the first section. The Chinese lard and bacon type hogs, their feeding, desirability, and past use in improving European breeds, are described in detail. Less attention is given to cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, chickens, and geese. Most breeds and varieties of these animals are ignored or glossed over.

A middle section discusses the selection of animals for slaughter, slaughtering, and meat cutting. The criteria described for selection are health, general condition, breeding attributes, and feeding. The desirable age and size of animals for slaughter is discussed for hogs and poultry. The discussion of slaughtering and butchering procedures is geared toward small-scale operations. Most of this section addresses hog butchering, including killing, cleaning, skinning, and segmentation of the carcass. Table cuts, which are important in archaeological research on households and other points of consumption, receive only cursory attention. Some of the descriptions of specific techniques describe Chinese tools and methods. The description of scalding equipment for hog butchering is the most complete example given.

The meat curing section of the monograph primarily describes "American" methods of curing meat, including descriptions of materials, smokehouse construction, and recipes for common types of cured meats. Most of the methods described are given with Chinese climate and building materials in mind. The

remaining part of this section describes sausage-making and other meat curing activities using Chinese recipes. The seventeen recipes given include pig's feet, dried duck, puffed pig skin, meat roasting, sausage, and others. Some of these recipes are slightly westernized, including weights which have been rounded off to the nearest English unit.

This monograph provides general information on Chinese food practices which presumably resulted in the bony wastes found in archaeological sites. The Chinese methods of sticking, scalding, and rib cage cutting are described. The recipes for dried duck, in which the bird is dressed with no bone removal, and pickled pig's feet, in which "the bone is removed from the leg, leaving only the meat, skin and toes" are examples of useful information for faunal analysts. The few references to Chinese tools and methods are valuable, also. Figure 5 illustrates Chinese butchering tools. Among the tools illustrated with explanatory captions are an oriental style cleaver, knives (sticking, cutting, scraping, bone cutting), sausage funnel, hooks, and miscellaneous small tools. Albeit brief, this is one of the few descriptions and illustrations of a Chinese butcher's tool kit in print.

Although the monograph provides information on pertinent subjects, it solves few problems for zooarchaeologists attempting to build emic models to interpret faunal data from Overseas Chinese assemblages. The text describes some Chinese butchering practices, but is primarily devoted to Euro-American tradition meat cutting with adaptations to conditions in China. Levine described the integration of Chinese and Euro-American meat processing technology, as he taught it, in an attempt to improve the meat processing technology in southern China during the early part of this century. Most of his descriptions of meat cutting do not delineate how Chinese and Euro-American procedures parallel or overlap. This precludes using the monograph as a source of information about Chinese butchering techniques for comparison or model building.

Levine's monograph is a useful tool for researchers interested in Chinese food processing in China. Those researchers interested in traditional Chinese methods of meat processing will find the description of hog processing, and the butcher's tool kits particularly useful. The major shortcoming of the reference is that Chinese and non-Chinese procedures are rarely discussed with reference to their cultural origins. Perhaps the greatest value of Levine's monograph is as an example of modernization, of interest to researchers studying intercultural contact, acculturation, and assimilation. The text provides information which would be useful to topical research on meat processing and acculturation, but is too detailed for most broad-based studies.

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