

## THE PRICE OF RICE

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The Price of Rice: Market Integration in Eighteenth-Century  
China,

by Sui-wai Cheung

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Scott Pearce

# **THE PRICE OF RICE:**

Market Integration  
in Eighteenth-Century China

by

**SUI-WAI CHEUNG**

Center for East Asian Studies,  
Western Washington University

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To **Yin-shan**, with love

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Map 1: The Grand Canal ————



## Table of Weights and Measures

### Area

1 *mu* = 0.1518 acre

100 *mu* = 1 *qing*

### Weights

16 *liang* (tael) = 1 *chin* (catty)

100 catties = 1 *dan* (picul, either 133 1/3 pounds

[Customs picul] or 131.58 pounds [imperial standard] )

### Volume

10 *sheng* = 1 *dou*

5 *dou* = 1 *hu* (half-bushel)

2 *hu* = 1 *shi* (bushel, about 103.55 liters)

Note: *Shi* (bushel) is now read as *dan* (picul), but they were two different measuring units in eighteenth-century China. While *dan* represented a weight, *shi* was actually a measure of volume, which equaled to 103.55 liters. Converted into weight, one *shi* was about 185 pounds, which was heavier than one *dan*, which was either 133 1/3 pounds (Customs picul) or 131.58 pounds (imperial standard).

### References:

Dwight H. Perkins, *Agricultural Development in China, 1368-1968* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1969), p. 314.

Han-sheng Chuan and Richard A. Kraus, *Mid-Ch'ing Rice Markets and Trade: An Essay in Price History* (Cambridge: Harvard University East Asian Monographs, 1975), pp. 79-98.

### **Table of Currencies (Approximate Conversion Rates)**

£ 1 sterling = 3 taels\*

1 tael = 0.0378 kg of silver\*\*

£ 1 sterling = 0.1134 kg of silver

Note and references:

\* As £ 1 sterling equaled to 20s, or 240d while 1 tael equaled to 6s 8d, £ 1 sterling was therefore equal to 3 taels of silver. See H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635-1834*, (1926-29; repr. Taipei: Chengwen 1966), vol. 2, "Conventional Equivalents".

\*\* See Brian Moloughney and Xia Weizhong, "Silver and the fall of the Ming: a reassessment," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 40 (September 1989) p. 78.

## Prefatory Notes

When quoting imperial edicts or official memorials, the following abbreviations are used in footnotes to show reign titles:

SZ: Shunzhi (1644-1661)

KX: Kangxi (1662-1722)

YZ: Yongzheng (1723-1735)

QL: Qianlong (1736-1795)

JQ: Jiaqing (1796-1820)

Dates are given by “year in reign title/lunar month/lunar day”. A symbol “\*” is used to indicate an intercalary month.

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