

Fur Trade and Beijing's Consumption from Middle Qin Dynasty till Earlier Republic of China

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Abstract

This essay uses *Kyakhta commercial files* stored in the National Archives of the People's Republic of Mongolia, and *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, to discuss the fur trade China had dealt with Russia, Britain and the United States from eighteenth-century. Furs imported from Russia were mainly land animals, and from the United Kingdom and the United States were mainly marine animals. This essay uses the data of mink, fox, rat skin, otter, seals, cat skins, etc. from *Kyakhta commercial files* for the chart and found that fur quantity imported from Russia had declined in 19th century, but still in majority comparing to those otters, seals, rabbit skins imported from the United Kingdom and the United States.

Qing dynasty had costume rules of imperial house, princes and nobles, civil and military officials, for winter costumes various furs were especially employed to classify the difference between the royal, the noble, and the official; which enabled Beijing to be the center of fur manufacture. A lot of furs were imported from Russia, originally for the manifestation of social classes, gradually became attire fashion in all over China since furs could be peacocked in daily life, and which also broke the barriers of social classes.

From the organization of Industry and Commerce Business Chamber in Beijing, we can see the handiwork of fur manufacturing was divided in detail, and professional, which enable the workshops make high quality fur fashion for exporting till Republican periods. Fur products belonged in wholesale by furs' secondhand shops and silk texture shops. The wholesale peak season started in earlier autumn, buyers from Shanghai, Nanjing, Hankou, Shandong, Henan, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangdong flocked into Beijing for purchasing fur products, of which Shanghai buyers were the most. Fur product shops were concentrated along East bank of Xi He (western river) and other places as Xiaojiangjia Hutong, Dongdashi, Dongzhushikou, where identified the distinctive features of fur trading in the city.

Keywords: *Kyakhta trade, Furs, Beijing Industry and Commerce Business Chamber*