1. Introduction

The greatest philosopher in China, Confucius, once mentioned that eating and sex are essential to humans. Eating has been considered central to daily life in China from the distant past to the present. In the words of Frederick J. Simoons:

“Food plays such an important role in Chinese life as to lead many to characterize the Chinese as having a food-centered culture. Not only are they wide-raging in their choice of foods, but concern with the excellence of food is found in all segments of society and is reflected in the common greeting ‘Have you eaten already?’ Indeed some have noted that food is not only a common topic of conversation, but often the dominant one.”

The above quotation well describes the Chinese viewpoint towards food. The way of greeting people in Taiwan is the same as it is in China except for the dialect. There is also some well-known Taiwanese slang, which although it is an exaggeration, emphasizes the importance of eating: “Eating is as important as an emperor.” This slang reveals the Taiwanese viewpoint towards eating. Both in China and in Taiwan, eating signifies more than just the behavior of people deriving sustenance from food; it is part of culture and art. “Chinese literature is rich in allusions to food, for it was a matter of pride for scholars to be gourmets. Dishes may bear their names, a situation that would be like the English having ‘Wordsworth steak’ or ‘Galsworthy cutlet’.”

Eating is an integral part of Chinese culture, and this is also true with regards to Taiwanese culture. Taiwan has been greatly influenced by Chinese culture since the Han people brought Chinese culture to Taiwan in Zheng Chenggong period. One can probe into Taiwanese culture through eating, as well as culinary habits and means, which also reflect people’s positions in society. Thus, researching a restaurant that once

1 Simoons, Frederick J. *Food in China, a cultural and historical inquiry*, p.14.
2 Ibid.
3 Zheng Chenggong is regarded highly among the public in Taiwan. He is worshipped in many Taiwanese temples and addressed as “Koxinga” in Fukien dialect.
played an important role in Taiwan will help us understand Taiwanese culture.

To understand the cultural history of Taiwan, many researchers have made studies of drama, literature, aboriginal lyrics and songs. In recent years more and more people have paid attention to the study of eating, which includes foods, culinary skills, eating habits, local culinary specialities and so forth. In bookstores, we see many leisure magazines introducing popular restaurants and these magazines usually turn out to be best sellers. Readers follow the guidance of these magazines and visit these restaurants for pleasure. However, different restaurants attract different customers. These restaurants can be categorized according to the variety of regions and culinary materials & skills, as Chinese restaurants, French restaurants, Japanese restaurants and so on. And they can also be divided according to price, into exclusive, average and low-price. Thus restaurants can disclose people’s lives and social status, and this paper will use this facet to study the culture of Taiwan. However, there has not yet been much academic research on the relationship between restaurants and the cultural lives of people. By researching the most famous restaurant in Taipei under Japanese rule, this thesis intends to understand the role a restaurant plays in colonial society.

Japan began colonial rule on Taiwan with the aim of making Taiwan the main agricultural supplier to Japan in the fashion of the British-Irish relationship. This policy was known as “industrial Japan and agricultural Taiwan”. This being the case, the Japanese governor general was rather slow in making an effort to improve Taiwan’s economy. As a result, Taiwanese international trade and business was initially not as prosperous as it had been before Japanese colonial rule.

After the 1920’s, directly after the First World War, Japan took the leading role in the
East Asian economy. Taiwan was on the sea trade route to Japan, and so it saw its economy prosper along with Japan. Dadaocheng, which had been the business center for cross-strait trade during the late Qing dynasty, had suffered from “industrial Japan and agricultural Taiwan” policy of the Japanese colonial government. However, after World War I, the area began to experience resurgence as businessmen from neighbouring Asian countries, particularly Japan, were in need of a place in which to do business that lived up to their social standards.

A businessman, Wu Jiangshan, saw an opportunity to establish a restaurant which could provide this service. He established Jiangshanlou in Dadaocheng and introduced Japanese cuisine and geisha performances, turning Jiangshanlou into a meeting point for both Japanese businessmen and also the literatti of Taiwan. Even today, Jiangshanlou is remembered as being one of the finest restaurants in Taiwan at the time.

Under Japanese rule, many first-class restaurants clustered around Dadaocheng, such as Jiangshanlou, the Penlaige and the Donghuifang. Many famous gentries left their mark in these restaurants through works of literature while many Taiwanese artists, musicians and painters preferred Taiwanese style restaurants. In this thesis, the author would like to examine, through the use of newspaper articles and memoirs, the role that Jiangshanlou played in Taiwanese modern culture. This paper will also examine if Japanese culture influenced Taiwanese restaurants. In addition, it will examine how the Jiangshanlou restaurant differed from other traditional Taiwanese restaurants. Was it founded because of new customer demands created under the new Japanese regime? How luxurious was Jiangshanlou and how did it keep its reputation? According to the *Taiwan Nichi-nichi Shimpo*, the restaurant ran very well. However, could the general
public afford to go there? If not, who made the Jiangshanlou a fashionable place to go? A local slang at that time described the social climate, “[The elites] ascend Jiangshanlou, taste Taiwanese cuisine and appreciate geishas’ performance” under Japanese rule in Taiwan. Therefore, this paper will show that a group of people, namely “the gentry”, sustained its business. However, the definition of gentry changed from traditional Chinese scholars to businessmen as time passed. Who were the gentry and what kind of social organizations frequently visited Jiangshanlou? Through an examination of the types of customers, this paper will reveal the character of the restaurant.

The frequent cultural interflow between Japanese colonists and local Taiwanese gentries took place in Jiangshanlou, which served as the social, political and economic center for both the colonizers and social elites. The restaurant was established when Taiwan was under the influence of Japanese culture and its existence seemed closely related with the gentry. However, as time went by, the restaurant was gradually forgotten or known as a byword for prostitution. The purpose of this research is to examine the founding and operation of Jiangshanlou and the role it played in gentry’s social activities under Japanese rule in Taiwan. By doing so, this paper may offer a new angle for people to look at Jiangshanlou as well as offering a new research aspect to Taiwan studies.

The main source of this research is from the written literature, including books, articles in historical periodicals or magazines and the most important newspaper in northern Taiwan under Japanese rule –Taiwan Nichi-nichi Shimpo. In addition to these printed resources, interviews with Mr. Wang, who experienced the final days of the restaurant, confirms the traditional impression that Jiangshanlou became a byword for brothel. As
most of the sources are in Chinese, all quotes are translated into English by the author. The slang “[The elites] ascend Jiangshanlou, taste Taiwanese cuisine and appreciate geishas’ performance” hints that the importance of the restaurant is revealed by those who ate at Jiangshanlou. These people help us picture it from other facets and redefine the restaurant.