



The Historical Origin of Entrails of Sheep and Its Current Situation of Inheritance

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Abstract: Entrails of Sheep (Yangzasui in Chinese) has a history of at least nearly 900 years in China, but there is not much literature in current scholarship, which makes its spread in history unclear. A review of existing ancient and modern literature reveals that many restaurants selling Entrails of Sheep were located in Lin'an (present-day Hangzhou), the capital of the Southern Song Dynasty (A Chinese dynasty from 1127-1279 A.D.). During the Qing Dynasty (A Chinese dynasty from 1644-1911 A.D.), Entrails of Sheep not only became a delicacy for the emperor's banquets for his ministers and state guests, but also spread widely in the daily dietary life of the citizens. By the Republic of China (1912-1949), people in the north and south of China still retained the habit of eating Entrails of Sheep, and the governments of Shanghai and Beijing included it in the list of secondary food for daily consumption. Nowadays, Entrails of Sheep mainly spreads in northwest and north China. It has diversified characteristics in terms of consumption methods, selection of seasoning and soup ingredients and side courses, however, there are no distinct differences in the selection of main ingredients, seasonings and cooking methods. It is hoped that this study can elaborate on its ancient and modern spread, and thus draw the attention of society to it, so that it can be better protected and promoted.

Keywords: Entrails of Sheep; historical origin; current situation of inheritance

Introduction

Entrails of Sheep (Yangzasui in Chinese) is a traditional dish made from a mixture of the head and hooves of sheep and its haslet. Entrails of Sheep has a long history in China, dating back as far as the Southern Song Dynasty (A Chinese dynasty from 1127-1279 A.D.), nearly 900 years ago. Nowadays, it is widely popular in northwest China and North China, and has become a unique traditional cuisine. At present, from the existing academic results, the academic community has not paid much attention to Entrails of Sheep, and related literature is extremely rare. Although some media or sporadic articles have reported or described it, most of them are based on the current cooking process and consumption methods of Entrails of Sheep. As for the historical origin of Entrails of Sheep and its current situation of spread in different regions have not been explored in depth. In view of this, the author collected and organized the existing literature to detail the spread of Entrails of Sheep in ancient China and to elaborate its current situation in different regions of China. Finally, the therapeutic effects of Entrails of Sheep and its adverse effects on human health are explained from the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine and western medicine. It is hoped that this study will not only provide a clearer understanding of the spread of Entrails of Sheep, but also make a contribution to protection and promotion.

The Historical Origin of Entrails of Sheep

From the available historical documents, it can be seen that Entrails of Sheep has been spreading in China since the Southern Song Dynasty, with a history of nearly 900 years. However, the academic community has not paid much attention to the spread of Entrails of Sheep in China, and none of specialized literature has been published so far, which, plus the lack of historical records, makes its historical origin unclear to people at present. Entrails of Sheep has received little attention from

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researchers because of the lack of historical accumulation.

Recently, through the studying of basic Chinese ancient books in the library of relevant historical documents, the author found that the information recorded “Entrails of Sheep” could be described as just a sprinkling of words. Although it is difficult to trace the initial appearance of Entrails of Sheep according to these historical information, these materials are sufficient to prove that Entrails of Sheep in ancient China in a certain period of time does have a relatively wide spread, and it is loved by different social classes. The word “Yangza”, from the available historical documents, its earliest appearance should be in book of *Meng Liang Lu*, written by Wu Zimu in the Southern Song Dynasty. The book mainly introduces the landscape of Lin’an (present-day Hangzhou), the capital city of the Southern Song Dynasty, which also contains description of well-known restaurants and dishes in Lin’an city. As stated in the text: “There are restaurants that selling sheep meat on the different streets in Lin’an city, such as the Guijia, Mojia, Shijia and Double-sheep which sell soft lamb, lamb backbone, steamed sheep and four soft offal of sheep ^[1].” This shows that Entrails of Sheep was a very popular cuisine at that time, otherwise it would not have been served to the major restaurants in Lin’an city. Moreover, according to the quoted text “four soft offal of sheep”, the Entrails of Sheep mainly braised by the belly, intestines, heart, lungs - four kinds of soft entrails of sheep at that time. Through the generations, Entrails of Sheep was still widely spread in the Qing Dynasty (A Chinese dynasty from 1644-1911A.D.), and was popular with the nobility of the court as well as the civilians. For example, *Guanglusi Zeli* compiled by Enfu, a man lived in the Qing dynasty, records, “Eggs, priced at 0.33 cents each; sheep’s liver and intestines, priced at 2.4 cents per jin (a unit of weight) ; Entrails of Sheep, priced at 15 cents per set; Fei Luo white noodles, priced at 4.9 cents per jin (a unit of weight); wine, priced at 2.1 cents per jin (a unit of weight)^[2]”. The Guangluo Temple and the Ministry of Rites and Fine Dining Division were both ancient institutions that mastered the affairs of sacrifices, feasts, court meals, and imperial banquets for ministers and state guests. Thus, it can be seen that Entrails of Sheep also had a place in the palace cuisine at that time. In addition, by comparing the prices of the various materials in the quotation, it is found that the price of Entrails of Sheep was much higher than other materials, and it can be inferred that the demand and the popularity for Entrails of Sheep among the court nobles was remarkable. To a certain extent, this is mainly directly related to the ancient dietary habits of northern ethnic minorities, mainly dairy meat.

During the Jiaqing period of Qing Dynasty (Jiaqing is an emperor’s reign title), Entrails of Sheep was widely spread as a traditional snack in the markets and docks of the southern region, and was popular with the people at the bottom of society. As *Yangzhou Pleasure Boat Collection*, written by Li Dou of the Qing dynasty: “Xiao Dongmen Street is full of restaurants, there is a cooked lamb store, the house’s front faces the bridge, a river flows behind the house, below which is the Xiao Dongmen pier. People get up to eat when they hear the rooster crowing, wrapping in furry fur and wearing felt hats, from snow to frost ^[3].” By the Republic of China (1912-1949), Entrails of Sheep has been spread to the certain extend in China’s major cities (Shanghai, Beijing). Moreover, the governments of the two places has also included meat products, such as beef soup, minced beef, lamb, lamb blood, lamb soup and minced lamb and other meat food examples into the local residents of daily consumption of secondary food list^{[4][5]}. Although residents in both the North and the South consumed Entrails of Sheep, the southern residents mainly consumed seafood such as “mackerel, scallops, fresh shrimp, eel, and sardines^[4,p.3].” In addition, besides Shanghai and Beijing, Entrails of Sheep was also spread in Tianjin and Xi’an at that time. For example, *New Tianjin Guide*, written by Gan Mianyang records: “Entrails of Sheep restaurants’ waiters wear Mei Lanfang ancient costumes, called female clothing entrails of sheep, also known as Li Entrails of Sheep. Li, that is, Li Hongzhang^[6].” Another example, Cao Qiji’s book *Xijing Essentials* contains: “Xi’an’s cuisine are cold noodles, pulling noodles, slurry noodles, cold fried rice, oil fruit, mutton soup, Entrails of Sheep, raising blood, powdered steamed meat, baozi, etc^[7].” In addition, the Republic of China period, Entrails of Sheep in Tibet also circulated, but “Tibetans consumption method of entrails of sheep is different from other regions, it has another flavor. Slaughter sheep method is also different, Tibetans adopt a non-bleeding method of killing sheep, plug its mouth and nose, smother alive, and then cut off the head (do not eat sheep’s head), cast into the wilderness. Then they cut the skin, take out the organs, slightly clean and chop, roll in net oil (lamb belly oil), bundle with wool, shaped like a string of beads^[8].” Thus, it can be seen that the differences between different regions due to dietary habits, production resources and other aspects, which in turn makes the method of consumption and processing of Entrails of Sheep also exists a large difference, especially in minority areas is particularly significant.

In a nutshell, Entrails of Sheep became a well-known delicacy in the capital city of Lin’an (present-day Hangzhou) as early as the Southern Song Dynasty, and was sold in the restaurant that sells fatty lamb as the main food. During the Qing Dynasty, Entrails of Sheep was not only used for court banquets, but also became a traditional snack for the lower classes of society. During the Republic of China period, Entrails of Sheep was spread in the major cities of northern and southern China (Beijing and Shanghai) and was included in the list of daily secondary food consumption by the local government. In addition, it should be noted that Entrails of Sheep was actually much more widespread in ancient China than mentioned above, and was mainly concentrated in Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia and Shaanxi in northwest China, and in Hebei, Shanxi and Inner Mongolia

in north China, in terms of the geographical scope of present-day China. Although it has not been extensively and thoroughly recorded in the existing historical literature for various reasons, it is reasonable to believe that the current situation of spread of Entrails of Sheep in Northwest China and North China is, to a large extent, a continuation and inheritance of the ancient Entrails of Sheep culture.

The Current Situation of the Inheritance of Entrails of Sheep in China

At present, Entrails of Sheep has a certain spread in the north and south of China, especially in the northwest and North China. At present, although Entrails of Sheep in different regions has diversified characteristics in terms of consumption methods and selection of side ingredients, there is no distinct difference in the selection of main ingredients, seasonings and cooking methods.

Northwest China, including five provinces and autonomous regions, namely Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia Hui and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Regions, is one of the major settlements of ethnic minorities in China. Currently, people living in this region retain the habit of eating and processing Entrails of Sheep to this day. First of all, in the case of Ningxia, Entrails of Sheep is one of the most representative cuisines of Ningxia, which is mainly made of “a mixture of sheep’s head, hooves, liver, heart, intestines and belly, so it is also known as Yangzahui (stewed chopped entrails of sheep)^[9].” Mianfeizi (made of sheep lung and flour paste water) is the most crucial ingredient in the Ningxia’s Entrails of Sheep. For people living in Ningxia, Entrails of Sheep is mostly served for breakfast or midnight snack, a bowl of hot Entrails of Sheep is come with both the beginning of the day and the end of a tiring day. This shows that Entrails of Sheep has an unusual significance to the daily life of Ningxia people. Secondly, Entrails of Sheep is also a famous traditional food in Shaanxi, “Most of Entrails of Sheep stores here are run by Hui people. The heart, liver, lungs, intestines, belly, hoof tendons and other kinds of cooked hash are placed on the counter. When the guests come, each kind is cut into a few pieces, poured in the boiled bone soup several times, put chili, cilantro, MSG, and then sprinkled a spoonful of soup surface floating oil, that becomes a bowl of Entrails of Sheep soup perfect in color, fragrance and taste^[10].” In Gansu, Entrails of Sheep is also a local signature cuisine, where it is not only available with stewed chopped entrails of sheep, but also in sauce and stir-fried. Entrails of Sheep in sauce is made by sheep liver, lung, sheep head meat, tripe, intestines, sheep heart and other offal, and heating them by repeatedly pouring the soup, and then mixing with oil splashed chili, garlic paste and other condiments. Stir-fried Entrails of Sheep, also known as “Yangbola” by locals, “The cooking method is to use the head meat and offals of the sheep as the main ingredients, and pour them into a large open iron pot, swing the flat iron spatula, and pluck and pull the Entrails of Sheep tightly together, along with the ‘bared’ sound, the Entrails of Sheep is gradually stretching out. The condiments do not need much, cumin, salt and spicy noodles are enough, and the side courses do not need much, onions, green peppers are enough, all of them are to remove the muttoney taste^[11].” This dish, like stewed chopped entrails of sheep soup and Entrails of Sheep in sauce, is also a very grounded local cuisine for the common people, all year round, and people never get tired of eating. In addition, as far as Qinghai Province is concerned, the processing method of Entrails of Sheep here is also quite unique, which usually involves cutting up cold Entrails of Sheep and repeatedly pouring hot soup from a pot into a bowl until the Entrails of Sheep is warmed up, then adding the hot soup to the bowl and auxiliary ingredients such as oil-spiced chili and garlic seeds to serve. Another point to note is that the Entrails of Sheep here rarely has heart, liver and lung, but most only shredded tripe and head meat.

In terms of politics and economy, the geographical area of North China includes Beijing, Tianjing, Hebei, Shanxi and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Regions, which are five provincial administrative units. In terms of the twelve Dietetic Cultural Zone in China, they include the Beijing-Tianjin Dietetic Cultural Zone, the Middle Yellow River Dietetic Cultural Zone and the North Central Dietetic Cultural Zone, which cover the dietetic cultures and characteristics of the Han, Manchu, Hui and Mongolian peoples respectively. In North China, Entrails of Sheep is a traditional snack in the region and is very popular among people living in the region.

In Beijing, the old Beijingers called “Entrails of Sheep” and “Entrails of Sheep soup” collectively as “Yangzasui”. Nowadays, Beijingers call it “Yangzaer”. The local people eat Entrails of Sheep soup at home, and they are very particular about “freshness”, mainly using fresh heart, liver, lung, belly and head of sheep, which is also called “Laowuyang” (old five kinds). If only the heart, liver, lung processing, it will be connoisseurs called “Sanhong”. Entrails of Sheep soup sold on the market focuses on the old soup taste, the ingredients used are the same as the homemade ones, the main purpose is to reflect the rich flavor of the soup. In Tianjin, the main ingredients of Entrails of Sheep are also composed of head, heart, liver, intestines, belly and lungs, and there are not only the traditional Entrails of Sheep soup, but also the rolling pie with Entrails of Sheep (which means that the cooked sheep’s offal is chopped and then wrapped in a rolling pie to eat) and sauced Entrails of Sheep in sauce (which means that the sheep’s offal is chopped fine and then brined in high soup. It can be sliced and eaten directly,

or stir-fried in a pot). That is to say, the people of Tianjin have inherited the tradition and also innovated some eating methods in line with the local food culture. In Shanxi Province, the local people call Entrails of Sheep as “Yangzage”, “It is made of mutton soup boiled with mutton bones and minced mutton meat, mutton belly, mutton blood and other minced mutton with vermicelli and sliced white radish. When customers come to eat, the chef picks up a chopstick of vermicelli, scoops a spoonful of mutton soup and sliced radish, puts some minced mutton and Entrails of Sheep, then pours on garlic water, chili, MSG, vinegar and other seasonings, sprinkles cilantro, now it is ready to be eaten^[12].” At the same time, locals usually eat Entrails of Sheep with pancakes, which has long become customary in the region. In Inner Mongolia, “Entrails of Sheep focuses on three ingredients, three soups and three flavors. There are strict standards for the ingredients, production and serving. The three materials are divided into main ingredients and side ingredients, authentic main ingredients, also known as ‘three red’, are the heart, liver, lungs, cut into pieces or thin slices; three side ingredients, also known as ‘three white’, are the intestines, belly, head and hoof meat, when put them into the pot, they should be cut into thin shreds and long strips. A bowl of minced Entrails of Sheep depends on the main and side ingredients completely^[13].” In addition, the “three soups” can be divided into the original soup (Entrails of Sheep of the original soup), clear soup (change the water to re-cook Entrails of Sheep soup) and old soup (the original soup not changed for years); “three flavors” refers to the chili noodles, cilantro and salt. In addition, when local people eat Entrails of Sheep, many of them like to eat it together with another special snack, baklava, which is also a traditional eating habit of local people.

From the above, it is clear that Entrails of Sheep has been passed down in northwest China and north China, but there are obvious differences in the selection of side ingredients, eating methods, and the use of soup in each region due to the influence of regional food culture, resources, and people’s taste needs. However, it is because of these differences that the current situation of Entrails of Sheep in China can be better reflected, and its preservation and inheritance can be better from a diversified perspective.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Entrails of Sheep on Human Health

As mentioned above, Entrails of Sheep is not only widespread in China today, but also becomes a common food in the daily diet of people around the country. In recent years, as people’s health awareness has been increasing, the pros and cons of consuming Entrails of Sheep on human health have gradually received more attention, and some papers have been published. In the following content, the writer will collate and analyze the existing research results to provide insight into the health problems associated with the consumption of Entrails of Sheep, hoping that people will have a clearer understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of its consumption, so that people can better improve our dietary habits and prevent the occurrence of some diseases.

From the available research results, although there are some differences in academic opinions on the effects of Entrails of Sheep consumption on human health, there is unanimous agreement on the view that moderate consumption of Entrails of Sheep does not have adverse effects on human health. For example, Tian Yu’s article *Talking about Sheep-eating Culture in the Year of the Sheep - Various Parts of the Sheep Body and Human Health* says: “Sheep’s liver, which can nourish the liver, brighten the eyes, and benefit the blood, and can treat atrophy, emaciation and night blindness; sheep’s kidney, which can nourish kidney deficiency and benefit the essence, and can treat deafness and tinnitus caused by deficiency of kidney energy, as well as back pain and other obstructive diseases; sheep’s blood, which can invigorate the blood, stop bleeding, nourish the blood and detoxify; sheep’s heart, which can nourish the heart and treat irritability and restlessness^[14].” Meanwhile, the article *The Advantage and Disadvantage of Eating Animal Offal* ^[15] written by Wang Xiaoxiong also elaborates on the therapeutic efficacy of sheep offal one by one, and clearly points out that eating Entrails of Sheep in moderation does not bring adverse effects on human health. In other words, from the point of view of knowledge of Chinese medicine and health care, some scholars believe that moderate consumption of Entrails of Sheep is helpful to enhance human health.

However, there also are some scholars who believe that the consumption of sheep offal is likely to cause many diseases and is not good for human health. For example, the article *Animal offal should not be over-eaten* written by Jing Zhe pointed out that: “Sheep liver has detoxification effect, in the long detoxification process, toxins will also unconsciously accumulate in the internal organs, especially heavy metals are very difficult to excrete out of the body, only accumulated in the internal organs. So it is not recommended to eat offal often to avoid heavy metals. At the same time, animal offal contains very high cholesterol, normal people eat too much, it is likely to lead to high blood lipids, which may cause cardiovascular disease, so you also have to control the amount of consumption. Then, animal offal is a high purine food, people with gout is not easy to eat more, otherwise it will easily lead to gout attacks^[16].” In addition, Yu Kang, the director of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, also pointed out in the article *There are rules for consuming animal offal* that: “the consumption of animal offal

should not be excessive, according to the dietary guidelines, adults generally consume offal 2-3 times a month, 25 grams each time^[17].” At the same time, Director Yu Kang stressed that the best way to consume animal offal is boiling - this cooking method. Because high temperature and long-time boiling can effectively kill the parasites in animal offal, which is more beneficial to human health. As can be seen from the above, although part of the scholars believe that the consumption of Entrails of Sheep can have adverse effects on human health, but it is also clear that, except for people with special constitutions or suffering from certain diseases, as long as the consumption of Entrails of Sheep in moderation, it is not harmful to human health.

In addition, it should also be mentioned here that although there has been some understanding and awareness of the adverse effects of eating Entrails of Sheep on human health, this has not prevented people from loving it and expanding the scope of its circulation. The reason for this is that, in addition to the therapeutic effects of Entrails of Sheep, it is more closely related to its deep culinary culture and multiple values. First, in terms of food culture, since Entrails of Sheep has a history of nearly 900 years in China, its profound cultural genes have long been rooted in the ideology of the people in the area where it was passed down, becoming an integral part of the material and spiritual culture of the people in the area where it was passed down. Secondly, in terms of value, Entrails of Sheep, like other traditional foods, has significant multiple values, not only reflecting the dietary structure, food production, resources and aesthetics of the people in the area, but also playing a positive role in showing the food customs, food psychology and food behavior of the people in the area. At the same time, with the increasing spread of Entrails of Sheep, this traditional cuisine has gradually been separated from its exclusive ethnicity in the context of multi-ethnic food culture exchange, borrowing and integration, and has shown significant characteristics of multi-ethnic food culture fusion, which provides important realistic reference materials for the study of ancient and modern Chinese ethnology and sociology. All in all, the cultural significance and value of the Entrails of Sheep consumed by the inhabitants of the various transmission areas has far exceeded the food itself. In other words, people’s pursuit of cultural appreciation and value is, to a certain extent, far more important than the taste buds’ enjoyment of food.

Conclusion

In summary, the available ancient and modern literature proves that Entrails of Sheep has a history of nearly 900 years in China. It has not only been passed down in different social classes in ancient times, but also still has a relatively wide popularity in northwest China and northern China at present. At the same time, although there has been some understanding and awareness of the adverse effects of consuming Entrails of Sheep on human health, there is consensus in the academic community that moderate consumption of Entrails of Sheep does not have adverse effects on human health. In addition, due to its wide distribution and differences in local food culture, Entrails of Sheep has a wide variety of consumption methods, selection of seasoning and soup ingredients and side courses, but there are no distinct differences in the selection of main ingredients, choice of condiments and cooking methods. Finally, the purpose of this study is not only to make up for the lack of records in the current academic field, but also to clarify its history from a macroscopic point of view, to increase its historical significance, to raise the importance of this traditional cuisine to people from all walks of life, and make a contribution to better protection and promotion.

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