



**Editors**

Eric Olmedo, PhD  
Rachel Chan Suet Kay, PhD

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 2017  
*Food & Society*  
CONFERENCE IN KUALA LUMPUR

Taste • Culture • Education

**FOOD AND SOCIETY**  
**in**  
**ASIA PACIFIC**

**Taste, Culture, Education.**

# **FOOD AND SOCIETY in ASIA PACIFIC**

## **Taste, Culture, Education.**

Edited by

Eric Olmedo, PhD  
Rachel Chan Suet Kay, PhD

Institute of Ethnic Studies,  
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*The National University of Malaysia*

• 2018

• <http://www.ukm.my/kita/>

Keluaran Pertama / *First release*, March 2019  
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Diterbitkan di Malaysia oleh / *Published in Malaysia by*  
Institut Kajian Etnik,  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
43600 Bangi, Selangor D.E., Malaysia

Dicetak di Malaysia oleh / *Printed in Malaysia by*  
Printlab Marketing Sdn. Bhd.  
No.29-1, Jalan PJU 1A/5A, Ara Damansara, 47301 Petaling Jaya.  
Selangor. Malaysia.  
Tel: +6011-1082 2168

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data  
Food and Society Conference (2017 : Kuala Lumpur)

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 2017 Food &  
Society CONFERENCE IN KUALA  
LUMPUR : Taste, Culture, Education / Edited  
By: Eric Olmedo, Rachel Chan Suet Kay.  
ISBN 978-967-0741-54-3 (hardback) 1. Food--  
Congresses. 2. Food--Social aspects--  
Congresses. 3. Government publications--  
Malaysia. I. Panal, Eric Olmedo, Dr. II. Chan,  
Rachel Suet Kay, Dr. III. Title. 641.3  
ISBN 978-967-0741-54-3

*Design cover and inlay* : Nur Hezreen Othman (KITA – UKM).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors wish to thank Distinguished Prof. Datuk Dr. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin and Associate Prof. Dr. Kartini Aboo Talib @ Khalid, respectively founding director and deputy director of the Institute for Ethnic Studies (KITA) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia – the National University of Malaysia –, for their constant support and encouragements.

We are also very grateful to the following persons who, in one way or another, contributed to the making of this book:

Imran Daud bin Shamsul, Design Rhythm Consultants; Malaysia;

Nur Hezreen Othman, Institute of Ethnic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia;

Shada Salem Bokir, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

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## INTRODUCTION

Taste, culture and to a lesser extent education are classical objects of sociological and anthropological research. They also constitute the three pillars of what we could call a ‘culinary system’ (Lévi-Strauss, 1967) if we were to acknowledge the dual meaning of the word ‘education’, meaning both as a “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1980) and as a rationalized system of knowledge transmission, institutionalized or not. Lévi-Strauss defined a culinary system as a signifier in the sense of “a language in which each society encodes messages enabling to signify at a least a part of what this given society is.” (Levi-Strauss, 1967).

George Herbert Mead argues that the self is linguistically mediated and only realised in and through social actions and interactions (Mead, 1967: 78). His position, giving much primacy to agency, is not exempt from criticism. Blumer’s own appropriation of symbolic interactionism is much more compelling in our opinion. According to Blumer (1969), society comprises of the sum of all “joint actions” or “social acts” taking place at a given moment. By “social act” is meant the collective form of action that occurs when specifying “acting units” co-ordinate or “fit together” their respective lines of “action” (Blumer, 1969: p. 70). For this reason, social acts are also referred as “joint actions”.

The French food sociologist Jean-Pierre Corbeau has been analyzing this acting unit referred in plain language as “dining out”. As an analytical framework, he segregates the concepts of what he calls “sociality” and the one of “sociability”. The concept of sociality encompasses all

social and cultural factors that determine behavior of social actors from a given culture in particular situation. To illustrate the determinism of sociality as well as its social manipulations, Corbeau borrows the “tattoo” metaphor: “... [Sociality] is a marker, at times accepted, magnified, highlighted, or sometimes held back, hidden, or even denied, but from which individuals can never part” (Corbeau, 1997: 150 – *our translation*). According to Poulain (Poulain, 2002: p. 184), this conceptualization can be viewed as the French equivalent of the notion of “exteriorized objective reality” designed by Berger and Luckman (1986). The concept of “sociability” refers to the manner in which interacting individuals stage rules imposed by society, in a given context. In short, sociability reflects the way people consciously deal with social determinism: either performing social reproduction (being products of sociality) or igniting creativity in the choice and the process of their interactions (Corbeau, 1997: 152). Therefore, Corbeau describes the process of commensal interaction as the result of a three variables’ encounter: one eater (socially identified), one situation (a given social context: eating at home, eating at the workplace, dining out, etc.), and one food (embodying social and cultural representations). Corbeau calls this sum of interactions “the eating triangle” (Ibid, p. 155 – *our translation*), leading him to the conclusion that that the eater is a plural creature, meaning to say that the plural eater may actualise his eating pattern (both in behaviour and meaning) according to a given social context or typology of food.

Nicole Tarulevicz suggests that “the globalised pantry brings to many of us foods that come without a migrating community, creating a relentless pursuit of “authentic Asian

food” and an acceptance of fusion food in all its varied permutations” (Tarulevicz, 2012: 2).

In the context of Asia Pacific, “plural eaters” cannot ignore ethnic boundaries when those are being incarnated in form of food taboos. Even in countries where there are theoretically no ethnic and religious boundaries like in Myanmar, ethnic tensions may arise because of social praxis related to food habits. Duan Ying (2011) points out that “it is worth noting that Chinese banquets has been a sensitive issue between the Burmese and the Chinese. Extravagance at Chinese wedding banquets can incur the envy of the local Burmese, reinforcing ethnic tension between them” (Duan Ying, in Tan Chee-Beng, 2011: 146). In the Burmese case, social class and stratification issues are disguised in ethnic relations. In a country like Malaysia, where social stratification is at the same time horizontal and vertical, can we realistically hope to find this “great good place” evoked by Ray Oldenburg (1989), where people can freely and happily eat and mingle together?

Eating together-in-difference (Ang, 2003) does not come naturally. Ien Ang (2003) coins the term of “fundamental uneasiness”, when speaking of our relation with people who are different from us:

“[...] Hybridity is not only about fusion and synthesis, but also about friction and tension, about ambivalence and incommensurability, about contestations and interrogations that go hand in hand with the heterogeneity, diversity, and multiplicity we have to deal with as we live together-in-difference... [We have to learn to live together] in a world in which we no longer have the secure capacity to draw the line between ‘us’ and ‘them’ \_ in which difference and

sameness are inextricably intertwined in complicated entanglement.”

(Ang I, 2003: 141-154)

The question thus lies in the possibility of locating, both conceptually and empirically, “inclusive food spaces” in Asia Pacific.

Bastide describes the acculturation phenomena of Yoruba cuisine in Bahia, Brazil in the following manner: “[...] We could symbolise two cuisines, African and Brazilian, with two circles that would intertwine and share a common surface, the one of exchanges; African recipes being transported to Bahia, but bearing modifications, and then sometimes returning back in their new form, as it is the case at Cururu on the ‘Slaves’ Coast’, to become a gourmet-dish” (Bastide, 2007: 200).

If food creolisation applies only to pockets of Creole communities in the broader common society, how to make sense of the other forms of integrative food spaces in Asia-Pacific region? Another useful conceptual framework that can help understand the modalities of a form of food syncretism peculiar to Malaysia is captured in the key-concept of “viscosity” developed by the American geographer Arun Saldanha (2007). For Saldanha, “viscosity enables a rigorous grasping of social spaces by putting the dynamic physicality of human bodies and their interactions at the forefront of analysis. In basic terms, viscosity pertains to two dimensions of a collective of bodies: it’s sticking together, and its relative permeability.” (Saldanha, 2007: 5).

In the case of Malaysia, viscosity would symbolise the “cultural stickiness” of the cuisines and food ways of the main ethnic groups in Malaysia, notwithstanding the Creole ones, in the culinary acculturation process at work: in other words, what makes a Malaysian-Tamil cuisine still distinctively Tamil, and a Malaysian-Chinese cuisine, whether Cantonese or Hokkien, still distinctively Chinese.

Drawing from this first simple matrix, food acculturation processes in Malaysia would result from a binary scheme, stemming from the community where the culinary continuum has been constructed: “creolisation” for Creole social groups vs. “viscosity” for hyphenated identities. What makes the viscosity thicker or more porous might be correlated with food localisation. Kosaku Yoshino, when reflecting about Malaysian cuisine and culinary globalisation suggests that ethnic cuisines are “civilisations encapsulated in a Nation-state” (Yoshino, 2010: 6). Whether it is a Nation-state, or a state in a Nation, the general environment of the acculturation process contributes to shape a specific form of food syncretism, i.e. relative abundance of resources, political situation, economic situation, cohesiveness of social groups, urban planning, etc. The characterisation of the space where the cultural contact takes place: in other words, where taste is being shaped. The modalities of taste formation through acculturation and education are addressed in the collection of essays that follows.

This book is divided in three parts, namely (1) Food and Taste; (2) Food and Culture; (3) Food and Education.

## **Part 1: Food and taste**

Taste is a complicated matter; often associated with the primary sense of consuming food. Yet, in sociological and anthropological terms, the use of the word has been extended to encapsulate a matter of judgement, and of preference. Among the first renowned works exploring the concept of taste were by the Enlightenment philosophers. David Hume wrote the essay *Of the Standard of Taste*, citing that individual taste preferences are too obvious not to be observed (Kulenkampff, 1990). Immanuel Kant, meanwhile, in his *Critique of Judgement* analysed the notion of beauty in a philosophical sense through the act of displaying taste. Both Hume and Kant diverged, however, in the measurement of taste with Hume recognising taste to be subjective and Kant imagining it to be objective (Kulenkampff, 1990).

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has to be credited for developing the most sophisticated measure of taste. In his seminal work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), he wrote: "There is an economy of cultural goods, but it has a specific logic". Taste classifies, and classifies the classifier (Bourdieu, 1984). Statistical analysis does indeed show that oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits (Bourdieu, 1984). The elaborated taste for the most refined objects is reconnected with the elementary taste for the flavours of food as "one cannot fully understand cultural practices otherwise" (Bourdieu, 1984).

It is apparent then that Bourdieu also made a connection between the taste in food as well as the taste in other types of consumption. To add another layer to the analysis of consumption, one can draw from American economist Thorstein Veblen's study on conspicuous consumption, *Theory of the Leisure Class*. Veblen wrote that conspicuous consumption is mainly practiced by members of the middle class, also known as the leisure class, as they are not required to work yet profit from the labour of the working class (Trigg, 2001). The process of transforming wealth into status happens through the social performance of the leisure class (Trigg, 2001). Being able to display one's wealth through taste in luxury goods thus indicates status.

In this collection of papers, the concept of taste is elaborated through empirical observations of food consumption. These range from culturally-rooted notions of taste, up to more market-driven consumption choices. **Soon Pau Voon** in *A Feast at the Peranakan Chinese Wedding: A Social Aspect of Commensality* applies the concept of commensal politics and consumption of taste of the Peranakan Chinese in developing a conceptual framework of status class through his observation of the Peranakan Chinese wedding feast in Melaka.

Meanwhile, in *Labour Theory of Value: Perspective from Indian Cuisine*, **Devagi Sanmugam** and **Chandaralingam Kumarasamy** discuss consumers' choice of North Indian over South Indian cuisine, where the customers are often willing to pay more for the former as they mistakenly believe that the former is more labour-intensive than the latter. Using Marx's most famous paradigm, the authors explain that South Indian cuisine is in fact more labour-intensive.

A generational pattern of taste is also explored in **Loke Poh Yee**, Tan Jing Xuan, Tan Suk Leng, Siew Chin Yee, and Lim Wei Ann's *An Organic Trap: Perceptions and Purchase Intention of Gen Y in Malaysia toward Organic Junk Food*, where the writers explain why Generation Y in particular enjoy snacking, observing that snacking culture has been integrated into most cultures with the latest fad being that of "organic snacks", an amalgam of organic food and junk food. Hence the "trap" is created when marketers jump onto the health-craze bandwagon, banking on the Generation Y's attitudes and personal norms.

In terms of production, the success of the state-of-the-art Brazilian wine production chain is explored in **Rafael Lavrador Sant Anna's** paper, *Regional Wine Development in Brazil: The Case of Rio Grande do Sul and the Sao Francisco River Valley*. Sant Anna explains that its success is due to climatic factors which prevent higher volumes of harvests and drive producers to focus on the production of grape juice.

The vendor's side of things is also explored in **Azavedo & Walsh's** study on *Factors Determining Vendor Attendance at Vic Park Farmers' Market, Perth, Australia*. Through this study of a farmer's market, the authors found that the reasons for vendor participations include: to learn about customers, to inform the public about their products, to inform the public about artisanal products in general, to network with businesses, and to earn incremental income.

**Hart Feuer and Sary Seng** illustrate perfectly the concept of Food Transition developed by Angus Deaton and Jean Drèze, as applied in India (Deaton & Drèze, 2009). In the

context of Cambodia, Feuer and Seng narrow down their empirical field to one social group (factory workers) and one place of investigation (greater Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia and its surroundings). Their findings show the emergence of a desire for autonomy as far as nutritional choices are concerned, a desire that Feuer and Seng interestingly view as the manifestation of a political rejection geared towards the old paternalistic governance system present in various institutions and government bodies in Cambodia.

Finally, **Tainá Zaneti and Sergio Schneider** develop a promising construct that could serve as a potent analytical tool for food scholars who wish to study the mechanics of gastronomisation in a given country. Backed by solid data derived from Brazil and Peru, Zaneti and Schneider coin the concept of “embedded gastronomy”, emphasizing the potential charisma of unique agricultural products endemic to a particular biome while inherently triggering the constitution of a short supply chain.

Indeed, economists have noted that a world with tastes is significantly more complex than mere supply and demand (McCain, 2003, p. 449). This collection ultimately showcases the makings of taste from the perspective of both consumer and producer.

## **Part 2: Food and Culture**

All animals feed, but humans alone eat (Farb & Armelagos, 1980). Consuming food is a ritual, poignant with symbolic meaning; it goes beyond the mere need for nourishment which other creatures possess. This significance has been

condensed into the famous metaphor "You are what you eat" (Farb & Armelagos, 1980). The task of the anthropologist of food is to discern what the members of a society do, from knowing what and how they eat (Farb & Armelagos, 1980). This includes human cultural traits, social institutions, national histories, and individual attitudes (Farb & Armelagos, 1980).

This collection of papers discerns exactly the above from empirical observations of how people imbue meaning into their consumption of food. Sensibilities that stem from individuals' associations with social institutions such as ethnicity, religion, and social class are displayed in the choices that they make when it comes to food. Unlike taste, this does not concern conspicuous consumption in the pursuit of status.

**Mehrdad Arabestani** and **Ashraf Namakyan** show in *Food Habitus: The Iranians' Food Choice in Malaysia*, that most Iranians in Malaysia are motivated by religion and culture when it comes to making a choice in their consumption of Malaysian cuisine. They observe that most Iranians in Malaysia tend to choose Western-style fast foods and Iranian restaurants when in Malaysia. Further on, in *From "Everybody Used to Have a Cow Back Then, We Used to Make Cheese" to "We Have Three Geese on the Roof, Two Are Mine!" : Challenges and Changes in Ahvazi Mandaean Food Norms*, **Marta Marsano** and **Mehrdad Arabestani** introduce the Mandaeans, members of an ethno-religious minority originally based in Iran and Iraq, and their food-related rituals, restrictions, and purity.

Meanwhile, in *In-Between Quanzhou and Klang: A Case Study of 'Niu Pai' and 'Bak Kut Teh'*, **Lee Han Ying** traces the origin of the famous Klang 'Bak Kut Teh', or Meat Bone Tea, to that of 'Niu Pai', or Beef Steak in Southern Fujian. This study comparatively deciphers symbolisms relating 'Niu Pai' to 'Bak Kut Teh' in a contemporary context, given that empirical research shows similarities between both dishes.

The ubiquity of Mamak Stalls in Malaysia, restaurants or stalls run by Indian Muslim proprietors featuring localised Indian-style dishes such as *roti canai*, *mee mamak*, and *teh tarik*, is documented by **Anisha Chai and Eric Olmedo**, in their paper *Mamak Stalls: Inclusive Food Space in Malaysia?* This also draws from Olmedo and Shamsul Amri Baharuddin's concept of "mamakization", in which these highly accessible mamak stalls represent a democratic space which transcends the boundaries of ethnicity, social class, and gender, among others, in cementing a social bond between Malaysians.

The origins of eating utensils, one of the markers of civilisation and cultural accomplishment, is chronicled by **Christian Kelly Scott** in *The Roads to the Fork: How the Human and Natural Environments Have Shaped Eating Utensils*. Scott posits that the utensil as a historical marker can be useful in examining issues of power, social class, environmental degradation, and many other environmental factors. One can only imagine Cardinal Richelieu, inventor of etiquette, suppressing the urge to forbid aristocrats from his dining table for using their daggers to slice meat (Sutton, 2014, p.308).

Migration also leaves its mark on the blending of recipes. In *Penang Heritage Food and Comparisons With That From Melaka and Singapore*, **Ong Jin Teong** traces the multiethnic impact of migration on Penang heritage food, which come from Malay, Hokkien, Thai, and Indian origins.

Aside from food that is to be consumed, herbs also retain an important place in maintaining one's health. **Kartini Aboo Talib @ Khalid** documents this practice in *Midwives and Herbal Remedies: The New Normal in Modern Practice*. From observation and interviews with midwives from the west coast of Malaysia, the author finds that there is a significant amount of utilization of herbal remedies during pregnancy, in prenatal and postnatal care. In addition, this practice and belief has been integrated into modern medicine, especially in Islamic-based hospitals.

**Isami Omori** examines the positive effect of UNESCO's recognition of a particular foodway, Japanese cuisine, as intangible cultural heritage, in the paper *The Impact of UNESCO Heritage status on Japanese Food Discourse in Japan*. Omori finds that this very recognition, received in 2013, brought about an increase in reporting on Japanese food through a keyword analysis of the mass media.

Finally, **Voltaire Cang** echoes Omori's paper through the perspective of correlating the registration of Washoku at the UNESCO World's Intangible Heritage List in 2013, correlating this global recognition with the reclaiming of a national identity in Japan. By contrasting the commonly accepted definition of washoku (traditional Japanese Food) with the one of yoshoku (Western Food)

This collection of articles hopes to address the contention of Mintz and DuBois (2002) that the study of food and eating is important, because it has illuminated broad societal processes such as political-economic value-creation, symbolic value-creation, and the social construction of memory.

### **Part 3: Food and Education**

The science of philosophy emphasizes on the truth functionality of conjunction propositions such as ‘*and*’ in order to discover the “truth value” of a sentence. In the given case of the third part of the present book namely “Food *and* Education”, one might wonder whether the proposition ‘*and*’ may signify either a truth-functional connective or a simple disjunction.

If we enforce connectedness by removing the ‘*and*’ proposition, we find ourselves assaulted by another spectre i.e. polysemy as there is little consensus on what food education is, or on what food education should be. By applying the analytical tool of “analytical inquiry” (Portelli, 1987), we may be able to find out that food education could be located originally as a sub-stratum of health education. While health education is being conjointly substantiated by the construct of “health literacy” that was coined about forty years ago (see Smith, 2009), the original concept refers explicitly to the ability of given patients to comprehend written materials and concepts such as appointments and medical prescriptions (see Rootman & Ronson, 2005).

With regards to the simple generic proposition termed as “Food Education”, the answer is situational: some papers in

this final section clearly share experiences of food education in the sense of giving or receiving systematic instruction (such as the one by Eila Kauppinen, which touches on food literacy as the knowledge baseline to nourish action and change behaviours) while others reflect on the incorporation of food education in the Bourdieusian acceptance of the concept of “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984) in food choices, as per the academic production of Tan Kean Buan.

Having said so, education about ‘food’ often qualifies the latter and adorns it with a substantive word that further specifies the set of skills of literacy outcomes that the afferent ‘education’ programme or system targets. These specific sub-ensembles of food education often correlate with a given country’s development curves, public policies as well as public health prioritized issues. Let us consider for example the Food Education’s subcategories of Food Security (Ahmed & del Ninno, 2002), Community Food Security (CFS) (Hamm & Bellows, 2003), generational and gender-based dietary education (Campbell et al., 2002), Nutrition vs. Food literacy (Smith, 2009, and Home Economics (Dewhurst & Pendergast, 2019). This list stems from a brief literature review and is of course not exhaustive.

Some of the papers presented in part three of this book conveniently termed “food and education” fall clearly under one of the abovementioned categories; the rest may fall under the intersection of a few others (i.e. Belinda Fong: nutritional education and new media). Meanwhile, a minority of the presented papers might have created a category of their own, not unlike the creative piece devised by Hart Feuer and Ayaka Nomura.

The core of **Eila Kauppinen's** paper entitled "From Nutrition Education to Food Education – Finnish Experiences" lies probably within the emphasis on the holistic term "Food sense" that integrates in one construct all determining factors that influence food choices, and also incorporates critical food literacy as well as propensity for action. Kauppinen stresses on the importance of the home-school continuum for food education, highlighting the primordial role of peer social interaction during leisure time upon the shaping of new eating habits.

**Eric Olmedo** stresses on the need for hospitality skills training programs to be crafted with a more accurate incorporation of the targeted population's needs in his paper "*Cultural Embeddedness and Informal Hospitality as Strategies to Promote National Cuisine: Lessons from Georgia*". In order to attain such an outcome, Olmedo suggests to effectively decipher the qualitative expression of training needs using an analytical tool stemming from social science i.e. "the point of saturation", which discriminates the most stressed upon verbatim. This first step will enable further clarification of inaccurately expressed needs. Once the articulation of training design with actual training needs is verified, Olmedo proposes substantiating training contents using the emic approach. Drawing on data collected from Georgia, Olmedo advocates for the potency of the "cultural embeddedness" and "informal hospitality" concepts in guaranteeing both the authenticity and relevance of the training program.

**Belinda Fong Chong Lynn** has analysed one hundred and thirty-two distinct food commercials broadcasted on Internet TV using a quantitative method in her paper "*A Content*

*Analysis of Product Appeals in Online TV Food Advertisements Targeting Children*". Her findings reveal two main categories of TV ads' attractiveness i.e. emotional appeals and rational appeals, which she refines in twenty-one sub-categories. This exploratory study casts an extremely useful light on the pervasive strategies used by online TV advertisers.

**Emila Nercissians** discusses the inherent propensity of food in creating social boundaries, be they ethnic or religious, in her paper entitled "*Food and Its Role in Creating Boundaries: The Case of Iran*". The case study on her country of residence leads her to explore the roots of Iranian spirituality into the Cosmology devised by the great thinker and philosopher Avicenna, thus revitalizing his famous conceptualization of the "Four Elements".

**Hart Feuer and Ayaka Nomura** chose to scrutinize the modalities of community activism to fight against the food crisis in urban Japan. Their paper entitled "*Assessing the Sustainability of Community-led Responses to Japan Food Poverty Crisis*" puts a particular emphasis on *kodomo shokudou* or "children's canteens". The authors' assessment reveals an erosion of the movement due paradoxically to the a-critical relationship that the Japanese citizens have cultivated with morally-endowed endeavours such as *kodomo shokudou*, which resonates with the notion of *hōshi* or civic engagement deeply rooted in Japanese social norms and values.

**John D. Mulcahy** explores the potential benefits nested at the intersection of food, or rather cuisine, tourism and state agencies after having investigated the historical modalities

of such a conjunction. His own drawn conclusions confirm a status quo situation whereas stakeholders tend to work independently and not collaboratively in spite of obvious benefits for a variety of reasons such as risk adversity as well as differentials in product development cycles between public education and the industrial sector.

**Tan Ai Ling** *et al* proceeded with a quantitative survey targeting respondents that belong to “Generation Y” (i.e. people born between the 1980’s and 1990s) to test the most influential food choice motives when it comes to Peranakan cuisine. Their paper entitled “*Ethnicity and Peranakan Cuisine Purchase Intentions: Comparison between Malay, Chinese and Indian Social Groups in Malaysia*” shows that there is no significant difference in the purchase intentions between ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indians and between ethnic Malays and ethnic Chinese.

**Tan Kean Buan** investigates the social representations of Malaysian edible flora (*ulam*) across ethnic lines within a sample population of a Malaysian private college. While common ignorance about ulam seems to be the key finding in his paper entitled “*The Local Way: Investigating the Social Representations of Ulam by Young Students in a Malaysian College*”, Tan suggests that hospitality students explore ways of cooking Malaysian greens that would suit the taste and palatability of the urban context.

Tan Kean Buan’s paper, maybe unknowingly, echoes a classic school of anthropology of education, whose origins can be located in the USA in the 1930’s. The school’s original scientific direction was to investigate and understand the modalities of culture transmission to newer

generations, and especially to children for which personality is not entirely formed yet. Systematic circular interpretation of facts and findings, notwithstanding a general postulate of cultural homogeneity led to the demise of this school of thoughts. An alternative framing of the problem arose after the Second World War with an utmost interesting hypothesis: that modern educational institutions can be considered as cultural phenomena entirely. A Copernican postulate that lays the foundations for an informed criticism of the various forms of materialism and conservatism that can be conveyed through a national education in general and for food education in particular.

Eric Olmedo & Rachel Chan Suet Kay.  
*March 2019.*

### **About the editors:**

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**PART 1:**  
**FOOD AND TASTE**

# THE FEAST AT THE PERANAKAN CHINESE WEDDING A SOCIAL ASPECT OF COMMENSALITY

Soon Pau Voon

## Introduction

Melaka is a state located at the central west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, host to the historical site of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Melaka Sultanate. In Melaka, there is a sub-ethnic Chinese social group known as the “*Peranakan Chinese*”. The term *Peranakan* is of Malay origins, from the root word of *anak* – a child which refers to the descendants of early Chinese immigrants, off-springs of the intermarriage between indigenous people and foreigners (Tan, 1988). The *Peranakan Chinese* adopted the local aspects of culture, customs and practices and at the same time retained their Chinese traditions. The *Peranakan Chinese* males are known as *Baba*, while the females as *Nyonya*. The term *Peranakan Chinese* was used to distinguish the local-born Chinese from the immigrants, the latter of whom were known as the *sin-kheh* (new immigrants – pure “Chinese”). The *sin-kheh* were poor and had a lower status (Tan, 1988; Tan, 1993). During the British colonisation, the *Peranakan Chinese* emerged as the local bourgeois (Lim & Jorge, 2001:53) establishing a co-operative relationship with the British who rewarded them with economic and political importance (Hestflat, 2003).

The purpose of this study is to apply the concept of commensal politics and consumption of taste of the *Peranakan* Chinese in developing a conceptual framework of status class. Despite the fact that both the *Peranakan* Chinese and *sin-kheh* are Chinese and originated from China, how then did the *Peranakan* Chinese become established as an upper class during the pre-Second World War era? This paper explores the subject of feast and commensality in discussing this issue. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in order to gain in-depth information from two informants. Informant 1 is 30 years old, a 5<sup>th</sup> generation *baba* from Melaka and currently the manager of a *Peranakan* Chinese museum in Melaka. Informant 2 is 51 years old, a 6<sup>th</sup> generation *baba* from Melaka and currently a consultant for *Peranakan* Chinese wedding as well as the president of a *Peranakan* Chinese association.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defined feast as ‘an elaborate and usually abundant meal often accompanied by a ceremony or entertainment’ which is derived from the Old French term of “*feste*” and Latin term of “*fešta*” both meaning joyous. Hayden (2001:28) defined feast as ‘any sharing between two or more people of special foods (i.e. foods not generally served at daily meals) in a meal for a special purpose or occasion’. In addition to that, Dietler (2001:67) defined feast as a ‘form of public ritual activity centred around the communal consumption of food and drink’, where he further mentioned that the context of ritual may not need to be elaborate nor sacred in character. Therefore, by combining both Hayden and Dietler’s definition, feast is a form of communion ritual while sharing food during this special occasion (wedding feast). The act of

sharing food in a feast is conceptualized here as “commensality”, the act of eating together at the same table (*mensa*) (Fischler, 2011:529).

Marriage is one of the important life markers in the *Peranakan* Chinese community and traditional *Peranakan* Chinese wedding is known as *kahwen dulu kala* (Tan, 1988). The traditional *Peranakan* Chinese wedding is in fact old-style Chinese wedding; however, non-*Peranakan* Chinese would associate it to the *Peranakan* Chinese as the rituals are of ‘grandeur’ scale with elaborate celebrations (Tan, 1988). A study was carried out on the *Peranakan* Chinese of the pre-Second World War era which explores both the anthropological and historical social aspects of commensality in the traditional *Peranakan* Chinese wedding feast. This luncheon feast, named *Tok Panjang*, is derived from the *Hokkien* word of table *tok* (桌) and the Malay word of long *panjang*, which when put together literally means “long table”. The food of the feast is known as ‘*laok tok panjang*’ (Tan, 1988), while the invitation to dine is known as ‘*chianh tok*’ (Cho, 2010:8).

In the concluding chapter of *The Sociology of Food* (Mennel, Murcott & Von Otterloo, 1994), the subject of commensality and society was discussed in terms of its social importance in which the authors elaborate that ‘sharing of food is held to signify togetherness, equivalence among a group that defines and reaffirms insiders as socially similar’ (Mennel, Murcott & von Otterloo, 1994:115). Tan (2015) discussed the various forms of commensality namely domestic, kin and communal, ceremonial and religious, as well as political and hospitality in which he further

discussed that a wedding feast is a common kind of kin commensality.

The *tok panjang* feast is held at the eve of the wedding day – *chiah lang kheh* (Cheo, 2009; Tan, 1988). On this day, *nyonyas* are invited for the luncheon feast as well as to admire the bride. *Nyonyas* will arrive in their *kebaya* costumes with jewelleryes – an example of symbolic capital of wealth display. As conservative structures occurred during the era, it is not very often to see males and females dining together. *Babas* will dine at a separate banquet held in the evening which is known as ‘*laok jantan*’ (Gwee, 2015:56).

Fischler (2011:534) noted that ‘despite not all cultures eat around a table; there are rules and customs that govern the arrangement of commensals, distribution and sharing as well as table manners’. He further elaborates that the size and shape of the tables are relevant to the type and style of interactions between the commensals (Fischler, *ibid*). There are two types of *tok panjang* dining table, one being made up of two (or more) 3 to 3½ feet square tables joined together which may sit up to 12 people while the other one being a rectangular table with either square or rounded edge. The latter type may open up with two slabs of table boards and extend up to 16 feet long. The long dining table is a reproduction of the Victorian-style era dining table which shows the influence of the British on the lifestyle of the *Peranakan* Chinese, rather than adherence to the traditional Chinese circular dining table (Ho, 2008:148). The *tok panjang* display in the Chan family ancestral home is made up of three square tables, measuring at 9 feet long which sits 10 people.

*Peranakan* Chinese porcelain is used to host the *tok panjang* feast. These crockeries are brightly-coloured enamelled porcelain decorated with Chinese symbols made in Jingdezhen of the Jiangxi Province, China specially for the *Peranakan* Chinese (Ho, 2008). They are also known as *Nyonya* wares or *pinggan mangkok* Shanghai (Shanghai wares) as they are exported to South East Asia through Shanghai (Chan & Lee, 2015) in sets of 144 pieces (Chia: 2015). Phoenix and peony, which symbolise prosperity and righteousness, decorate the central motifs while Buddhist emblems decorate the border patterns of these *nyonya* wares (Kee, 2009:87). Unfortunately, the collection of the *tok panjang* crockeries in the Chan ancestral house is not complete as explained by informant 1 that part of the collection was distributed among the family members before the house was established as a museum. A near-complete collection of these *tok panjang* crockeries could be viewed at the Singapore Peranakan Museum, which was commissioned and once owned by Yap Ah Loy whose wife was a Melakan *nyonya*. Yap Ah Loy was the third Chinese *Kapitan* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century who had contributed to the development of Kuala Lumpur (Cartens, 2005).

The preparation of food is carried out days ahead before the *tok panjang* feast. This preparation involves *hari tumbok tepung* (pounding of flour day – for making of various types of *kuihs*), *hari kupas bawang* (peeling of onion day – for making of various types of dishes and *sambals*), and *hari menyambal* (preparation of spices day) (Chia, 2015). Informant 2 mentioned that the dishes are cooked and left overnight for its flavour to develop while *kuihs* are only made on the feast day itself. Informant 1 mentioned that wealthy *Peranakan* Chinese families employed cooks to

assist in their work. In the Chan family, there were two cooks of *Hainanese* Chinese descent – the “*chong po*” (cook) who would be the one buying the ingredients and his assistant who would be the one taking care of the wood-fire stove (Chan & Lee, 2015).

Informant 2 also elaborated that the *nyonyas* and cook would be responsible for preparing the food, while the grandmother i.e. the matriarch of the family would oversee the cooking as well as tasting and adjusting the flavours of the food. Servants will bring the food out from the kitchen, while young *nyonyas* would be doing the service of placing the food on the table.

Informant 2 described how the feast may begin – at pre-lunch, chicken macaroni or *kuih ee* (glutinous rice balls in sweet syrup) may be served. Both can be served on a dessert bowl with porcelain spoon. *Ang cho teh* (red dates tea) or *ayer mata kuching* (*longan* drink), or sometimes a combination of both red dates and *longan* served on tea cups may also be served as a pre-lunch drink. After pre-lunch drinks are served, guests are invited to take their seat on the *tok panjang*. Water is then served to cleanse their mouth before the commencement of lunch. The first batch of commensals consists of the matriarch of the family as well as elderly *nyonyas*, the *bibiks*.

Although the *babas* adopted the use of western style cutleries, the *nyonyas* ate their food with their hands. Porcelain spoons are only used for scooping dishes onto their plates and drinking soup while chopsticks are only meant for ceremonial purposes. Dishes are prepared in small portions rather than a large serving – like whole fish or

chicken. This may be attributed to the fact that the status of the host and commensals are viewed as equal while eating together.

Informant 2 described how the *tok panjang* is laid out on the dining table:

“The *lauk* (dishes) is laid out in the style of 3 – 5 *peranguan* (sets) of 4 – 6 types of dishes. Dishes are placed in front of you because it was not *manis* (appropriate) for us to stretch our arms for food.”

Informant 2: 52 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> generation *Baba*, consultant

Dishes served in the *tok panjang* feast are denoted by the type of crockeries used (Gwee; 2013:61):

- (a) One dish of *lauk mangkok* (serving bowl dishes) – *bak wan kepiting* (crab and pork balls with bamboo shoots soup), *hee pio* (dried fish maw soup), *perot babi* (pig’s tripe soup) and *ayam sarang burung* (chicken with bird’s nest soup); soup dishes are served with porcelain spoons.
- (b) Several dishes of *lauk pingan besar* (large serving plate dishes) – *babi panggang* (roast pork), *ayam kari* (chicken curry), *ikan goreng* (fried fish), *udang asam* (prawns in tamarind).
- (c) Several dishes of *lauk piring* (small saucer dishes) – *udang sambal* (spicy prawns), *achar* (pickles), *sambal jantung* (banana heart in rich coconut milk), *sambal timun* (cucumber, meat and dried prawn salad), *sambal belachan* (toasted shrimp paste pounded with chillies),

*sambal serondeng* (fried coconut in spices) and *sambal nanas* (pineapple in spices).

- (d) Rice is served on *pingan nasi* (dinner plate). Dishes are scooped from the serving plates onto their dinner plates with porcelain spoons to be eaten with rice.

Informant 2 described that the beverage may include water, soda, juices and cordial served on European type glasses. As *nyonyas* ate with their hands, finger bowls are located at the side of the table for them to rinse their fingers at the end of the meal. These finger bowls too are highly enamelled decorated.

After the commensals had completed their lunch, they would leave their seats for *pencuchi mulot* (desserts) on the next table as described by Informant 2:

- (a) *taibak* (glutinous rice noodles in sweet syrup) – served in dessert bowls with porcelain spoon.  
(b) Assortment of *nyonya kauh* (steamed and baked pastries).

The dishes on the *tok panjang* would be replaced with a new set of dishes. Then the next batch of commensals will take their seats, and when they too have completed their lunch, the process of replacing new sets of dishes will repeat until the end of the feast, which is normally into the evening.

## **Conceptual Framework**

As commensality strengthens social relations as pointed out by Mennel, Murcott & von Otterloo (1994), the *tok panjang* feast provides a space for the accumulation of social capital in terms of the network that one may possess (Bourdieu,

1986). The network of connection is not given either naturally or socially; it is “the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (Bourdieu, 1986:52). As the *Peranakan* Chinese dominated economic and political importance, the economic capital (Bourdieu: *ibid*) possessed by the *Peranakan* Chinese families had enabled them to invest in cultural capital which may exist in three forms as laid out by Bourdieu (1986: *ibid*) i.e. embodied state – knowledge of dining etiquette, food preparation and service; objectified state – dining table and *nyonya* wares; and institutionalised state. The economic, cultural and social capitals are then translated as a symbolic capital of wealth, honour and prestige which, according to Bourdieu’s concept of ‘distinction’, rendered the *Peranakan* Chinese as elites as defined by the volume of capital they possessed (Bourdieu, 1984).

The wedding feast is not only a kin commensality as pointed out by Tan (2015), but also overlapping with hospitality and political commensality, borrowing from Dietler’s concept of ‘commensal politics’ (Dietler, 2001). Dietler classified the modes of commensal politics into i) an empowering feast which involves “the manipulation of commensal hospitality towards the acquisition and maintenance of certain forms of symbolic capital...” (Dietler, 2001:76), and ii) patron-role feast and diacritical feast which involve “the use of differentiated cuisine and styles of consumption as a diacritical symbolic device to naturalise and reify concepts of ranked differences in the status of social orders or classes” (Dietler, 2001:85). The concept of empowering and

diacritical feast could be applied to the *tok panjang* feast which defines the *Peranakan* Chinese (particularly the host and the commensal) as elites. The *chong po* (cook) i.e. a specialised food preparer, the use of expensive food ingredients, the complexity of food preparation and consumption, and the use of elaborate *nyonya* wares and dining table during lunch services are styles of the diacritical feast (Dietler, 2001) which create a boundary-defining “consumption communities” (Dietler, 2001).

## **Conclusion**

This study shows how the concept of commensal politics and consumption taste may be applied in studying social class, which in this case entails the exploration of the *Peranakan* Chinese traditional wedding feast. The findings from this study shows how the *Peranakan* Chinese elites are conceptualised relative to the power they may have over others, to define tastes through consumption (Bourdieu, 1984) as we could see from the *tok panjang* feast held during the pre-Second World War era. The findings may also serve as a documented knowledge to the existing knowledge in the *Peranakan* Chinese heritage. The Second World War had caused many *Peranakan* Chinese to lose their economic capital which resulted in lesser wealthy families. As the British withdrew from Malaya, the *Peranakan* Chinese no longer enjoyed the relationship and privilege that were once bestowed upon them. The independence government did not recognise the *Peranakan* Chinese as an ethnic category and they were simply treated as Chinese (Tan, 1988). The emerging *sin-kheh*, now ‘pure Chinese’, had taken over the economic dominance as well as politic importance (Tan, 1988). Despite the shift in social

dominance from the *Peranakan* Chinese to the *sin-kheh*, it would be interesting to further study the contemporary context and significant importance of commensality in the wedding feast of the *Peranakan* Chinese.

### **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank both my informants – Baba Lee Yuen Thien and Baba Cedric Tan for their valuable information on the *tok panjang* feast. I would also like to thank Dr Eric Olmedo for his valuable feedbacks and suggestions for this study.

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# **LABOUR THEORY OF VALUE : PERSPECTIVE FROM INDIAN CUISINE**

Devagi Sanmugam  
Chandaralingam Kumarasamy

## **Introduction**

The labour theory of value has a long and illustrious beginning from the days of Sir William Petty in 1660 to John Locke and to how Karl Marx, Adam Smith and David Riccardo introduced some modifications and significant improvements while staying true to the theory. The concept of the theory dictates how price of commodities through labour to produce an item ignores the elements of moral, ethical and philosophical equations. As per this theory, labour is a crucial element in producing a product from its original state as without it there is no value to the product.

This paper will not argue on how prices are relatively determined, which is still the crucial question in economics. The most obvious problem in all these theories is that the price is affected by the quantity of all the necessary resources required to produce the product i.e labour, time, technology and land. But the crucial element that is difficult to equate is that labour is not a homogeneous resource.

Zimmermann (2017) mentioned that Indian foods are known for their large assortment of dishes and liberal use of herbs and spices. Cooking styles vary from region to region. South

Indian (SI) cuisine and North Indian (NI) cuisine are only some of the cuisines that are being widely exported by India. It is generally accepted worldwide that the Indian community brought their tradition, culture and food along during their migrations (Sanmugam & Kasinathan, 2011). The Indian community in Singapore and Malaysia mainly constitute of emigrants from South India, mainly Tamils, with a small proportion from North India. This is evident in the wide choice of Tamil and Tamil Muslim cuisines (OMICS, Singapore, 2017).

### ***Objective and Limitations of the Study***

The objective of this study is to identify:

- i. Market value which should always equate with the complexity and work involved in preparing the cuisine.
- ii. Pricing of the food which should also include its health benefits.

Limitations of the study are:

- i. The participants are limited to only chefs/restauranteurs who are experts in the field and are of Indian origin.
- ii. Customers were not factored in as they might not have detailed knowledge of how the food is prepared and what ingredients are used.

## ***Hypothesis of the Study***

Hypothesis 1: South Indian food, which requires plenty of time to prepare compared to North Indian food, is not correctly priced by restaurants.

As mentioned by Smith (1776), the value should always account for the “toil and trouble”. We hope to justify that the value of a cuisine is beyond its presentation and marketing (Files.libertyfund.org, 2017).

Hypothesis 2: The price of the dish should reflect its health benefits. Should food with rich or unhealthy ingredients be priced lower than food with healthy ingredients?

As mentioned by Banerjee (2015): “Indian food is not just rich in taste, but high on health too. .... want to learn because of the fact of medicinal advantages of Indian spices.”

## **Literature Review**

For Marx, the only resource important is labour, while the rest are just involvement in the process. The element of “supply and demand” is commonly ignored when in fact it is the main determinant of the price.

As summarized by Marx (Econlib.org, 2017):

*“Theory of value is able to show this unity of money and labour process because it does not pose production and circulation as two separates, discretely distinct spheres and does not pose value and price as discretely distinct variables.”*

The preparation of cuisines involve labour, and although some would argue that it is mostly machine-driven or automated, humans remain the creator in both aspects. The amount of time and labour involved are interdependent. As such, both the cuisines require time and effort to prepare, but the real question is: how much time is involved and how it should be valued.

*What Marx's theory of value does is provide a basis for showing the link between money relations and labour process relations in the process of exploitation. Neither money relations nor labour process relations in themselves constitute capitalist exploitation; and neither one can be changed very much without accompanying changes in the other (Econlib.org, 2017).*

Increase in population and demand for food, as per the norm of supply and demand, would result in labour inducing industries, long working hours and exploitation by the owners/restaurateurs. The element of competition and price wars would further result in these equations.

Adam Smith (1776) made it clear that 'toil and trouble' was to be measured from the labourer's subjective standpoint: *"Equal quantities of labour must at all times and in all places have the same value for the labourer. In his normal state of health, strength and activity, and with the average degree of skill that he may possess, he must always give up the same portion of his rest, his freedom, and his happiness"* (Files.libertyfund.org, 2017).

Smith (1776) further elaborated that: *“Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities.”*

Labour and labour alone creates all values as exerted by Smith (1776), a notion of which Hypothesis 1 will intend to prove. South Indian cuisine requires a longer preparation time and a more significant amount of labour; as such, the value placed should equate the work involved unlike that of North Indian food.

David Ricardo (1817) agreed with Smith’s general framework, but he further classified the society as being fragmented into labourers, capitalists and landlords. Growth in population will mean that the income distributions will vary among the members of the society.

Ricardo (1817) further summarizes: *“If we look to a state of society in which greater improvements have been made, and in which arts and commerce flourish, we shall still find that commodities vary in value conformably with this principle: in estimating the exchangeable value of stockings, for example, we shall find that their value, comparatively with other things, depends on the total quantity of labour necessary to manufacture them, and bring them to market”* (Oll.libertyfund.org, 2017).

Affluent positioning and marketing determines the value of a cuisine. Below are some of the reasons why North Indian cuisine is usually priced high:

- i. It is sold in mid to high-end restaurants where rental is high.
- ii. Plenty of showmanship and high cost in acquiring the “tandoor” whilst the expertise from India requires high remunerations.
- iii. The food is priced in such a way that gives a “prestigious” feel for corporate clients.
- iv. The element of supply vs demand.

## **Methodology**

The research involves the collection and interpretation of both primary data, empirical evidence and secondary data. Primary data and empirical evidence are mainly gathered from:

- i. Google Doc administered survey.
- ii. Observation of actual restaurant environments and experiences.

Meanwhile, secondary research is based on available data from books and online research.

## ***Type of Research***

Over 70 research questionnaires were sent to international chefs who are owners of successful Indian restaurant chains, well-established or reknowned restaurants while some have also written and published numerous cook books from Singapore, Malaysia, India, Dubai to the UK.

The researchers were able to pool their wealth of experience to gather these hands-on information and contemplate the

element of effort and time needed to produce the end product.

### ***Questionnaire Design***

The questions were structured in an unambiguous manner, focusing on simplicity to derive the intended results. The questions are more of choosing one over the other with no detailed explanations required.

The design involved:

- i. Defining the target respondents.
- ii. Choosing the method(s) of reaching the target respondents.
- iii. Deciding on the number of questions and content.
- iv. Ensuring questions are in orderly fashion.
- v. Developing the final survey form.

A pilot survey was conducted with seven local chefs and owners before actual implementation to ensure the reliability and validity of the survey questionnaires.

### ***Primary Data Collection***

A set of 17 questions each were sent to 70 chefs/owners via Google Docs, from which 54 responded. The data was received over a period of 21 days from 8<sup>th</sup> August until 29<sup>th</sup> August 2017. Administering the questionnaires via Google Docs was easier as the participants are spread across the globe.

Observations on the preparation method, time taken and ingredients used for preparing dishes were carried out in 3 restaurants in Singapore. This was substantiated further by the existing data from experiences.

### **Analysis**

From the 70 sets of questionnaires sent (Appendix 1), 54 or 77% of the chefs/owners responded with their interpretation towards the research. All the 17 questions were answered and the data was analyzed by Google docs with some equal distributions, as indicated in the graphs (Appendix 2).

Through survey Questions (Q) 2, 4, 5, 11, 12 and 16, we were able to find out the amount of ingredients used for the cuisine/dish: whether they were expensive or non-expensive, whether they offer significant health benefits, and whether they will contribute to a profitable restaurant operation. From the 8 groups of dishes compared, between SI & NI (Appendix 3), it is imperative for Q2, Q5 and Q16 (Appendix 2) that SI uses more ingredients, which is supported by the data obtained from observation and empirical data. Thus, this further cemented the notion that the selling price of products that use healthy ingredients must be higher compared to cuisines with lesser ingredients. Another 4 items were added to further indicate the differences between SI and NI in our own observation.

Ingredients for the NI tend to be more expensive as indicated by 83.3% of the survey respondents, but the observation and empirical data obtained stated otherwise with the exception of Dahi Bhalla and Rogan Josh (see Table 1 and Appendix 3).

As the respondents are from different geographical locations, it was helpful as they provided answers relevant to their market situation. The cost of preparing both cuisines will be more expensive in London as compared to India due to the simple fact of acquiring the necessary spices and ingredients and also the effect of currency exchange and taxation.

Although SI cuisine uses more ingredients, which is good for health, 59.3% of chefs/restaurateurs feel that it is much more profitable to operate a SI cuisine restaurant as compared to NI (Q18), which could only mean that the healthier ingredients are cheaper and more profitable.

Why many think it is profitable to run a SI cuisine business (Q18 – Appendix 2)

- i. Most SI restaurants have a simple ambience filled with lots of seats where more people can dine at the same table over a 1 hour period.
- ii. Many of the chefs in lower-end SI restaurants (there are more of such restaurants) are not well trained and therefore their salaries are low.
- iii. Most SI restaurants use stainless steel plates and cups which means breakages are rare.
- iv. Some curries can be cooked in advanced and heated up and served throughout the day.

It is notable here that despite overpricing the NI cuisine (Q6) to compensate the higher ingredient cost (Q4), the chefs/restaurateurs think the NI cuisine is not as profitable as SI cuisine. Therefore, if more ingredients like spices are used in a cuisine, should it not be more nutritious and

beneficial for health, which should result in a higher selling price? Spices are defined as dried forms of various seeds, roots, flowers, fruits, barks, or vegetables. They are used to add flavour and colour i.e. as an aesthetic addition as well as to help preserve food and for better taste.

Spices encompass almost every element of health, and have been shown to protect your body in some way. A total of 83.3% of the survey respondents agreed that SI uses healthier ingredients (Q5) and 87% of them concurred that SI should be priced in accordance to its nutrition level (see Q16 and Appendix 2).

On Q4, 83.3% of the respondents felt that NI cuisine uses expensive ingredients. The overall understanding is that ingredients are expensive in NI cuisine, but with proper control, the correct pricing mechanism can be ensured. Data from the observation (Appendix 3) indicates that the ingredients in NI cuisine are negligible in quantity.

The tabulated data (Table 1) from the observation and empirical data gathered (Appendix 3) compared to the respondents' survey (Appendix 2) indicated a difference in the preparation time of SI and NI. Respondents from the survey indicated that NI takes longer to prepare, but from observation and empirical data, it is evident that SI takes longer to prepare, with the exception of Chicken Tikka for NI.

In terms of preparation time, the empirical data and observation corresponds with Q17 that cuisines should be priced in accordance to the labor hours involved. A total of 57.4% of the respondents (Q2) responded that NI takes

longer to prepare and as such the food should be priced higher to cater to the labour effort involved as indicated by 77.8% of the respondents (Q17).

In response to Q3, 57.4% commented about the “long hours to prepare” which basically refers to the marinating time (most grilled items in the tandoor requires marinating overnight) or boiling time (the lentils, mutton and sauces). Many food items in NI restaurants and SI restaurants are not prepared ala-minute. The main sauces are prepared earlier as well as the mis-en-place for all the ingredients; all it needs is putting one and two together and heating through.

From both the researchers’ experiences as chef, restaurateur, consultant, lecturer specializing in consumerism and service improvement together with the support of the empirical data, it is certain that North Indian cuisine does not take long to prepare.

Based on observation and empirical data, despite incurring lesser cost, using lesser ingredients and requiring much lesser time to prepare, NI cuisine is actually overpriced as agreed by 83.3% of the survey respondents.

**Table 1**

# Profit margin has factored in the element of labour and overheads involved.  
 # Shaded section represents North Indian (NI) cuisine.

	Naan	Thosai	Tadka	Sambar	Rogan	Mutton	Chicken	Tikka	Chicken	65	Palak ka	Saag	Keeral	Masiyal	Bathura	Puri	Tandoori	Paratha	Roti	Dahi	Bhalla	Tairu	Vadai
Labour Hours	3.18 hr	15.3 hr	1	1.40 hr	2	2.40 hr	7.10 hr	3 hr	3 hr	1 hr	1.05 hr	4hr	4.50 hr	3 hr	3 hr	3.30 hr	10	10	1.50	1.20	10	1.20	10
Cost (\$\$)	0.60	1.80	1.00	1.40	4.10	3.90	3.00	3.00	1.20	1.40	1.40	1.00	1.20	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Selling Price (\$\$)	4.00	4.00	8.00	3.00	19.00	13.00	19.50	12.00	7.50	4.00	4.00	5.50	4.00	7.50	4.00	5.00	4.50	5.00	7.50	7.50	4.00	4.00	4.00
Profit Margin (%)	666	222	800	214	463	333	650	400	625	285	550	350	500	357	500	333	333	500	500	333	333	333	333

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The preparation of SI cuisine is time and labour intensive as established by the research data to support Hypothesis 1. Its status of being labour intensive but undervalued is due to the assumption that emigrant workers cook cheap and nutritious food with home-like simplicity unlike the NI cuisine which requires expensive investments due to the use of ‘tandoor’ and grills thus creating the novelty of dining and paying a premium price (Appendix 4).

Pricing the SI cuisine higher will be something hard to fathom in the near future, but efforts such as exposing customers to the preparation methods via video-technology while they are ordering their cuisine and organizing kitchen visits to expose customers to the process involved would be small initiatives to make customers aware of the value of the labour involved and the appropriate pricing.

As clearly established with the presented research data and to support the research objective of Hypothesis 2, SI cuisine is much healthier when it uses a variety of nutritious yet widely available spices.

In general, when one talks about NI food, it is described as “not so spicy” which clearly indicates that not many spices are used in this cuisine! However, in SI cuisine, a process called “tempering” is used. In this process, whole spices are heated in oil and thrown into the boiling curry to further enhance the flavour and health benefits. The use of ingredients such as chillies, turmeric, cumin, coriander, curry leaves, tamarind and coconut milk add health benefits to SI cuisine.

Thus, it is imperative to determine that SI cuisine is lowly priced despite the high labour hours involved and healthier ingredients used due to it being multi-faceted and easily prepared in a restaurant and at home with readily found ingredients. The variety of ingredients used is more substantial in SI cuisine as compared to NI cuisine thus enriching the health benefits of the former.

Presenting the cuisine with finesse, establishing its health benefits and slowly shifting the mindsets of the customers to value pricing through education will propel the value associated with SI cuisine.

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## **Authors' Biographies**

**Chef Devagi Sanmugam** also known as Spice Queen in Singapore is an accomplished chef, culinary consultant, spice blender and author of 22 cookbooks including her latest book I AM A RICE COOKER! Awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> place as World's Best in the cooking schools category at the Gourmand World Cookbook Award 2017.

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# **AN ORGANIC TRAP: PERCEPTIONS AND PURCHASE INTENTION OF GEN Y IN MALAYSIA TOWARDS ORGANIC JUNK FOOD**

Loke Poh Yee  
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## **Introduction**

Consumers today are more sophisticated and more concerned about health and longevity (Hughner et al. 2007; Ozguven, 2012). This phenomenon has led to an acceleration of demand for organic products (Hassan et al. 2016). According to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), the sales of organic products in years 2010 and 2012 had increased significantly. The Generation Y (Gen Y) group is the most affected by the organic diet trend as they are more attentive to health and general wellness (Hanna 2015; Williams 2015; Robinson 2017). The culture of snacking on junk food is also most prominent among the Gen Y and they define this trend differently; the Gen Y commonly eat between meals or eat small quantities of food during main meals. This culture has become a dominant habit and is not considered as self-indulgent (*Mordor Intelligence* 2016; Fromm 2015). However, many researchers disagree on the classification of organic junk food as an organic product (Guduex 2010; Bezoni & Skwiat 2017). Considering the demand for

organic products, this study examined the consumer purchase intention towards organic products.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2002), the term 'organic' refers to products which are certified as having been produced through clearly defined organic production methods. In depth, a claim on the production process is rather a claim on the product itself when it comes to 'organic' (Trade and Markets Division, 2001). Organic junk food is considered as an organic trap for consumers in which its advertising and marketing are often misleading (Striepe 2013; Guduex 2010). Numerous studies have used Ajzen's TPB to test consumers' purchase intention of organic food products (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist 2005; Chen 2012; Saleki & Seyedsalek 2012). Consumers are found to have higher intention of purchasing organic food products if they have a positive attitude towards organic food in terms of health consciousness, consumer knowledge, positive perception of organic food, and subjective norms (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist 2005; Yang, Al-Shaabab & Nguyen 2014). Price is also claimed as a crucial factor when it comes to food choice (Markovina et al. 2015). Hence, the overarching objective for this study is to examine factors that influence the Gen Y's purchase intention in relation to organic junk food in Malaysia. Appendix 1 shows the conceptual framework of this research. The proposed conceptual framework for this research is distinctive and incorporates the idea adapted from Yang, Al-Shaabab and Nguyen (2014).

## **Methodology**

The approaches in this study are quantitative in nature as the relationship between the variables are studied using self-administered questionnaires consisting of 30 items adapted from past studies by Yang, Al-Shaabani and Nguyen (2014), Chen (2012) and Markovina et al. (2015). Before carrying out the large-scale data collection, a pilot test was conducted to assess face validity. Subsequently, data collection was carried out in various shopping malls located around the Klang Valley area, which is ranked as one of the highest GDP among other states in Malaysia (Malaysia Department of Statistics). Being a well-developed area leads to the assumption that consumers from the Klang Valley have higher incomes and buying power (Loon et al., 2014). As a sampling frame could not be acquired, non-probability judgemental sampling was used. The criteria for choosing the samples of respondents were: being within the Gen Y age group, being residents of Malaysia and having some potential knowledge of organic junk food. All surveys were conducted in shopping malls with a total of 350 respondents, but only 341 questionnaires were usable, representing a response rate of 97.43 percent. The primary data was analyzed through statistical procedure by utilizing the SPSS program, carrying out a series of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Parametric Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and multiple regression to determine and test the relationships between the variables.

## **Data Analysis**

The data analysis relied on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. In this research, the

descriptive analysis constructed for the demographic characteristics of the final 341 respondents represented a response rate of 97.43 percent. A total of 8 straight-lining cases and 1 case with 22.2% of missing data were removed. The number of female respondents is slightly higher than the male respondents i.e. by 21. More than half of the respondents had higher education degrees. The results also show that 45.5% of the Gen Y respondents live with their parents and 61.9% are working. Besides that, 46.6% of the Gen Y respondents have a monthly family income of between RM 1,801 to RM 6,000. Appendix 2 shows the profile of the respondents.

### **Reliability and normality**

According to Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt (2011), it is important to test the normality of the data distribution as it will decrease the probability of the hypothesis to be significant if the data is extremely non-normal. In general, the mean value is varied between the questions with the lowest value of 2.26 to the highest value of 3.77. The values of skewness and kurtosis can be examined to assess the degree of normality. The result of skewness and kurtosis for this research is between +1 to -1 which is within the acceptable range according to Hair et al (2016).

### **Validity**

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to measure the variables. Appendix 3 shows the EFA results for all the independent variables of the framework. Bartlett's Test of A factor is interpreted by examining the largest value linking the measured variables to the factor in the

rotated factor matrix. The factor loading value of less than 0.3 is not shown in the result as it is a weak factor loading.

The overall Cronbach alpha value is 0.868 i.e. above 0.7, which is the value prescribed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). All the hypotheses were tested using Pearson's correlation. The results are shown in appendix 4. According to Cohen (1988), the value of correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) can be categorized into three which are small ( $0.1 < [r] < 0.3$ ), moderate ( $0.3 < [r] < 0.5$ ) and large ( $1 < [r] < 0.5$ ). Appendix 5 below shows the results for each variable.

## **Regression**

A multiple regression was run to predict how the independent variables affect purchase intention. There was linearity as assessed by the partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the predicted values. The Durbin-Watson statistic for this analysis is 1.736, or approximately 2, which indicates that there was independence of residuals. The strength of the coefficient of determination,  $r^2$  is 0.50 which is moderate as suggested by Hair et al (2013).  $R^2$  for overall model was 49.3% with an adjusted  $R^2$  of 48.2%, a weak effect size according to Cohen (1988). During the test for multicollinearity, the tolerance value is greater than 0.1 and the VIF is lower than 10; thus, there is no evidence of multicollinearity. There were no studentized deleted residuals greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2 and values for Cook's distance above 1. The multiple regression model statistically and significantly predicted the purchase intention,  $F(7, 333) = 46.257$ ,  $P < .001$ . All variables added statistically and significantly to the prediction,  $p < .05$  except for health consciousness with a recorded  $p$  value of

0.155. The summary of multiple regression analysis can be found in appendix 6. Appendix 7 shows the summary for the hypothesis.

## **Discussion**

The influence of purchase intention on organic junk food based on the independent variables are discussed to determine how these will affect the dependent variable.

There is a significant relationship between attitude and purchase intention which is aligned with the study of Ajzen (1991). Many people have a great attitude towards organic junk food because of the label 'organic'. As Palmer (2012) suggested, the general majority view organic as a healthier option than conventional food including junk food as supported by Linder et al. (2010) who managed to show that there are more favourable responses when 'organic' is labelled on the food packaging of the same product. In fact, the only good thing about the said product is in the way its ingredient was cultivated organically whereas its nutritional content is no better than conventional junk food (Palmer, 2012). This study is also in line with the findings of Zanoli and Naspetti (2002) who highlighted the general perception that there is quality in organic food products as compared to conventional food products. Hence, the Malaysians of Gen Y are easily influenced by organic junk food because of the word 'organic' labelled on the packaging. As no pesticide was used to grow the ingredients in the organic products, the Gen Y believe that such products are safer to consume than conventional ones.

Health consciousness is not related to the purchase intention of organic junk food which is in contrast to the findings by

Grossman (1972) and Schifferstein and Oude Ophuis (1998). This is because Malaysians tend to prefer high-fat foods and put taste and convenience over nutrition when it comes to choosing food products (Chai, 2006). Malaysian national foods such as *Nasi Lemak* contains a large amount of fat from steamed coconut milk rice, dried anchovies and peanuts. Furthermore, although health is always perceived as the most important factor in determining a human's life quality, the study of Hossain and Lim (2016) showed that there is no relationship between health consciousness and consumer behaviour among Malaysian consumers. This is justified by Brunso and Scholderer's (2001) study which indicated that the least important factor in shaping consumers' behaviour towards organic food products is health consciousness due to the fact that many perceived healthy foods including organic food products are tasteless and clean.

The findings of this study is consistent with the studies of Yang, Al-Shaabani and Nguyen (2014) and Hossain and Lim (2016) which indicated that consumer knowledge positively affects purchase intention. The most important tool to differentiate the difference between organic and conventional product is product knowledge (Gracia & de Magistris, 2007). Consumers these days are hungry for knowledge and are more into 'natural' products; they want to know the difference between organic and conventional food product production and processes (Zanoli & Naspetti 2002). This is because investing in organic food products can easily cost double or triple the amount of conventional food products. Thus, knowledge and information on organic food is crucial for the intention of consuming organic food products among the Gen Y in Malaysia so as to establish the

worthiness of the products for their health and the environment.

In this study, an environmental-concerned consumer has higher intention to purchase organic junk food driven by the knowledge of the cost of the product. The hypothesis is aligned with the studies of Wee et al (2014) and Saleki and Seyedsalek (2012) as Malaysians are aware that organic food can help improve the environment. Moreover, the study by Kareklas, Carlson, and Muehling (2014) explained that the intention to buy organic product increases when the consumers believe that less harm is done to the environment with organic farming. With organically grown products, the Malaysian Gen Y believe that this can help with the environment as the Gen Y are more educated about environmental concerns and ways to help preserve the earth.

A significant relationship could be seen between the perception on organic junk foods and purchase intention to personal norm. This study suggested that Malaysians act and behave based on their beliefs which is supported by the study by Schwartz (1973) who indicated that one's own behaviour and belief cause them to act in a certain way. In addition, with the agreement of the respondents on "I feel I should choose organic junk food", "I get a good conscience about myself when I choose organic junk food" and "I believe that choosing organic junk food is a right decision", the indication is that they choose organic junk food because they personally believe that it is a better choice than conventional junk food.

Positive subjective norms influence the purchase intention of organic junk food which is line with the study by Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005) on subjective norm and

attitude. This may be because many of the Gen Y respondents (45.5%) are still living with their parents and may be influenced by their parents from a young age. Based on the study of Makatouni (2003), parents are usually concerned about health, the environment and ethical issues when it comes to food consumption. Organic food is perceived by parents to be healthier, safer, higher in quality, fresher and tastes better than conventional food. Moreover, the study by Kok (2011) showed that Malaysian students overseas have eating habits that are influenced by their parents including eating healthily and consuming organic products. Thus, due to the influence of their parents, Gen Y have the perception that all organic food products are healthy, including organic junk food.

Price is shown to be an important factor in determining the purchase intention of organic junk food (Markovina et al, 2015). This is because there is an additional percentage charged on organic foods known as price premium (Fillion & Arazi, 2002). With this extra incurred cost, many Gen Y including the respondents regard organic junk food as expensive. For example, organic popcorn costs RM 7.90 at 50 grams while conventional popcorn costs RM 7.95 for 160 grams. More than triple the amount of conventional popcorn can be bought for almost the same price of the organic popcorn. Therefore, many people would feel that it is worth more buying conventional junk food in terms of price although they know the benefits of organic food. Besides that, the Asian Institute of Finance (2015) reported that although Gen Y have the highest spending power, they lack confidence in financial literacy because they only have average financial knowledge despite being the most up-to-date in terms of education.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, supported by the multiple linear regression test ran by SPSS, the most significant independent variable is personal norm, followed by attitude. However, health consciousness of a consumer showed no significant relationship with the purchase intention of organic junk food, thus the hypothesis was rejected. In addition to the independent variables adapted from previous studies, price was also used to test the relationship which also showed a significant relationship. Furthermore, this study is one of the very few associated with consumer's purchase intention of organic food products among Gen Y in Malaysia. Therefore, the findings of this study could be beneficial for academic purposes. This study could also benefit the government and relevant organic product industry, especially the marketers and manufacturers as this study gave insights to the perceptions of Gen Y in Malaysia on organic junk food. Nevertheless, there are still limited studies on organic food that can indicate and unambiguously demonstrate that organic junk food is neither healthy nor unhealthy with sufficient scientific evidence. Moreover, organic food products are still in the introductory stage in Malaysia, which pose challenges as the market has limited knowledge of and experience with organic food products, especially organic junk food. Future researchers can study more on organic junk foods which could help raise awareness on the matter among our society. On the other hand, marketers also play a significant role in educating and creating awareness among the Malaysian society about organic food products, especially organic junk food. This research had emphasized specifically on Gen Y, which could serve as the foundation for further studies on organic junk food in the future, and

applied on other generations such as Gen Z. Furthermore, researchers could modify the study by investigating on conventional junk food and comparing the results with the findings of this study, or replicate it to suit different contexts such as countries and consumers.

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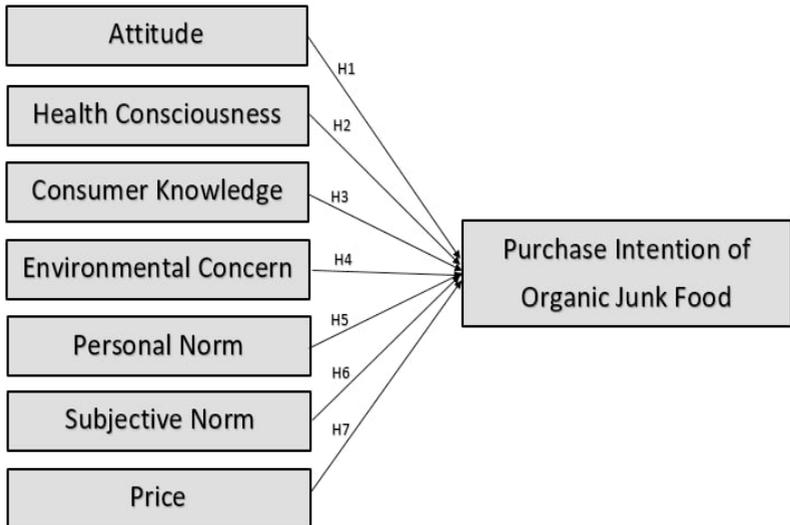
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Conceptual framework of this research



## Appendix 2: Profile of respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Gen Y	
	N = 341	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	181	53.1
Male	160	46.9
<i>Age</i>		
Between 22 – 26	215	63.0
Between 27 – 31	77	22.6
Between 32 – 37	49	14.4
<i>Education</i>		
Below high school	5	1.5
High school	32	9.4
College	93	27.3
Undergraduate	126	37.0
Postgraduate or above	85	24.9
<i>Household</i>		
Yourself (single)	91	26.7
Couple without children	62	18.2
With parents	155	45.5
With children	33	9.7
<i>Occupation</i>		
Occupied	211	61.9
Unoccupied	9	2.6
Student	121	35.5
<i>Monthly family income</i>		
< RM 1,800	91	26.7
RM 1,801 – RM 6,000	159	46.6
RM 6,001 – RM 9,700	55	16.1
> RM9,701	36	10.6

### Appendix 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

Variables and items	Eigen value	Factor loadings	% Variance	Cum. %	Cronbach alpha
<i>Attitude</i>	6.553		16.857	16.857	0.861
I think it is good to buy organic junk food.		0.811		7	
I think it is important to buy organic junk food.		0.757			
I think it is wise to buy organic junk food.		0.744			
<i>Health Consciousness</i>	1.345		7.613	56.160	0.617
I pay a lot of attention to my health.		0.861			
The health aspect is very important in my food choice.		0.859			
I believe that organic junk food contains more natural ingredients than conventional junk food.		0.747			
I believe that organic junk food is good for my health more than conventional junk food.		0.729			
<i>Consumer Knowledge</i>	1.008		6.928	70.538	0.407
My knowledge about organic junk food is sufficient.		0.839			
My knowledge about organic junk food is		0.845			

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based on previous experience such as purchasing/consuming/hearing from others/reading about it.				
Overall, I have a negative experience/impression towards organic junk food.	0.748			
<i>Environmental Concern</i>	1.689	10.084	39.136	0.692
I am concerned towards the environmental issues.	0.801			
The environmental aspect is very important in my food choice.	0.810			
I believe that organic junk food is more environmental friendly than conventional junk food.	0.550			
<i>Personal Norm</i>	1.182	7.449	63.610	0.832
I feel that I should choose organic junk food instead of conventional junk food.	0.620			
I get a good conscience about myself if I choose organic junk food.	0.475			
I believe that choosing organic junk food is a right decision.	0.474			

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<i>Subjective Norm</i>	2.135	12.195	29.05	0.779
			2	
When it comes to choosing organic junk food, I behave as others do.	0.775			
Due to the impact of social pressure (society, environment, social network etc), I choose organic junk food.	0.791			
Most people who are important to me would like me to choose organic junk food.	0.665			
<i>Price</i>	1.607	9.411	48.54	0.749
			8	
Organic junk food is not expensive.	0.879			
Organic junk food is cheap.	0.864			
Organic junk food is good value for money.	0.615			

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**Notes:**

KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test of Sampling Adequacy) → 0.839

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity → 3159.999 p<0.0001

Overall alpha coefficient = 0.868

## Appendix 4: Pearson Correlations for all variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Attitude	1.00							
Health	0.519	1.00						
Consciousness	**							
Consumer Knowledge	0.092	0.160	1.00					
Environmental Concern	0.277	0.497	0.112	1.00				
Personal Norm	0.579	0.519	0.069	0.455	1.00			
Subjective Norm	0.444	0.442	0.295	0.312	0.527	1.00		
Price	0.181	0.228	0.138	0.208	0.361	0.335	1.00	
Purchase Intention	0.538	0.485	0.253	0.416	0.598	0.496	0.336	1.00

**Notes:**

- \*indicates significant level at 0.05
- \*\*indicates significant value at 0.01

## Appendix 5: Results for each variable

Variables	KMO Value	Bartlett Test of Sphericity Value	Cronbach Alpha value	Parametric-Pearson Correlations, r	Strength of correlation
Attitude	0.731	0.000	0.861	0.538	Large
Health Consciousness	0.508	0.000	0.617	0.485	Moderate
Consumer Knowledge	0.478	0.000	0.407	0.253	Small
Environmental Concern	0.613	0.000	0.692	0.416	Moderate
Personal Norm	0.724	0.000	0.832	0.598	Large
Subjective Norm	0.670	0.000	0.779	0.491	Moderate
Price	0.648	0.000	0.749	0.336	Moderate

## Appendix 6: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	<i>B</i>	SE $\beta$	$\beta$
Intercept	0.549	0.174	
Attitude	0.157	0.035	0.234*
Health Consciousness	0.072	0.051	0.074
Consumer Knowledge	0.134	0.038	0.145*
Environmental Concern	0.106	0.040	0.124*
Personal Norm	0.207	0.043	0.271*
Subjective Norm	0.074	0.039	0.096*
Price	0.076	0.032	0.101*

**Notes:** \* $p < 0.05$ ; *B* = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SE $\beta$  = Standard error of the coefficient;  $\beta$  = standardized coefficient

## Appendix 7: Summary for hypothesis

Hypothesis	Results
H1: The more positive the attitude of an individual, the higher the purchase intention of organic junk food.	Accepted
H2: The higher the health consciousness of an individual, the higher the purchase intention of organic junk food.	Accepted
H3: The higher the consumer knowledge on organic junk food, the higher the chance of purchase intention.	Rejected
H4: When consumers are more environmentally concerned, the higher the purchase intention of organic junk food.	Accepted
H5: The more positive the perception on organic junk foods by consumers, the higher the purchase intention towards the organic junk foods.	Accepted
H6: The higher the number of people around the consumers that consider organic junk food as good, the higher the purchase intention of consumers towards organic junk food.	Accepted
H7: Price is perceived important when there is intention of purchasing organic junk food.	Accepted

# **REGIONAL WINE DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZIL: THE CASE OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL AND THE SÃO FRANCISCO VALLEY**

Rafael Lavrador Sant Anna

## **Introduction**

In recent years, the Brazilian wine production chain has been following the trend of Brazilian agribusiness, growing considerably and occupying more and more space within the main wineries in Brazil, as well as supermarket chains. It is enough to observe the growth of the area destined to this type of drink in the supermarkets.

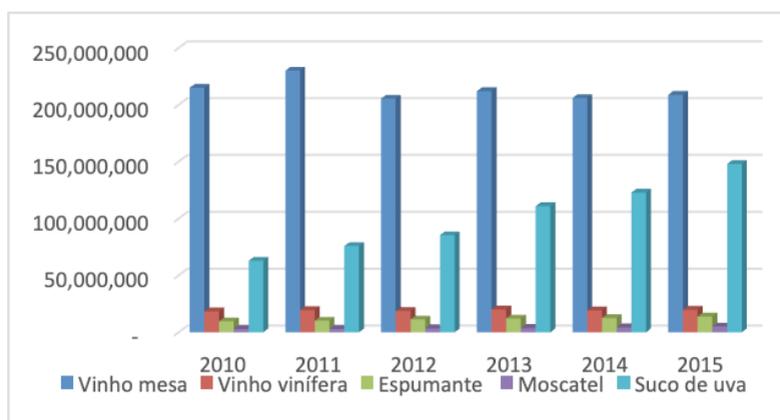
Brazil's main wine producing state is Rio Grande do Sul, more precisely in the Serra Gaúcha Region, and the cities of Bento Gonçalves and Caxias do Sul are of great relevance. However, today, wines are produced practically in all regions of the country, reaching production in Mato Grosso and Goiás, as well as in the São Francisco River Valley, a promising productive hub that has shown continuous growth in the last eight years. Vale dos Vinhedos is the first Brazilian region to be classified as a geographical indication (GI), which has led to greater investments and development in the region.

The San Francisco Valley also has a geographical indication, but was later established to the Vale dos

Vinhos. These indications have led to advantages in the quality of products and the self-esteem of the population, which in turn has led to a better quality of life and a virtuous development cycle (Paviani, 2014).

Wine production in Rio Grande do Sul has grown reasonably in recent years, mainly due to climatic factors, which prevented higher harvests and made producers focus more on the production of grape juice. Figure 1 shows this growth relationship.

**Figure 1** - Growth of the main derivatives of the grape production chain in Brazil



Source: IBRAVIN, 2016.

The figure shows the growth relationship of the main derivatives of the grape production chain in Brazil. There is a steady increase in the production of grape juice and a somewhat more timid growth in the production of fine

wines. Meanwhile, table wine production remained practically constant between 2010 and 2015. When we observed the commercialization of these wines, we noticed that the table wine is the one that stands out, followed by the concentrated grape juice. Both are responsible for more than 80% of the commercialization of the grape production chain in Brazil. In this respect, fine table wine has a small portion.

According to Farias (2016), the wine industry segment of RS is formed by approximately 545 companies, where 88% are located in one of the thirteen municipalities that make up the Caxias do Sul Microregion, with about 60 companies located in other regions of the state. From 2001 to 2009, there was a growth of around 60% in the number of companies registered in IBRAVIN. This growth is explained not only by the increase in the marketing of wines and grape juice, but also by an expansion of the so-called "wine business". Numerous producers (between grape producers and wineries) have invested in the last years in the increase of their original businesses, going beyond the production of grapes and wines.

### **Research problem**

Having briefly presented the context of the wine sector in Brazil, it is possible to visualize that this chain has the potential to grow in the coming years. Thus, the study intends to focus on the territorial and regional factors that influence this growth and in which areas the sector should focus to improve its competitiveness.

As a way to understand the needs of the sector a little more, an interview was conducted with specialists from the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) and the Brazilian Wine Institute (IBRAVIN). In the interviews, it was possible to understand even more the needs of the sector, besides all the difficulties encountered and the efforts that the various bodies linked to the wine production chain have made. In the view of the specialist of EMBRAPA VINHOS:

"We have a project in Mato Grosso, called Fazenda Melina, which is run by Embrapa, mainly in genetic improvement, which has great potential. But what is the problem in this region to launch and have national and international expression in the juice and a region that is being promised a link between Cuiabá-Santarém that can make it possible to flow from the rivers of the northern region" (EMBRAPA Specialist, 2016).

"The state of Goiás has also begun to grow wine production and has a very high potential. This production has advanced mainly in some farms that have lost competitiveness in the production of cotton and are now investing in the production of grapes in regions of Brazil, which is transportation logistics" (EMBRAPA Specialist, 2016).

In the view of this specialist, it is evident that the logistics and transportation system is one of the main obstacles for the development of the wine production chain in Brazil, and

possibly regional and territorial development as well. However, along with this problem, there is another very relevant one, which is the loss of competitiveness of Brazilian wines in comparison to the wines of Mercosur, especially the Argentine and Chilean wines, which dominate the wine market within Brazil. This problem is evident in the speech of one of IBRAVIN's experts:

"The way the Mercosur wines enter Brazil is an affront to all Brazilian producers. We can not compete with Chilean and Argentine wines when we compare Custo-Brasil for wine production and the so much of tax exemption that wines of Mercosur wines, our wines lose their market power completely. While Brazilian wines receive excessive taxation in all sectors of the production chain, Mercosur wines receive support and tax incentives in all stages of their commercialization and their entry into Brazil"(IBRAVIN Specialist, 2016).

Observing these two opinions, the following questions arise: Does the Institutional Environment of the wine production chain affect its development in Brazil, harming regional and territorial development? What is the role of the wine sector in regional development? Do geographical indications (GIs) help in the regional development process?

## **Objectives**

The objectives generated from the research problem and of which will be the guiding principles of the thesis are:

## **General objective**

To analyze the role of wine production chains in Brazil for regional development in the Vale dos Vinhedos and São Francisco Valley regions.

## **Specific objectives**

- To characterize the wine production chain in Brazil and identify its main links.
- To identify the main critical points in wine production chains and develop a model of wine production chain.
- To analyze the different producing regions, identifying their population, size of the region, number of inhabitants, cultural environment, climate, and other factors that influence regional development.
- To identify existing limitations and opportunities for the development of the Brazilian wine market.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Type of research***

According to Vergara (2006), this research can be classified, as far as the ends, as exploratory since there is little knowledge accumulated and systematized in the area in which it intends to investigate.

The research will be carried out through bibliographic research in the main databases and information of the wine sector. This database and information are composed of books, dissertations, theses, scientific journals, websites linked to the topic, among others. All this process of secondary information collection is extremely important for the theoretical enrichment of the work and contextualization of the study.

The proposed methodology for the analysis of the productive chains will be the Technological Demands Prospecting Methodology proposed by Castro (1998). According to this Methodology, the prospection of productive chains comprises two major steps: diagnostic analysis and prognostic analysis. This study intends to use this methodology to carry out a comparative study between the São Francisco River Valley and the Serra Gaúcha.

In the diagnostic analysis, the past and current situation and performance of the production chain is investigated. In the definition of Castro (1998), the performance of a productive chain is the capacity of its components, acting interactively, to process capital, energy (mechanical and chemical), information and matter, and transforming them into products and byproducts of utility for certain groups of intermediate or final consumers.

## **Research Development**

In analyzing the Brazilian wine production chain, especially the São Francisco River Valley and the Serra Gaúcha, a

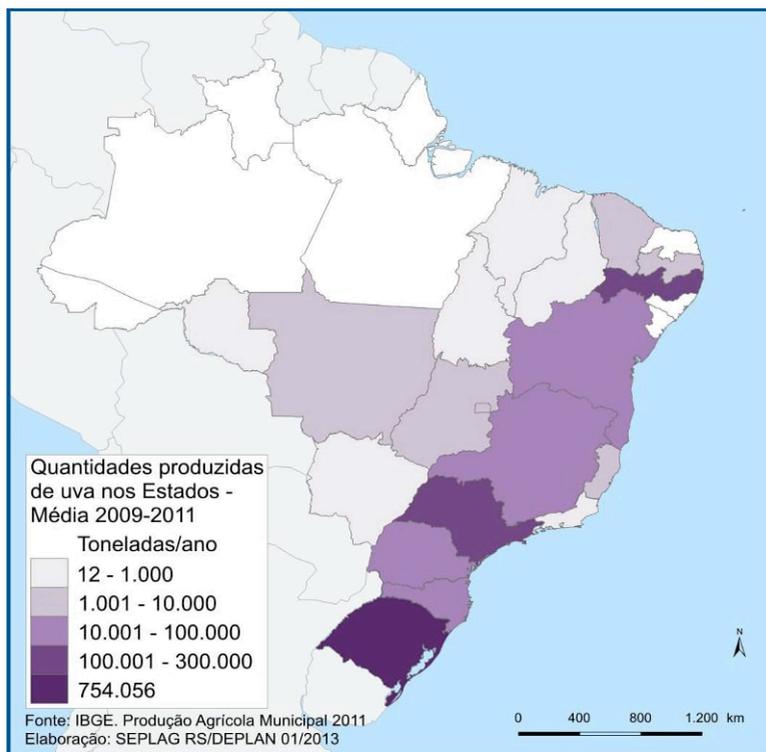
great disparity was found in both the quantity of production and the organizational structure of the producers. Whilst in Rio Grande do Sul there is a mix of small and large producers in significant quantities, the São Francisco River Valley presents a very small fraction of producers belonging to large groups.

Currently, it can be stated that the viticulture occupies an area of approximately 80 thousand hectares, with Rio Grande do Sul contributing more than 770 million kilograms of grapes per year, and the fruit poles of Petrolina / PE and Juazeiro / BA in the well-known São Francisco Valley is responsible for 95% of national exports of fine table grapes (FARIAS, 2016).

According to SÁ et al (2015), the Vale do Rio São Francisco has only six wineries, five of which are located in Pernambuco and one in Bahia: Vinibrasil (PE), São Francisco Valley Winery (PE) Lagoa Grande (PE), Adega Bianchetti Tedesco Ltda. (PE), Ducos Vinícola Comércio Indústria (PE) and Exportação Ltda. (PE), and Vinícola Ouro Verde Ltda (BA).

The map below shows the general panorama of grape production in Brazil according to the 2006 Census of Agriculture (last agricultural survey in Brazil):

**Figure 2** - Location of quantities of grapes (average), by state - (2009 to 2011)



Source: Farias, 2016, apud IBGE. Censo Agropecuário, 2006.

As can be seen in the figure above, it is evident that the main producers of grapes in Brazil are the States of Rio Grande do Sul, Pernambuco and São Paulo (for methodological purposes, it was not contemplated in this study). The intriguing thing about this map is the great

distance between the two main producers, staying in totally different parallels, and consequently in different climates.

According to Farias (2016), the cultivation of grapes in the Brazilian semi-arid began in the second half of the 1980s, with the planting of varieties adapted to the region. Embrapa played a key role in the development of grapes production in the region, mainly in the stimulation and selection of cultivars.

"The intention was to seek cultivars that could ensure the development of new wine options in Brazil. With this intention, Embrapa has been testing grape varieties since the 1980s for the production of wines with characteristics similar to the product of Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French and German origins. Today there are more than 28 different types of varietal grapes produced in the Brazilian semi-arid region" (Farias, 2016, p.120).

It is possible to affirm that in Brazil there is a distinction in the productive process of the vitivinícola sector, where each region has been specified in the production of more adapted products, of climatic, cultural, or technological form. We find mainly in the southern region the production of wines (table and fine), juices and derivatives, already in the region of the Valley of the São Francisco, where the production is directed towards the consumption of natural and fine wines.

The main producing region of Brazil, as mentioned previously, is the Serra Gaúcha, and the most striking aspect

of this region is the growth in the number of wine properties and the number of people involved in the wine production chain. Today, the Serra Gaúcha represents 90% of the planted area in Rio Grande do Sul and for more than 40% of Brazil (Farias, 2016).

Meanwhile, in the region of the San Francisco Valley, there is a small number of producers; the region of the valley of the Vineyards presents a significant number of producers with more than 13,783 vineyards as of 2012. Figure 3 shows the evolution:

**Figure 3** - Evolution of the number of viticultural properties in the Serra Gaúcha



Source: elaborado a partir de Farias (2016).

In analyzing the above figures, there is a certain optimism on the part of the new producers of Serra Gaúcha, where in

an interval of eight years, there is an increase of 485 new viticultural properties in the region. If we compare the numbers with that of the region of the São Francisco River Valley, where, according to the São Francisco River Basin Committee, in 2013 there were 3,331 producers working in wine production, there is a large difference in the quantity.

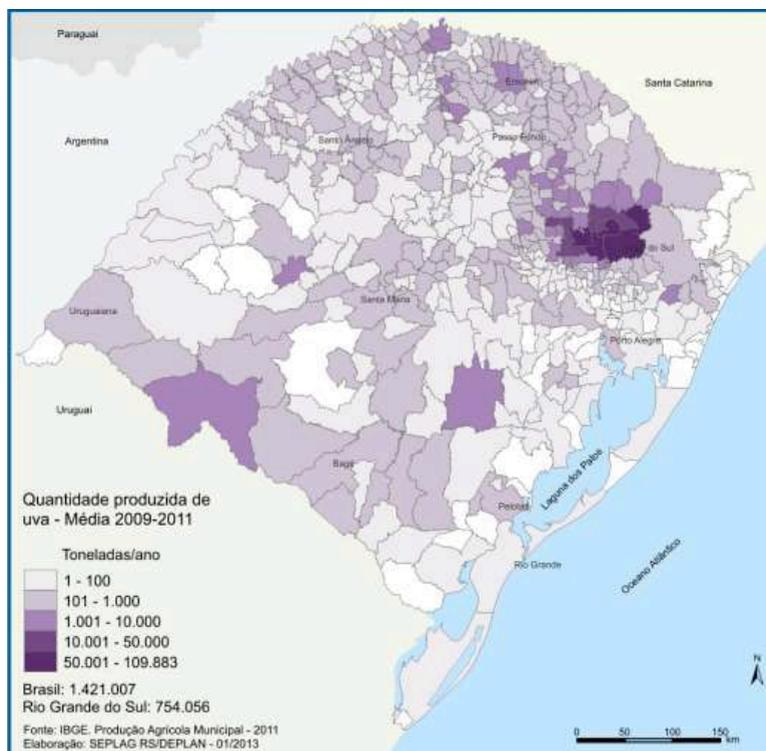
When analyzing the quantity of wine producers in a region, we can see the number of producers working with vines, are not necessarily producing wines (wine-related activity) but also grapes that can be used to produce juice, jellies, and other natural products for consumption, such as wine, among other purposes. Despite the caveat, the data is important as it may indicate whether or not there is a future growth of new wine producers in the region.

One explanation for the great difference in the number of winegrowers in the studied regions is the recent implantation of vineyards in the São Francisco Valley, against a centennial production of the Serra Gaúcha, influenced largely by the immigrant culture (mainly Italian). Another factor for this discrepancy is related to the process of transposition of the São Francisco River, which is very recent, and that without water it was not possible to cause water stress in the vines and induce them to the dormancy stage.

Rio Grande do Sul has considerably increased the number of wine producers in recent years, but this does not necessarily imply that these new producers are reduced to Serra Gaúcha. In Figure it is possible to verify that there is a considerable

expansion for the region of the *pampas gauchos* in the border with Uruguay.

**Figure 4** - Produced quantity of grapes (average) RS - (2009 to 2011)



Source: FARIAS, 2016, apud IBGE. Censo Agropecuário, 2006.

Figure 4 shows that in the region of the Gaúcha Campanha between the municipalities of Uruguaiana and Bagé, the production of grapes has increased considerably, reaching an average production of between 10 and 50 thousand

tons/year, production level found in the region of Serra Gaúcha. Serra Gaúcha leads the concentration of grape production, reaching an average of over 100 thousand tons/year.

Rio Grande do Sul, in addition to presenting exciting data on grape production, also presents very intriguing data on the characteristics of producers, with the prevalence of small farmers in the Serra Gaúcha region and larger properties in the Campanha region.

"The organization of the production of grapes, through small family units, is one of the characteristics of the Serra Gaúcha. This difference is striking when compared to other RS producing regions, such as the Campaign, where in 2012 the average size of the properties was 88 hectares, with about 27 hectares dedicated to the production of grapes" (Farias, 2016, p. .128).

## **Conclusion**

The study provided an overview of how state-of-the-art wine production is found in the region of the São Francisco River Valley and the Serra Gaúcha River in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. At the first moment of analysis, a great difference was found mainly in the quantity of producers in the two regions, with Serra Gaúcha reaching almost double that of the São Francisco Valley.

Another relevant indication refers to the wine producing units, where in the São Francisco Valley there are only six production units albeit of great size, against hundreds of producers in the Serra Gaúcha with small characteristics.

The study also identified that despite the differences in the production systems, there is a certain animation in the production chain since the data indicated growth in recent years, both in productivity and in numbers of producers. In addition, the study identified that one of the great promoters of this animation is the opportunity to invest in wine tourism, a sector that is developing in the Serra Gaúcha and which is gradually starting in the Valley of the São Francisco River.

The research presented concrete data on the reality of the wine production system, but as it is under development, there is a need to invest in new avenues of research such as: observing the importance of geographical indication (GI) for the development of the chain wine production; checking where the production is being sent (internal or external market); and verifying if the regionality has influenced the price of the products and consequently the development of the productive chain.

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# **FACTORS DETERMINING VENDOR ATTENDANCE AT VIC PARK FARMERS' MARKET, PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Mark Azavedo and John Walsh

## **Introduction**

“A farmers’ market is a public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives selling the food that they produced directly to consumers,” claims the Farmers’ Market Coalition (What are Farmers’ Markets?).

In truth, though, most are fairly broad-based leisure facilities that allow the interaction between the public and each other, and also a variety of stallholders, as live music is played, ready to eat food eaten, donkey rides taken, bouncy castles played on, faces painted, and goods – not just farm produce – are bought and sold.

In some areas, the farmers’ market is part of the tourism offer. Zittlau and Gorman (2012) flagged that national tourist boards and other Government agencies of many western countries, such as Canada and Australia, see food as a focal point of their tourist offering. The same is true of Failte Ireland.

Farmers’ markets have also been seen as active contributors to community development, both economic and social.

Guthrie et al (2006), in considering New Zealand's farmers' markets, stressed economic development, or at least a role in preventing decline, for saving growers. In fact, there can be a growth of jobs through farmers' market, which could be among the growers, or at the farmers' market or in the wider community. Particularly, farmers' markets draw customers to shop more broadly nearby the market. Hughner et al (2008) saw the sociability of farmers' markets, referencing the interactions of vendors with each other and with customers. Equally, though, they saw powerful social motives among customers to support small producers and local artisanal suppliers. Murphy (2011), in his survey of New Zealand's farmers' markets, also suggested the high value that customers place on interaction with stallholders, and also of broader social-emotional goals such as supporting the local community and finding local products. Gumirakiza et al (2014) found social interaction as a significant reason for attendance at farmers' markets amongst their respondents. As many as 14% held social interaction as the primary reason for the attendance. Alonso and O'Neill (2011) found motives for attendance at Farmers' Markets, on the part of customers, substantially beyond what they labelled as "monetary driven exchange economics". They found strong motivations around supporting local agriculture and farmers and around the opportunity to engage in social discourse. Alonso and O'Neill (2011) concluded that communities can significantly benefit in social terms.

Cassia et al (2012) noted the limitations of their study in only considering consumers. It has also been argued (Guthrie et al, 2006) that for New Zealand, the Farmers' Market development has been supply-side led. Surveying

stallholders at Whangerei, New Zealand, Guthrie et al (2006) found that 30% actually considered their output too small to sell to supermarkets and wholesalers. That, of course, created a pressure to sell by other means. Blasi et al (2015) considered this in Trentino, Italy where farming is carried out in a marginal mountain environment. It is very difficult for farmers to standardise their products and guarantee constant or volume supply. In short, in the mainstream market, they are uncompetitive. Supermarkets and wholesalers are unwilling to deal with them. Australia has similar problems with the same result of pushing farmers to shorten the supply chain, reaching out to the public. The problem is exacerbated by the supermarket duopoly of Coles Myers and Woolworths (King & Mortimer, 2013).

Farmers have responded by cutting out the middlemen, selling directly to the public through farmers' markets or at the farm gate. This of course has several community economic developmental implications.

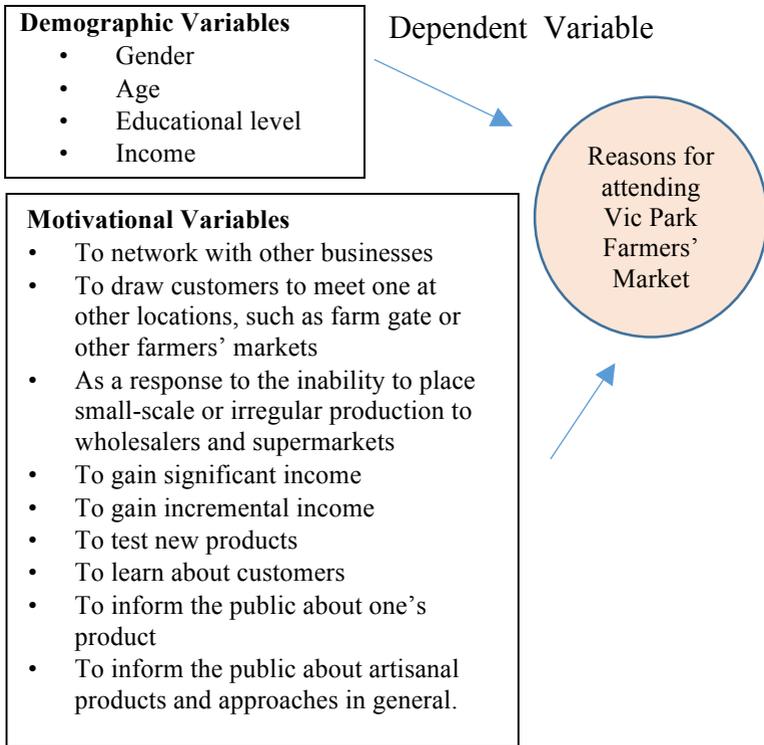
## **Research Methodology**

As previously stated, this study focuses on the reasons for vendors attending the Vic Park Farmers' Market.

The research questions for the study include: 1) how do demographic variables, such as age and gender, influence reasons for vendors attending Vic Park Farmers' Market, and 2) how do motivational variables, such as learning from customers or testing new products, influence the reasons for vendors attending Vic Park Farmers' Market?

The research questions relate to a variable set introduced into the survey's conceptual framework as shown below in Figure 1:

### Independent Variables



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

The demographic variables constitute the study's H1 hypothesis set, whilst the motivational variables constitute the H2 hypothesis set.

The H1 hypotheses, as a category, indicated that there is a positive relationship between the range of demographic variables in the conceptual framework and reasons for vendors attending Vic Park Farmers' Market. The H2 hypotheses suggested a positive relationship between the conceptual framework's motivational variables and reasons for attending.

The testing of these hypotheses was carried out using a quantitative, questionnaire-based survey. The respondents were all the vendors in attendance at Vic Park Farmers' Market on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2017. A randomly selected sub-set also acted as participants in a qualitative survey. The quantitative respondents (sample 24, population 24 [1 void]) were asked about their demographic profile (age, gender, income, etc) and their motivations in attending. Cronbach's statistical tool (Cronbach, 1951) was adopted to assess reliability. The outcome was a .642 Cronbach Alpha measurement which indicated the achievement of reliability. The quantitative questionnaire construction was directly derived from the hypotheses and conceptual framework for the study, and considered both the existing research and prevailing gaps. Coster and Kennon (2005) and Guthrie et al (2006) were influential sources, though Lawson et al (2008) more so, with their ten-fold coding of qualitative responses on stallholder motivations. Naturally, the questionnaires for this study openly added additional elements such as those concerning product testing, which Guthrie et al (2006) found important, and those concerning learning about customers, which were considered important by Coster and Kennon (2005). The qualitative survey used semi-structured interviews with pre-determined, but open-ended questions.

## Research Findings

The data collected on 12th March 2017 was subjected to a wide range of descriptive and inferential analysis, using the SPSS package and several statistical tools.

The sample constituted 56.5% Females and 43.5% Males. The largest group of respondents were in the age group of 26-35 years (39.1%), and only 13% each in the age groups of 18-25 years and over 55 years.

In terms of income, the largest group of respondents (45.5%) reported income of less than AU\$ 30,000 annually, whilst the largest group of respondents reported their highest level of education as bachelor's degree (39.1%).

Other descriptive statistics are worthy of particular note. For instance, on attending to learn about customers, 60.9% strongly agreed with 34.8% somewhat agreeing.

On inability to place small-scale or irregular production to wholesalers as the motivation for attending Vic Park Farmers' Market, 34.8% i.e. by far the largest group of respondents strongly disagreed.

On the aspect of informing the public about their products, all the respondents answered either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed.

Turning to inferential statistics, accepting or rejecting hypotheses H1a through H2i, was against a 0.05 significance level threshold. The results are shown below:

**Table 1:** Summary of Hypothesis Test Outcomes

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Accept/ Reject</b>	<b>Statistical Tool Used</b>
<b>H1 Hypotheses</b>		
Demographic		
H1a Gender	Rejected	Chi-Square
H1b Age	Partially Rejected *1	Chi-Square
H1c Educational level	Rejected	Chi-Square
H1d Income	Partially Rejected *2	Chi-Square
<b>H2 Hypotheses</b>		
Motivational		
H2a Networking	Accepted	Chi-Square
H2b Draw customers to other locations	Rejected	Chi-Square
H2c Inability to place to wholesalers or supermarkets	Rejected	Chi-Square
H2d Earn significant income	Rejected	Chi-Square
H2e Earn incremental income	Accepted	Chi-Square
H2f Test new products	Rejected	Chi-Square
H2g learn about customers	Accepted	Chi-Square
H2h Inform the public about my product	Accepted	Chi Square
H2i Inform the public about artisanal products and approaches in general	Accepted	Chi-Square

\*1 Age and to test new products was accepted.

\*2 Income and to network with other businesses was accepted.

The final inferential statistical tests for this study considered rank order between the accepted hypotheses (H2a, H2e, H2g, H2h and H2i) from the most to the least important determinant of attendance.

The summary (recorded) is as per Table 2 below:

**Table 2:** Rank order of motivations for vendors attending Vic Park Farmers’ Market

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Mean ± SE</b>
To inform the public about my product	3.74 ± .094 <sup>a</sup>
To learn about my customers	3.57 ± .123 <sup>ab</sup>
To inform the public about artisanal products	3.22 ± .177 <sup>b</sup>
To network with other businesses	3.17 ± .162 <sup>b</sup>
To earn incremental income	3.17 ± .185 <sup>b</sup>

This rank order was tested for statistical significance through a one-way analysis of variance, locating significance as ( $\alpha$ ): .05, and substantiated through the Duncan Multiple Range Test. Statistical significance was affirmed.

In terms of the qualitative data, it was broadly supportive of the quantitative findings. In summary, people seemed to be talking more about marketing than selling. One respondent wanted “brand exposure in this area”. Another respondent wanted “to advertise myself and get out there with people”. Participants used the word “community” frequently. Their idea of community support referenced both support of each other and of the consumers.

One interviewee described Vic Park Farmers' Market as a "good opportunity to get my products into the local market". She continued that she was present not only to support other local businesses, but also the community.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

The approach of the conceptual framework for the Vic Park Farmers' Market Vendor Attendance Study was broadly confirmed. The majority of the hypotheses derived from that framework were accepted, at a margin of error of 5% and confidence level of 95%. Cronbach's statistical tool offered a reliability measurement of .642.

Specific conclusions of the quantitative study indicated the importance of five motivators for the attendance of vendors. These were: to inform the public about one's product, to learn about customers, to inform the public about artisanal products, to earn incremental income and to network with other businesses. These conclusions are broadly in line with the findings of such researchers as Coster and Kennon (2005) and Guthrie et al (2006).

The pursuit of significant income as a motivator was rejected. When motivations were rank ordered, the pursuit of incremental income appeared last (or penultimate). This cross-tabulated well with the qualitative study. Only one participant mentioned "profitable sales". Supporting the community, on the other hand, was often mentioned.

The Vic Park outcomes seem to confirm vendor social motivations in line with the findings of Alonso and O'Neill (2011) for customers. Additionally, Sidali et al (2013) highlighted that food products are an important marker of

the consumers' identity, and also of the food providers, who consciously or unconsciously use them to "construct and confirm their own personalities" (Sidalı et al, 2013).

Interaction of those personalities is the issue, socially or economically. Two relevant models may be applied. The intimacy model (Treacy & Wiersma, 1993) posits that building an intimate relationship is possible in the farmers' market environment, particularly with the presence of the grower who may have a tale to tell, which is a major plus in customer experience. The experience model (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) suggests that customers are willing to pay for an experience.

Granovetter (1985) challenges the classical economic theory of the rational consumer. Social factors outside of the transaction, through their embeddedness, can override or modify traditional economic assumptions. People may pay a premium for goods or services where the social environment is appealing.

This study may well be seen as offering the other side of the coin, the vendor who is not motivated solely, or even primarily, by classical economic rationality i.e. income.

Vendor motivations may even have a psychosociological genesis as suggested for consumers (Barthes, 2008) in their food choices and involvements, as identity choices and indicators.

In considering ethnic minorities, Xiao concludes that "food has the capacity to assert and express cultural identity" (Xiao, 2017) Any sub-cultural or class-cultural environment might be considered. It is of great validity to consider

“vegetarian”, “vegan”, “organic”, “clean”, “macrobiotic” not simply as food descriptors, but rather in terms of proponents of those food types. In some of those cases, food choice may not be the only primary defining characteristic and descriptor of the group; it might also entail the individual, if only as perceived by that individual.

Whatever the genesis of economically irrational consumers and economically irrational vendors at farmers’ markets, if either or both are apt descriptions, the farmers’ market considered may be regarded as an economically irrational marketplace.

Given the findings of this study and given the findings of the Vic Park Farmers’ Market customer attendance survey (Azavedo, 2016), where customers proved largely price unconcerned, the totality of those two pieces of research may well have uncovered a marketplace that is wholly irrational in classical economic terms, thereby making an important contribution to knowledge in this fast-evolving area.

Not to be forgotten, though, is that to look at the Vic Park Farmers’ Market vendors is to consider people shortening the local food supply chain by their alternate activity. The shortening of the supply chain i.e. by cutting out profit-seeking middlemen, normally creates price reductions for the end consumer.

Generally, shortened food supply chains mean lower prices. Farmers’ markets have been associated with high prices (e.g. Pesch & Keeler, 2015). The accusation that cost benefits were not being passed on was leveled strongly by a

participant in the qualitative study of consumers at Vic Park Farmers' Market (Azavedo, 2016).

The argument of value being perceived beyond simply the goods in the transaction reasserts itself, now to the detriment of the classic supply chain theory. The shortening of the food supply chain, by bringing producer and consumer physically closer together and interacting together at the farmers' market, enables a social dimension to develop which actually acts as an enabler for higher prices.

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### **Author’s Biography**

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# **PUTTING COOKING SKILLS TO THE TEST: DIETARY LIFESTYLES IN CAMBODIA'S INDUSTRIAL SLUMS**

Hart Feuer  
Sary Seng

## **Introduction**

### ***The factory worker lifeworld in popular imagination***

The driving force behind improvements to conditions in ‘sweat shops’ in poorer countries have been based on the presumption that the necessary interventions are primarily needed at the workplaces in question. The dominant narrative understood by international audiences, particularly among those who put pressure on brand names, is that factory conditions are hot and cramped, and that workers toil for long hours for low wages. It follows that factories should become better ventilated, overtime working hours should be optional, and that wages should simply rise. Since the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) ‘Better Factories Cambodia’ (BFC) initiative began in 2001, all of these things have occurred and yet the condition of factory workers in the garment and footwear sector remains a chronic point of concern and national fixation. Two areas have attracted special attention in the national dialogue: health and safety, and nutrition. And in these areas as well, pressure has been imposed on the garment sector to manage the safety of factory workers at home and en route to work, to manage health and maternal care, and to support a nutritious diet. A certain ideal seems to surround this push,

centered around visions of a gleaming factory with on-site health services, free food canteens, and worker transportation via air-conditioned bus from safe housing estates. The supporting assumption is that a centralized, regulated, and systematized system attached to factories would be more efficient and effective than the inconsistent domain of private service provision outside the factory gates. There is some evidence that when these services are internalized by factories, the workers' well-being rises, but few have compared whether the "chaotic" private sector is, on balance, the optimal place for intervention—especially given the recalcitrance of most factories toward long-term structural changes. This paper departs from multi-lateral, governmental, and non-governmental organization (NGO) reports and academic work in that it squarely seeks to determine how the existing systems of nutrition and food provision can play a role in improving workers' health conditions.

One driver of this research is the observation that the factory sector is in a constant state of flux on which it is difficult to impose health and nutrition rationality, while other forms of service provision are comparable and consistent across neighborhoods and industrial estates in Cambodia. Optimizing the workability of factory workers' fresh markets, lunch vendors, and food stalls would have a more universally-felt effect not only for the workers, but also within the broader industrial working and living space. Beyond this are potential knock-on effects, including better domestic and cooking skills, better financial management, and more independence to customize one's nutritional lifestyle. The impacts are potentially significant for Cambodia's middle-term industrial development and its

post-industrial future. The ILO estimates that around 700,000 workers (out of a population of around 14 million), mostly young and female, are engaged in the garment and footwear sector – which amounts for perhaps one-quarter of all females aged 18-29 in Cambodia (Heng & Ashish, 2017a). It is therefore not surprising that, overall, most international aid funded projects have targeted maternal and sexual health (Heng & Ashish, 2017a), as there is a strong expectation that long-term family building is at stake. The result is an interventionist approach that seeks firstly to improve nutrition during the critical maternal years at the cost of taking a longer-term approach which would focus more on empowering factory women to manage their own nutrition strategically and become savvy domestic managers.

The project appraisals and reports produced about nutrition in the garment and footwear sector often articulate a patriarchal discourse of innocent young women in need of protection from profiteering factory owners, unscrupulous food vendors, and their own dietary illiteracy. This constellation of characteristics serves to deny agency to the workers while creating a justification for structural intervention. One example of this is the preoccupation with factory canteens. Despite the decline in the number of canteens and the persistence of major structural impediments to their use (BDLINK & HRINC, 2012), policy recommendations typically refer to them as the ideal solution for workers (Angkor Research, 2016; Ashish, 2017; Becker, 2012; CARE International, 2006). The implication is that the food systems internal to the targets (i.e. the factory workers' own domestic and food skills) and external (i.e. the food vendors, fresh markets, and stalls) are sub-

optimal spaces for intervention. In short, factory workers' dietary skills are not consistent and vendors cannot be trustworthy. This paper does not seek to contradict the well-documented nutritional challenges facing factory workers, but rather to avoid the trap of seeking *a priori* top-down interventions.

### **Factory workers in the lens of development aid**

Consistent with the experience of industrialization in most countries, factory workers in Cambodia typically transition from farm homes to cramped slum areas where basic amenities, including kitchens and running water, cannot be taken for granted. Most typically, young female workers reside in a single room with an improvised cooking area made up of a camping stove, wood block, and set of crockery. Many have disrupted school and domestic education to migrate to the city and may lack comprehensive cooking and life skills. While this set of conditions might suggest ominous nutritional outcomes, our research in a number of factory worker areas in the greater Phnom Penh area has uncovered a more optimistic state of affairs. This short research update draws on surveys, and itinerant research among factory workers to illustrate how the social modeling in migration, the food spaces around factories, and ingenuity combine to create a lived environment with surprisingly high nutritional potential. This is not to say that factory workers' health and hygiene are necessarily good, as indeed many migrants struggle to adopt optimal dietary behavior, but rather to suggest that nutritional outcomes are better than expected and can often be quite good.

Certain aspects of the routine, lived dietary experience have been well documented in reports by consulting and aid agency reports. As a starting point, the most recent controlled study of the impact of factory canteens (Angkor Research, 2016) ultimately endorses canteens, but the contradictory tone apparent in the recommendations reveals a more ambivalent conclusion.

“Improvements in workers’ understanding of positive health behaviours, including how to make appropriate food choices for better health and nutrition, would help workers to make positive changes *in their own lives over the long term, and would also benefit their children and other family members.*” (Angkor Research, 2016, p. 27, emphasis added)

Contrary to popular imagination, they find that the workers’ Body Mass Index (BMI) is not dissimilar to that of the overall Cambodian population, and that factory workers actually had an “acceptable amount of dietary diversity” when eating independently (Angkor Research, 2016, p. 7). Instead of forcefully and exclusively pushing for canteens, they recommend a combination of trainings on food diversity, nutrition, and hygiene, as well as more eggs, dairy, and foods rich in vitamin A and iron. In evaluating existing canteens, they suggest that the food be more culturally appropriate and that providing sufficient food choice is important for uptake – in other words, to render the food experience more similar to typical private dietary habits.

## Factory workers in an ethnographic lens

Our research seeks to explain why the contradictory conclusions documented above arise by exploring a domain little covered by project evaluation based, technocratic research. In part, we do this by replicating the basic research methodologies used by numerous studies in evaluating the link between behavioral patterns and dietary outcomes (BDLINK & HRINC, 2012; i.e. CARE International, 2006; Heng & Ashish, 2017b), and by triangulating these with ethnographic research. In addition to a survey of ‘dietary history’ and routine food consumption patterns, we follow up with key informants by developing sufficient rapport that we may visit their rental rooms for an impromptu meal and then follow-up with a visit to their provincial hometowns to further explore their cooking background. Vansintjan (2017) effectively captured our initial impressions with his representation of Vietnamese street food:

“Street vendors rarely have fridges, nor do they have large cooking surfaces, dishwashing machines, or ovens. By and large, they make do with some knives, two bowls to wash fresh vegetables in, a large pot, a frying pan, coals or gas burners and — for products that may go bad during the day — fermentation. Having limited access to capital and consumer electronics, these vendors — most often women — ply their trade in a way that has stood the test of time.”

The food preparation conditions of factory workers are also very rudimentary (see **Figure 1**), but in many ways comparable to their hometown counterparts (see **Figure 2**).

The transferability of certain food preparation skills – such as the effective employment of very basic equipment – can explain why we have consistently experienced thoughtful, hygienic and efficiently-prepared meals (see Figure 3). Given the good availability and proximity of fresh markets to most high-density factory areas, workers can be said to have more consistent access to a wider variety of ingredients than in their hometowns. As a result, factory workers with sufficient cooking and domestic planning skills are also frequently able to coordinate the preparation of breakfast and a packed-lunch (44% do so at least a few times per week), despite having very little time before and after work (typically 07:00-17:00 shifts, with bedtime around 21:00) to complete cooking and all other domestic duties.



**Figure 1** The rental room kitchen of hometown kitchen of female factory worker A.



**Figure 2**  
The hometown kitchen of female factory worker A.

By our measure, 28% of the workers have *comprehensive* cooking skills and are able to use these skills to manage their dietary lifestyle efficiently. Given that an additional 66% of the workers can cook most everyday Khmer dishes (including all male informants), the potential for employing independent skills to effectively manage one's nutrition remains high. Furthermore, when working in groups, gaps in dietary skill can be remedied and dietary diversity can be increased significantly. As documented by most of the evaluations and reports summarized above, and confirmed in our research, most factory workers live with others (usually family), with an average household size of three (Angkor Research, 2016). By coordinating differences in their work schedules and cooking skills, they can very efficiently prepare nutritionally comprehensive meals. Khmer cuisine is particularly suited to such shared arrangements, as many of the healthiest dishes require group eating (Feuer, 2015).



**Figure 3** A dinner of female factory worker B.

Beyond the household, factory workers consistently share food with others at the factory (88% of the time). This not only allows a more relaxed, convivial break, but also facilitates food sharing and dietary diversity. We have documented groups of between 3-6 workers eating together, sharing between 4 and 12 dishes. A particular form of this behavior emerges among factory comrades who delegate the responsibility of buying food for the group to those who are particularly adept at selecting a balanced and hygienic meal from among the myriad options outside the gate (see Figure 4). This ideal case, however, must be viewed in the broader context of food in front of the factory gate. While the variety of low-cost food near factory areas is often impressive due to the entrepreneurship of the vendors, there are two main weaknesses in the current system: hygiene and temptation. While our research confirms that the vast majority of workers consume a typical Khmer meal of rice (99%), *somlor* (stew) (60%-98%), and stir-fried foods (36-97%),

we also know that unhealthy choices are common as well: artificial fish balls (55-65%), milky desserts (33-80%), salted clams (30%), and all manner of sugary drinks (cane juice, soda, lemonade) are very common complementary additions. In general, those with longer tenures at the factories purchase less unhealthy options from the factory gate (declines are particularly noticeable for fish balls, clams, and sugary drinks). Over this period, workers can improve their independent cooking skills, domestic management, and gain discipline.



**Figure 4** An arrangement of soups, fried dishes, pickles, and rice for quick sale in front of a garment factory.

## **Conclusion**

### ***Lifelong dietary skills for navigating urban food systems***

The food systems that have developed alongside dense factory areas in the Phnom Penh metropolitan area are not ideal from the perspective of hygiene, but they have co-

evolved with factory workers and their preferences for over two decades. While external interventions, such as in-factory canteens, can achieve a marginal increase in nutrition outcomes, they also rob workers of their independence in dietary management and food preference. The consistent support for canteens is sustained by the patriarchal view, present among government, civil society, and factory managers, that factory workers lack the agency to navigate the turbulent food systems which they are faced with. This paper has provided the preliminary case for how the inherent food skills are already the backbone of worker nutrition and how they can continue to be indispensable, especially when expressed in group effort. Workers themselves, when given the chance, express their desire to maintain independence and responsibility over their dietary lifestyles. In this, there is an opportunity to push for empowerment of workers to continuously refine these skills to help manage the challenges of hygiene, micronutrient intake, and rising food costs. This would not only help raise productivity and alleviate ongoing nutrition-based health problems, but would also set workers on a path to lifelong cooking and domestic management skills that will benefit not only them but also their future families. Although there are few innovative examples of how such empowerment would be shaped, a few factories have stumbled upon promising solutions and a few observers have made important suggestions. Among these are: working closely with vendors to set baseline standards for hygiene, inviting vendors into factory gates to create informal 'food courts' away from unsafe and dusty roads, and providing healthy snacks (such as bananas) to increase the probability that workers are driven by choice rather than hunger. Outside of the factory, it is important to support rather than demonize

the fresh market and food systems that have evolved with the workers; instead, it is important to recognize their strengths and work to minimize their weaknesses. These spaces, which are the facilitators to independent dietary learning, are inescapably part of the present and future facing urban workers in the next generation.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> We reviewed completed and ongoing evaluations from the following projects: HealthWorks (2012-present), funded by USAID; Healthy Food, Healthy Workplace (2016-2019), administered by CARE; Life Skills (2012), funded by ILO, administered by World Education; Better Factories Cambodia's Nutrition Program, funded by the US Department of Labor

<sup>2</sup> The sample size is 77 workers from 5 factories in different regions in the metropolitan Phnom Penh area. The informants were selected randomly as they exit the factory gate in the evening and those with literacy impediments were given the survey orally.

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# THE USE OF UNIQUE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN CONTEMPORARY GASTRONOMY

Tainá Zaneti  
Sergio Schneider

## Introduction

In recent decades, there has been an expressive interest in food and food issues, both in terms of their means of production, their marketing, consumption and implications. Scientific developments on human nutrition and medicine, debates about the implications of the agro-industrial food system on the environment, food sovereignty and food security, and the impacts of globalization on local culinary identities have redirected the place and meaning of food in contemporary society. Food choices in this context are increasingly perceived as social signs that express modes of being (Woortman 2013). According to Pollan (2014), the current consumer lives a food paradox: "People have never been so interested in food, and people have never been so inattentive about what they are eating." On one hand, consumers base their food choices as a political act, and on the other, on health, convenience, sensoriality, leisure and pleasure issues (Barbosa 2009), thus revealing a growing demand for alternative forms of food acquisition such as organic products fairs (Oliveira et al., 2014).

This growing interest in the food theme also shows a greater search for aestheticization, ritualization, appreciation of the taste, and pleasure in eating and cooking, for the

gastronomy and its aspects as a whole. This trend is denominated by Barbosa (2009) as a gastronomization process. This has triggered an ever closer relationship between gastronomy and rural areas, since the rescue of the pleasure of cooking and eating promotes the search for better quality ingredients, the valorization of the origin, the use of gastronomic techniques and, not infrequently, traditional culinary knowledge (Barbosa, 2009).

Among the trends in contemporary gastronomy is the growing use of traditional products and raw materials, produced locally and using organic methods. According to Inwood et al. (2009), the use of local products has become popular in various segments of the culinary community and as such chefs have come to be recognized as important potential partners in efforts to promote local food systems. The use of local products in gastronomy is also understood as a way to re-signify and reconstruct the sense of national identity as argued by Hermansen (2012) with regards to the new Nordic cuisine. For the author, the recreation and consumption of the Nordic terroir is a way for the natives to consume a material version of the local culture, thus being a method of producing locality as a reaction to the globalization process. In addition, Matta (2013) argues that in different regional contexts, asset valuation policies are stimulating the revitalization and promotion of "traditional" food products, in order to stimulate their cultural recognition and market potential.

In Brazil, there is an increasingly notable trend among chefs of international repute in combining gastronomy and the use of symbolic and cultural elements related to the emblematic preparation and ingredients of Brazilian culture. A recent

study by the Center for Advanced Studies in Applied Economics (CEPEA) (2014) highlighted the growing number of contemporary gastronomic restaurants that work directly with small producers in order to guarantee the quality and exclusivity of hortifruti. Among these chefs, there is a consonance in the discourse that it is necessary to respect the ingredients and establish links with the producers both to guarantee the quality of the product and to value the producer. The same study highlighted gastronomy as a new market on the rise for family farming.

These new demands for differentiated agri-food products seem to be reconfiguring the area of family agriculture. Nowadays, in addition to its potential for basic food production, family agriculture has been distinguished by the production of differentiated goods, such as 80% of organic and agroextractivist production (IBGE 2006). What is perceived is that there is an increasing segmentation of the markets for family agriculture that offers products that are not necessarily more basic, but with added values and unique characteristics, occupying a space that is still not thoroughly studied i.e. contemporary gastronomy.

In this context, a question arises as to what are the reasons for chefs to resort to the use of origin or local products? The aim of this article is to reflect on this movement of chefs and to seek understanding about the characteristics of this new gastronomy immersed in ingredients and products of origin, as well as to discuss the intersection between singular products and contemporary gastronomy in a bid to understand the relationship between chefs and producers.

We understand that gastronomy is a social space that allows both the development of relationships between chefs, producers and consumers, as well as cultural and identity practices in view of the high degree of symbolic understanding of food in this context. We argue that the chef is a key actor in this process, since he is an expert who holds information and therefore is endowed with a "symbolic authority" (Karpik 2010), thus becoming an opinion maker.

### **Methodology and Research Cases**

Four cases were studied in which semi-structured interviews were carried out with chefs, producers and consumers along with participant observation in restaurants and institutions. The choice of cases was based on the exploratory study of the research, in which the existence of some patterns and types of performance of the chefs were identified. It was found that there were chefs who bought directly from producers and pointed this out in their restaurants but did not act in social movements and / or institutions; that there were situations of the formation of social intuitions that encompassed the gastronomy and the chefs such as between producers and consumers; and finally, from the work of the chef in your restaurant - to use local products and to maintain direct relations with producers of these ingredients - began to formalize this practice as an institution in order to develop it with other chefs, producers, consumers and to reach out to other spheres like politics. Thus, we chose the four cases that are most significant and more accessible in each of these situations.

The first is the case of the restaurant At Home and the Paulo Martins Institute in Belém do Pará - PA, which is indicated

as the precursor of the valorisation of products and revenues traditional in gastronomy in Brazil. The second case entails chef Teresa Corção who fronts The Navegador and the Maniva Institute in Rio de Janeiro; she works with ingredients - which the chef calls special products – in the restaurant and by the Institute, with direct marketing, the diversification of marketing and products, and the education of diners and producers. The third case entails the Asociación Peruana de Gastronomía (APEGA), which is taken as a reference in the organization of strategies for the rapprochement between chefs, producers and diners, and elaboration of gastronomy as a tool for rural development. Finally, we studied the case of the Del Barbieri Bistrot in Porto Alegre - RS, which works with seasonal menus, maintaining a direct and close relationship with producers and performing a weekly "menu of market", but does not participate in any institutions.

### **Repercussions and effects of the use of singular products in contemporary gastronomy**

In analyzing the diverse contexts of the empirical universe, we can see the interaction of the main pillars that are producing a new space for the commercialization of the products of the familiar agriculture, being: chefs, producers and consumers in the restaurant (media); social movements such as Slow Food, and integration among social movements, the State, chefs and consumers, as in the case of APEGA in Peru where there is a prominence for the economic impacts and aggregation of values along the product trajectory since its production to the gastronomy.

The insertion of artisanal products, fair trade, quality savings and designation of origin in gastronomy are being used, on one hand, as tools of social differentiation for the contribution of status and / or identity as "instrument of political consumption and health" (Barbosa 2009), or just for convenience (Barbosa, 2009) by chefs and consumers. On the other hand, they are constructing a new market configuration for family agriculture for products endowed with distinctiveness and specificity, of which governance is based on social and territorial interactions, emerging as an important mechanism for the struggle for emancipation to respond to the flaws of conventional markets commodities (Ploeg et al 2012).

For chefs, the use of unique agri-food products seems to be something legitimated as a premise to be judged as a quality cook, as seen in the case of chef Marcos from the Bistrô Do Centro. The increasing use of these products and the emergence of the chef's role as an activist acting alongside state initiatives and social movements indicate a repositioning of gastronomy in discussions about strategies for rural development. The approach and valuation of the relationship with producers in search of differentiated products and fair trade, as shown by CEPEA (2014) and the cases of chefs Alex Atala and Carlos Kristensen, suggest the emergence of a marketing logic immersed in values and logics.

These new forms of interaction between chefs, producers and consumers suggest that the search for foods with differentiated qualities does not only respond to objective issues of supply of needs, but also to cultural, social, symbolic, and value-related issues. What seems to be

indicated is that these interactions are inserted in a non-conventional logic of markets. This understanding of quality, according to Goodman (2003), is linked to the trust, social roots and origin of the product. These new demands are enabling the emergence of new forms of commercialization based on product quality, valorization of origin and producer, fair relations of commercialization and social interaction. This also suggests that the understanding of the product, the process and the place (Ilbery, 2005) matter for the conference of the direction of trajectory to the food. It is this notion of trajectory that confers precepts to consumer confidence and traces of uniqueness to the product, allowing its re-signification and appreciation.

On the part of the producers, the idea of diversifying production and working with value-added products seems convenient, as seen in the speech by Antonio and the farmer Romilda Grimm Haxe, in the report granted to the MDA. The symbolic recognition of producers by chefs by showing that the former's products are being used in the latter's restaurants and by increasing demand for their products after starting to supply to the same restaurants, as well as access to policies to strengthen family farming, evidenced the formation of a basket of strategies based on the improvement of the quality of the products, insertion in markets of quality and direct relation with the consumer. However, this market still seems to be only for a few producers, partly because it demands high specialization from the producers and also because it suggests that the insertion in this type of market requires the access to social capital i.e. the producer being inserted in a network of contacts that legitimize their entry into the gastronomic circuit. In this sense, the CEPEA study (2014) showed that

although it is a new market for small producers, the quantities demanded by chefs of specific products which are often produced exclusively for their restaurants, although frequent, are very small and are generally not accepted in other markets. This may in the long run make production unviable economically. In addition, the cost of logistics is borne by the producer.

Although the evidence shows a scenario prone to new spaces of interaction between gastronomy and family farming, there are some inconsistencies in this relationship. In a recent research, Zaneti and Balestro (2015) demonstrated that despite the insertion of traditional products into the gastronomic circuit and new forms of interaction between chefs and family farmers constituting means for the construction of differentiated markets, there is discrepancy in the possession of the symbolic capital between chefs and producers necessary to the understanding of typical products as differentiated goods. This results in an asymmetry in the distribution of economic capital where "there is a great disparity between the prices paid to producers and the prices of the dishes served that incorporate these products as delicacies" (Zaneti and Balestro 2015: 33).

### **The Short Gastronomic Chains**

From the analysis of the cases, it is possible to perceive that the relations between the actors are configured in short chains and, because they are mediated by chefs, one can consider them short gastronomic chains. The short gastronomic chain is mediated by the chef, and this is the building trust between the producers and consumers. It can

be inferred that the relations between the actors are based on symbolic and moral values – although they are governed by commercial relations. This indicates that, apparently, these relations are established in a differentiated logic of the current economic and food system, which can then be configured as an alternative food network identified in this thesis as a Short Gastronomic Chain. From the analysis of the cases, it was possible to identify two models of short gastronomic chains.

These chains are made up of two main forms: a) Chefcentric Short Gastronomic Chain, which has a horizontal formation and is organized between actors with the chef as the chain's central link, or b) Sinergic Short Gastronomic Chains, organized in a vertical way, mediated by institutions and not only by the actors, allowing the consumers and producers greater possibilities of interaction, giving greater power of agency and autonomy to the producers that can establish networks with both the chefs and consumers directly. In both, the chef appears as the central social actor both in the formation of these chains and in the re-signification of the ingredients towards the singularity.

## **Final considerations**

The valuation of the use of unique ingredients and the relationship between chefs and producers is relatively recent. Although it is set in the midst of social movements advocating sustainable food networks, the tendency of chefs to use local, organic and / or family farmer products seems to be more related to a quest for flavor, authenticity and distinction rather than to issues related to the social development of farmers and the sustainable use of local

biodiversity. Although it is apparently a win-win relationship in which chefs excel at having access to unique products and producers gaining greater visibility and starting to participate in new markets and increasing their sales, it still shows with the small scope restricted to gastronomic restaurants which have average tickets between R \$ 90.00 and R \$ 495.00 (CEPEA 2014) as being unviable for the greater majority of the Brazilian population, since 79% of the population received up to three minimum wages of R \$ 724 in 2014. And in the case of Brazil, according to Santos et al (2014, p.6), families with a monthly family income of up to R \$ 830 million and an average monthly income of R \$ 1760.00 (IBPT, 2014) have an average expenditure of R \$ 35.72 for out-of-home food, which represents 14.71% of the total food expenses. In families with an income above R \$ 10,375.00, this expense rises to R \$ 590.09, which represents 33% of the total food expenses. On the other hand, it is noticeable that for producers, symbolic values such as pride and self-esteem due to the fact that they sell to chefs, seem to be worth more than the economic values themselves.

Nevertheless, there is a greater initiative on the part of the chefs looking for the producers, which shows a certain fragility of the producers when they position themselves in the market. This may stimulate a relationship with the chefs' paternalism and paternalism towards the producers, as there is an understanding that chefs take producers out of invisibility. It is understood that a closer approximation of the State is necessary for the formulation of public policies that foster national gastronomy, associated with the strengthening of family agriculture, not only in the sense of promoting and enhancing the ingredients, but also in giving

these producers access to the environment food, freeing them from the tutelage of the chefs.

There are still very few studies that analyze the gastronomic environment and chefs as important social actors for the construction of understandings about food and food choices, and as a tool for rural development. Therefore, it is suggested that in the debates of sociology and anthropology of food, gastronomy should be included not only as a marginal theme, but as a space that facilitates exchanges, construction of markets and social relations from production to food consumption.

Despite the important role of the chef as a political actor in the constitution of short chains and the approximation between production and consumption, the vital role of actors in the political field such as the state, policy makers and social movements cannot be exempted. The role of the chef is an important educational channel in order to raise awareness on the importance of the approximation and appreciation of family agriculture and traditional groups. However, the chef's role must be associated with a basket of policies and initiatives that guarantee the strengthening of family agriculture, the valorization of national biodiversity and the development of short marketing channels. In other words, in order for gastronomization to be a tool for the scale up of singular products and for rural development starting from the formation of short chains, there must be a link between initiatives / political actors, producers, diners and chefs.

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**PART 2:**  
**FOOD AND CULTURE**

# **FOOD HABITUS: THE IRANIANS' FOOD CHOICE IN MALAYSIA**

Mehrdad Arabestani  
Ashraf Namakyan

## **Introduction**

While eating is indispensable to human beings as biological organisms and is a fundamental pillar to health across our entire lifespan, its actual practice is a matter of enormous diversity based on cultural behaviors, the environment and sensory factors, with the latter being influenced by cultural selection. Because of the direct relationship between food and health, food choice has important health implications (e.g. Namakyan, Jamaluddin, & Latiff, 2009). Nevertheless, at the same time, food choice has significant implications for the food industry, tourism, and even the cultural identity of a given group.

One of the first choices that any foreigners have to make in a new society is related to food. In the same way, making food choices is among the first decisions that had to be considered by the Iranian expatriates in Malaysia. Malaysian cuisine is mainly comprised of Malay, Chinese and Indian cuisines i.e. taken as separate cuisines or in combination. The significant difference between Malaysian food ingredients, spices and cooking style to that of Iran's have caused the Iranians to feel confused, and sometimes excited, about what to eat. Moreover, meal structures comprising of

the combination of sweet and savory flavors in some foods and drinks such as pineapple in stews and savory drinks are unusual for most Iranians.<sup>1</sup> The colorful and eclectic cuisine of Malaysia with 'unfamiliar' ingredients also adds to the confusion and makes food decision even more uncertain. For those who plan to stay in Malaysia for a long time including students, it takes time to clear up the confusion and settle on a certain set of available foods through tentative steps. For tourists, however, the story is rather different. In fact, tourism managers usually set the itinerary of the Iranians to include dining in a series of restaurants that they know by experience will suit their clients' taste. Therefore, the Iranian tourists do not spend much time on food adventures and sensational experiments and basically remain in their sensory comfort zone.

Studies show that personal traits such as extroversion and openness to experience, including trying new foods, is positively related to the expatriates' general living adjustment (e.g. Huang, Chi, & Lawler, 2005). Likewise, there are some Iranians in Malaysia who enjoy tasting every local delicacy and even unfamiliar foods and generally look more satisfied with the different aspects of their lives in Malaysia. Nonetheless, the food choice of the Iranians is usually restricted by their food habitus and cultural values. Analyzing the Iranians' reaction to Malaysian food and understanding its cultural implications is the purpose of this study.

It is believed that the tourists are motivated to visit new places to escape from the ordinary and find the opportunity to experience the extraordinary. However, studies show that the tourists only end up getting involved in activities and

behaviors, including food choice, that they are used to in their own country (Lee, Scott, & Packer, 2014). In other words, they more or less follow their habitus and food style. Change in the expatriates' food consumption behavior is commonly expected. The change, however, is influenced by factors from the perceived taste and the category of the food to the price and health considerations (Hu & Duval, 2003).

The expatriates' loss of their habitual food and drinks is comparable to the loss of their native language (Usunier, 1999). Therefore, their "oral pleasure" through food and language experience i.e. their liking of the food, drinks and language of the host country is an essential experience that shows a positive relation to their personal and family satisfaction (Ibid). Such embodied experience as food habitus is the key concept that the article is based on.

Here, we deal with the Iranians' food choice in Malaysia and its health as well as cultural implications. After Iran's revolution in 1979, the Iranians' passport power rank considerably dropped, which means the people are now more restricted in their options for tourist destinations. According to ISNA<sup>2</sup> (2014), Iran's passport power is ranked 96 out of 100 countries. Malaysia, however, is one of the few countries that do not demand prior visa application for Iranian visitors. This is a fact that accounts for the rising number of Iranian tourists to Malaysia. On the other hand, the studies (See: Asadi & Daryaei, 2012) show that certain relative advantages of Malaysia such as the open social space that is comparatively lacking in Iran, also plays an important role in the development of Iranian tourism and educational tourism in the country. Therefore, despite the long distance between the two countries, a relatively large

number of Iranians visit or stay in Malaysia as tourists, businessmen, and students. The empirical information of the study is based on the data obtained through ethnographic studies on the Iranian visitors and expatriates in Malaysia, supplemented by a survey among Iranian students in University Putra Malaysia (UPM).

### **Embodiment and Food Habitus**

Cultural relativism is regarded as the fundamental concept of anthropological studies. By postulating the psychic unity of humankind, the anthropologists endeavor to explain cultural varieties, predominantly in terms of cultural values, the difference in worldviews, and the different cultural patterns. It was Mauss (1973) who – perhaps for the first time – extended the cultural traits to the techniques of the body. In this way, culture is not seen only as something that can be studied through values, behaviors and handicrafts, but also through the human body and its application. Culture is engraved on the body and in the same way as the other aspects of culture, the body techniques are also transferred from one generation to the next and from a certain society to another. The idea of the embodied culture carries wide implications to the understanding of the nature of human perception and behavior and renders the elaboration on the concept by other scholars to flourish.

Phenomenologist philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty focused on the subjective-objective relation in human perception and its embodied nature through the spatiality and sensory apparatus of the human body. By the concept of embodiment, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes on the sensory basis of our perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, pp. 59-61). In

fact, our perception of the objective world is conditioned by priori concepts in our sense of experience that inevitably accompanies a valuation reaction in terms of like and dislike. Therefore, the world's objects are not simply neutral, but rather symbolize and recall certain ways of behaving or reacting, which is either favorable or unfavorable. Habit is the embodied perception of the world that has been acquired by the subject and is associated with bodily efforts (Merleau-Ponty, 1958, pp. 164-168; Moya, 2014). We are inhabited in time and space and the subjective experience with the body, including sensory experiences, lay the horizon of our fundamentally corporeal perception.

Presupposing the notion of embodiment, Pierre Bourdieu used the concept of habitus to solve the antinomy of objectivism and subjectivism. Habitus is the intermediate phase between structures and practice. Habitus is the acquired embodied schemes of perception, thought and behavior; however, the responses of habitus do not rule out the strategic calculations that tend to perform in a conscious mode i.e. the estimation of chances affects the different performances of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 52-53). This can explain the differences in habitus performance from one person to another. In this way, Bourdieu attempts to solve the parallel antinomy of structure and agency. Therefore, the habitus is acquired, but simultaneously provides enough room for the agents' initiative. Habitus works at the almost subconscious level and is the basis of the beliefs and behaviors that are regarded as "normal" and meaningful. As Bourdieu says in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*:

The habitus is the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent's practices, without either explicit reason or

signifying intent, to be none the less "sensible" and "reasonable (1977, p. 79).

In the same way, we can talk about food habitus, a culturally acquired perception and patterns of action about food that are mutually sensible and comprehensible among the members of a certain society with a common social and cultural background. The development of taste and food choice, as part of food habitus, happens through the enculturation and cultural acquisition (acculturation) that are unintentionally or deliberately accepted.

### **Sensory Bombardment**

When I arrived in Malaysia for the first time, it was in the dark of the night, and I entered one of my Iranian family friend's place. My friends were waiting for me, and upon my arrival, they entertained me with tea and a bowl of fruits, according to Iranian custom. However, this time the fruit bowl was delightfully exotic; it was full of local tropical fruits that I had never seen before i.e. an exciting combination of *Rambutan*, *Manggis*, *Mata Kucing* and *Papaya*. I eagerly explored the smell, textures, and tastes of the fruits as my friends guided me on how to consume them and enjoy their flesh. This was only the first step in my sensory adventures that was followed by the pleasant humid and warm climate of Malaysia and, in the next morning, the amazing green landscape of the country. Later, I tried the local restaurants and street foods with their diverse and appetizing foods and astonishing smells around them. Self-service shops like *Mamak* restaurants offered a unique opportunity for food journey and discovery of the taste of Malaysia through the wonderful spices and flavors. For me,

the climax of this journey was the *pasar malam* with its wet market section and food stalls which felt like a festival that filled all my senses from sight to touch. Not forgetting to mention, trying *durian* – the king of fruits – with its encompassing sensory experience and the culture around it, was itself a 'total social fact' experience, in Mauss' terms.

Nonetheless, I soon realized that my favorable sensory experience is not shared by many of my compatriots of whom, ever since their arrival in Malaysia, had struggled in finding food that suits their taste. My enthusiastic attempts to encourage them to try new foods and discover the wonderful festival of tastes and flavors were futile and often responded by a strict refusal. All of them would say that the local foods are too hot and the spices that are used in Malaysian cuisine are very different from the ones they are accustomed to and they can hardly endure them. They find beans in drinks, whole shrimps in soups, and fried bananas covered in savory coating as rather surprising. While in Iranian cuisine, only a relatively small range of spices such as salt, turmeric, saffron, and pepper are used, Malaysian cuisine uses a generous amount of a wider range of spices, some barely known by the Iranians. All these created an immense perceived difference between the two countries' cuisines. Yet, the lower price of local foods in comparison to available Iranian foods is the main competitive advantage of the former, particularly for expatriates who want to stay longer in Malaysia. This advantage encourages the Iranians to search through local foods to find familiar ingredients. Dairy products such as cheese and yogurt are common foods in Iran, which comprise an essential part of the breakfast table and as a side dish. These products are relatively expensive in Malaysia. When Reza, a newcomer, gladly told

me that in spite of expensive cheeses in the market, he found a very low priced cheese that "tastes somewhat different, but is good!" Upon further investigation, it was revealed that he mistook drained blocks of tofu for cheese!

Iranians also find the cooking and serving style of foods in Malaysian to be different from what they are used to in their homeland. "I cannot endure the shrimps with head and skin in the dish," says Mohammad, an Iranian student who lives in Malaysia with his family. He added: "The first time I saw them in the served dish, I couldn't finish my food."

Through their experience in Malaysia, Iranians develop a certain attitude towards Malaysian food that can be best understood in comparison to their attitude to available Iranian food throughout the country. The survey among the Iranian students in Malaysia portrays this attitude as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1** Iranian students' attitude towards Malaysian food

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Malaysian foods are cheap	3.88	0.69
Malaysian foods are tasty	2.65	0.99
Malaysian foods have a good smell	2.09	0.94
Malaysian foods have a good appearance	2.43	1.05
Malaysian foods are healthy	2.46	1.00
Malaysian foods are available	4.23	0.75
Malaysian foods are appropriately hot (spicy)	2.67	1.23

The scale of 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

**Table 2** Iranian students' attitude towards available Iranian foods in Malaysia

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Iranian foods are cheap	1.97	.84
Iranian foods are tasty	4.43	.62
Iranian foods have a good smell	4.42	.60
Iranian foods have a good appearance	4.36	.60
Iranian foods are healthy	3.71	.90
Iranian foods are available	2.5	.95
Iranian foods are appropriately hot (spicy)	3.95	.91

The scale of 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

The results show the maximum differences in the sensory and taste variables that suggest the food habitus inertia among the Iranians that are manifested in their resistant attitude towards Malaysian food. However, as our study shows, a longer stay in Malaysia somewhat affects their attitude towards the local foods.

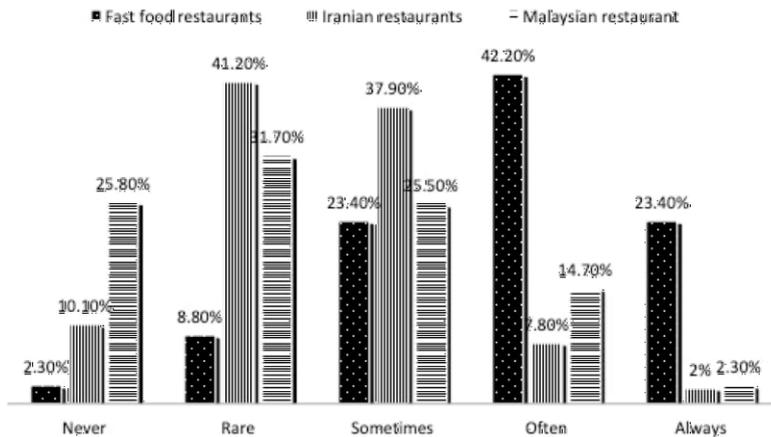
## **Retreat**

Certainly, people can change their habits, but there is always resistance. This is what we call habitus inertia, a tendency to stay in the comfort zones and avoid the challenges of change forces. The strict difference in food culture makes the Iranians over-conscious about the food in Malaysia. The everyday conversations of the newcomers to Malaysia, with particularly repeated complaints about the hot and spicy foods, display a preoccupation with food and food choice. It seems that they are so overwhelmed by this sensory bombardment of the new environment that they are looking for a way to retreat and stay in their comfort zone. Popular fast food shops like McDonald's, KFC and Pizza chain stores, which offer "familiar" tastes, become one of the first choices of many Iranians for dining out. These restaurants offer a kind of "global taste" that satisfies customers from various food cultures. The prevalent availability of these chain stores all around the world prove their popularity and compatibility with the diverse food cultures. As a result, their foods provide a non-challenging choice for many people who do not know what to eat in a foreign country. After Iran's revolution (1979) and the establishment of the new "anti-imperialism" regime, these chain restaurants were regarded as the "imperialist agents" and have not been allowed to operate in Iran. Therefore, in addition to their

satisfying products, choosing such fast food restaurants also satisfy the Iranians' food adventure in discovering what they had been deprived of and the joy of violating the rules of prohibition in their own country.

The study among the Iranian students in Malaysia revealed a clear tendency towards fast-food restaurants for dining out in comparison to other available restaurants (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Restaurant preference by Iranian students



Tourist agencies that work with Iranian visitors have a clear understanding of their customers' taste. Ali, who runs a tourist and travel agency in Kuala Lumpur said: "We never take Iranian visitors to local restaurants. They will definitely complain! Only Iranian restaurants and fast foods." Siavash,

an Iranian tour leader related how he took his group to a local restaurant:

Some people in my group asked me to take them to a local restaurant. I explained that it is difficult to choose from local food as I do not know which one you might like. But they insisted and eventually they persuaded the whole group. I thought maybe Satay is a good choice because its taste and appearance are very close to the Iranian Kebab; however, the seasoning and flavor are a bit different[...] well they ate the Satay, but then some started grumbling that the 'Kebab' was sweet and they do not like it that much, and we should have gone to a fast food restaurant.

Regardless of the taste, because of the high amount of fat and preservatives, regular consumption of fast foods among the Iranian expatriates in Malaysia would have certain health implications and can be regarded as a risk factor (Namakyan et al., 2009).

### **Halal or Haram: Doxic Basis of Food Choice**

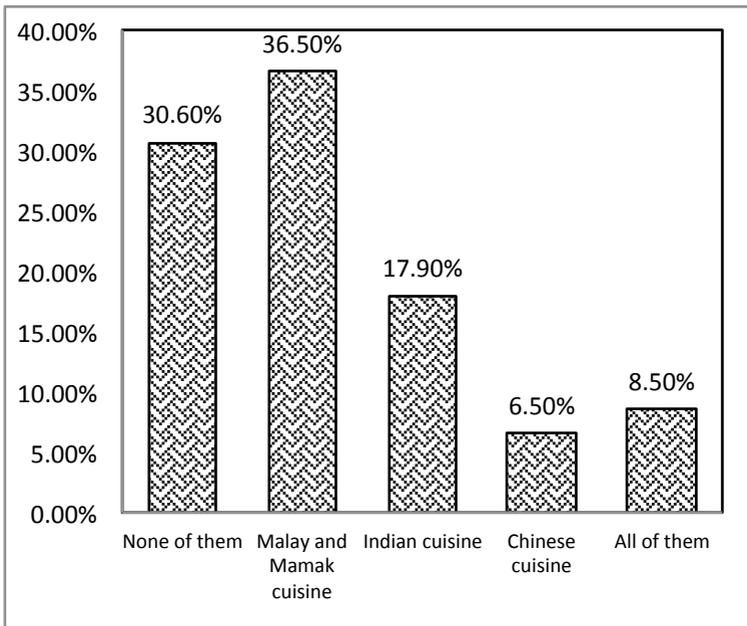
Beliefs and values can also play an important role in food choice. Vegetarian diet prescribed by some religions is a known example of the impact of belief system on food intake. Certain religions, including Islam and Judaism, have developed an elaborate system of lawful and unlawful foods. The type of food and the proper way of preparation are the criteria for defining the lawful (halal or kosher) from unlawful foods.

Iran is a country with more than 99.7% Muslim population; therefore, the majority of Iranians avoid non-halal foods in Malaysia. The study among the Iranian students shows that among the major Malaysian cuisines (Malay and *Mamak*, Chinese and Indian), the Iranians clearly prefer Malay and *Mamak* restaurants, which offer halal foods. However, it does not mean that all Iranians strictly follow religious laws. In fact, some do not care for religious laws in general. Nevertheless, regardless of the prevalence of alcohol consumption among some of the Iranian visitors and expatriates, they generally avoid other non-halal foods such as pork. The reason might be found in Iran's cultural and political situation. Iran's political and legal system is based on the Shia Islamic Sharia law.

Therefore, the Islamic codes of behavior do not only receive support and social pressure from the common Islamic culture, but are also reinforced by the country's legal system. While the Islamic codes of food and drink consumption are a given in the society and supported by the government propaganda, the law also prohibits the sale and distribution of non-halal foods where the culprits are persecuted. In fact, this situation makes the Islamic laws about food pervasive throughout the country and consequently turns them to the level of habit, associated with doxa i.e. the level of the subconscious and fundamental beliefs that are taken for granted. In a doxic mode, there is a "quasi-perfect correspondence between the subjective order and objective principles of the organization [...] the natural and social world appears as self-evident" and "tradition experienced as a 'natural world' and taken for granted" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 168). The doxa about halal and non-halal foods penetrates in the food habitus of the people and their general avoidance of

non-halal foods.<sup>3</sup> Thus, avoiding pork and other non-halal foods can rather be derived from the doxa and food habitus than a conscious behavior derived from intentional religious commitment.

**Figure 2** The Iranian students' inclination towards major Malaysian cuisines



The majority of Iranian Muslims are Shia.<sup>4</sup> There are certain disagreements about halal foods, mostly concerning seafood, between the Shia and Sunni Sharia. According to the Sunni Sharia, almost all seafood is halal; but the Shia sharia prohibits fishes with no scales that include, but is not restricted to, certain types of fish, squid (*sotong*), crab, oyster, and lobster. When one sees an Iranian in Malaysia

who avoids these foods, he/she can be sure that the reason behind it is religious.

Perhaps one of the reasons that the tourist agencies mostly put fast food chain stores in their itinerary is that these restaurants do not usually offer seafood; thus, there would not be any "suspicious" food on their menu that worries some Iranian Shia visitors.

### **Picky Adoption**

When people from a certain culture move to an area with different cultural norms, the adaptation process i.e. acculturation begins. The adoption of new food culture is among the last changes that happen. In terms of eating at the privacy of the home, the Iranians choose familiar ingredients and prepare their own food. Many of these ingredients can be found in local markets. Some ingredients, such as specific herbs needed for *Ghormeh-sabzi*, the Iranian iconic dish, are not available in Malaysia and as such the Iranian expatriates bring them from Iran and give them to their friends as a souvenir from the homeland. Certain food items and ingredients are imported in a limited amount and are available in Iranian supermarkets with relatively high prices. Because these items and ingredients are scarce and expensive, most Iranians cannot afford to put them in their daily food routine. The studies on other expatriates also show that the lack of native ingredients, convenience and cost affect the food acculturation significantly (Kittler, Sucher, & Nelms, 2011, pp. 6-7). Nonetheless, for the most part, Iranians keep their food habitus in their home. Core foods like rice, bread and pasta, and secondary foods such as chicken and fish are available in Malaysia. As for fruits, the Iranians tend to adopt local

fruits quickly. A usual Iranian table in Malaysia is not much different from what can be found in the homeland. The only difference is that the proportion and the consumption frequency of some foods may change according to the food's availability and costs. The study among the Iranian students shows a significant decrease in the consumption of dairy products and bread that are more expensive in Malaysia than in Iran. The Iranians also do not include specific local spices like curry, chili, and *sambal* in their home food and tend to stick with their common spices and seasonings like turmeric and tomato paste. However, they may replace some seasonings with that of locally available items that seem similar to them such as replacing local lemons with their native lemons, or Iranian rice with locally available rice.<sup>5</sup> These replacements make a small difference in the flavor of Iranian homemade food in Malaysia. A compliment on a host's table would be that her/his foods have exactly the same flavor as that found in Iran.

When it comes to dining out, Iranians are picky. *Nasi goreng*, *nasi ayam*, and fried chicken and fish are among the few local foods that are recognized by the Iranians. Meanwhile, many other culturally specific foods like *nasi lemak*, *rojak*, and fish head curry are mostly unrecognized.

Despite the fact that the food scene in Malaysia is very different from that of Iran at first glance, the availability of many food ingredients and various cuisines (including Middle Eastern and Western cuisines) in Malaysia does not encourage or force Iranians to change their food habitus. However, at the same time, they gradually adopt some local foods and food ingredients and integrate them into their daily food routine.

## **Conclusion and Speculations**

The Iranian expatriates in Malaysia mostly resist the changes in their food habitus, unless the unavailability of their native foods and high costs force them to do so. This resistance is obvious when one looks at the privacy of the Iranians' homemade food, where they are free to follow their own taste and practice their own food culture. Iranian homemade foods are almost the same as that found in the homeland, with a small accommodation for the replacement of native ingredients with locally available ones. However, slow and selective acculturation does occur and with a longer stay in Malaysia, the Iranians are able to adopt some local ingredients and foods into their food routine. For dining out, they often prefer fast food chain stores that offer foods with a "global" taste. On the other hand, they only recognize a few local dishes and always choose these foods in local restaurants. The study shows that taste and sensory factors play an essential role in the food choice of the Iranians. Considering that taste and sensory factors are themselves a cultural construction and part of an embodied culture or habitus, resisting against new tastes and flavors and evaluating them as unfavorable can be considered as sensory ethnocentrism i.e. an evaluation of other people's taste according to one's own cultural preconceived standards of sensual favorites.

Is there any relationship between sensory openness and being [inter]culturally competent? In other words, is there a direct relationship between sensory ethnocentrism and cultural ethnocentrism? Our primary observations suggest a link between sensory openness towards new tastes and flavors and the ability to cope with cultural diversity that is

the ability to interact with the Malaysian people appropriately and with empathy. However, proving such a claim requires further investigation.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Professor Richard Wilk for his comments on our paper and bringing to our attention the importance of the different structures of meals in various food cultures.

<sup>2</sup> Iranian Students' News Agency

<sup>3</sup> Despite the legal prohibition against alcohol, drinking alcohol persists as a secret and casual social fact in Iran. Thus, avoiding alcohol is not so much a part of the Iranian food doxa as avoiding pork.

<sup>4</sup> No precise figures are available about the population of Sunnis in Iran. It is estimated that the Sunnis constitute 5-10% of the country's population.

<sup>5</sup> Iran has a small amount of fragrant rice crop, barely enough for internal consumption. All Iranians prefer this rice to other types.

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# **FROM “EVERYBODY USED TO HAVE A COW BACK THEN, WE USED TO MAKE CHEESE” TO “WE HAVE THREE GEESE ON THE ROOF, TWO ARE MINE!”: CHALLENGES AND CHANGES IN AHVAZI MANDAEANS FOOD NORMS**

Marta Marsano  
Mehrdad Arabestani

## **Introduction**

In a quiet corner next to the crowded business area, lies the famous Mandaean neighbourhood of Ahvaz, in southeastern Iran. Mandeans are the members of an ancient community of members of a single ethno-religious group that has been living with their Muslim neighbourhoods for more than one millennium. Mandeans are famous for being the inheritors of the last living Gnostic tradition in the world (see: Lupieri, 2012, pp. 382-386) and who have managed to maintain their distinct cultural identity and group integrity despite the constant threat of cultural extinction.

The unique tradition of the Mandaean religion and its rich written tradition have captured scholarly attention since the 19th century. The study of Mandaean scriptures, their language, and their history resulted in fine pieces of scholarship (e.g. Buckley, 2002, 2006; L. E. S. Drower & Macuch, 1963; Lupieri, 2012; Macuch, 1965, 1971; Rudolph, 1978). Only a few, however, had analysed the actual Mandaean religious practice and the recent history of Mandeans as an ethnic minority (e.g. Buckley, 2002; E. S.

Drower, 1937). The impact of the historical and social experience of the Mandaeans on the development of their religious beliefs and practices is seldom studied. In the last decades, a series of events in the Mandaeans' homeland in Iran and Iraq have intensely affected the community. The war between Iran and Iraq (1980-88), the Persian Gulf wars (1990-91), the invasion of Iraq led by the United States with the consequent political instability and sectarianism it fomented, all resulted in the migration of many Iraqi and Iranian Mandaeans to other countries. The experience of migration presented the Mandaean community with a new set of challenges regarding their cultural identity and religious practice.

The most outstanding character of the Mandaean religion is the corpus of ancient rituals that mostly revolve around the concept of purity. Purity is manifold: the purity of the body from worldly elements, symbolized in pivotal rituals such as baptism, daily ablutions, and complex rules regarding the transmittance of the pollution, the purity of food that affects bodily purity, which is expressed through food taboos and food preparation rules. Anxiety for bodily purity and purification rites, and their connection to the concern of the minorities about their political and cultural integrity have long been known, thanks to the famous works of Mary Douglas (Douglas, 2001[1966], 2003[1970]). In the case of the Mandaeans, some ethnographic studies also indicate the significance of Mandaean ritual in maintaining and re-establishing the group's identity (Arabestani, 2010, 2012). In fact, the studies show how the Mandaeans' social situation as a minority under the hegemony of the Muslim society and their historical experience as a small ethno-religious group led to the development of elaborate purification rites as a

symbolic strategy for the protection of group identity. In fact, facing a potential danger, like the threat of group identity, activates a certain neurocognitive system that deals with the selection and highlighting certain rituals as a symbolic vehicle to transmit the group identity through religious codes from one generation to the next (Liénard & Boyer, 2006).

This course of cultural selection, however, is not a straightforward development that leaves no room for innovation. In fact, the very agents of the cultural selection do not follow the rules in pedantic observance, but rather perform religious rituals in a fuzzy way. This involves constant re-interpretation and decision-making about how to perform the rituals, which makes the action more uncertain than how the rigid, abstract rules provide. In addition, actual religious practice engages the subjectivity of the agents, which is the outcome of the interaction between group identity requirements and personal desires and aspirations. To investigate this subjectivity, this article analyses the narratives of Mandaean women. Considering the significance and everydayness of food-related taboos and ritual foods among the Mandaeans, the women's narratives mostly revolve around these issues and show the cultural meaning of the constant cultural selection that the Mandaeans make in their daily life.

Thanks to our Mandaean hosts and mentors, the narration and the supplementary information were gathered during several courses of fieldwork in Ahvaz, and also among the Mandaean Diaspora communities in Sweden and the United States. We chose to locate the main research fieldwork in Ahvaz because Khuzestan is one of the last areas in the

Middle East where the Mandaeans are still living in their homeland. The Mandaeans' homelands include Iran and Iraq, especially the region of “The Arab Marshes”, Baghdad and other certain Iranian villages and cities in Khuzestan. Nowadays, Iraqi Mandaeans mostly live in diaspora, whereas, despite a consistent flow of migration towards the United States, Australia, and Europe, Iranian Mandaeans still constitute a significant component of the Ahvazi metropolitan scene.

Consequently, this article will focus mainly on how Ahvazi Mandaeans have always culturally survived within the Iranian society, especially after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, socially constructing their community boundaries with food purity rules and rituals. A temporal framework provides order to the interviewees' shared memories, starting from the war between Iraq and Iran (1980) and ending with a reflection on the diaspora communities and their future developments regarding food prohibitions and rituals.

### **Situating the narratives**

The set of Mandaean religious laws clearly defines taboos and the necessary pre-conditions of ritual performance. The lawful foods and the procedure of their preparation are clearly described. Rules of transmittance guide the Mandaeans to avoid pollution, and purification rituals are designed to restore purity. Running water is the only purifying element in Mandaeism, which explains the historical formation of Mandaean communities around rivers and streams. Nonetheless, the requirements of modern life inevitably affected the way the people observe these

rules. While the conservative faction of the community insists on following the exact codes, a spectrum of newly adapted exegesis and permissive attitudes are observable among the Mandaeanes (see: Arabestani, 2016). While some of these disagreements are tolerated, at some point they cause heated debates in the community, particularly around subjects such as food choice, mate selection, and purity and pollution rules.

The Mandaeanes are divided between preserving their cultural heritage and the appeal of a more accommodated interpretation of the religious law suitable to the new ways of life. The "orientation to future" (Appadurai, 2003, p. 30) is the dimension of their culture that accounts for the Mandaeanes' will to change, with one foot still solidly anchored in their tradition. Demonstrating through the Mandaean's narrative, this interplay between past and future is precisely the task that this article undertakes.

Culinary practices emerge as a key lens through which understanding the changing constellations of senses of community and identity across space and time is possible. This paper will analyse the relationship between the Mandaean community and food through an ethnographic narrative, telescoping in from the level of the region to neighbourhoods, ending with speculation about the future developments that the Mandaeanes in the diaspora might produce.

During fieldwork in the "*Mahalle Subbi*" i.e. the Mandaean neighbourhood in Ahvaz, we interviewed women of all ages and from different social and cultural backgrounds, asking them to share with us the story of their lives. In these

interviews, the topic of their culinary habits came up several times, as well as their family's practices related to food and the animals that they kept in their home. Some of the women retained traditional purity rules while some others were instead quite secular; but overall, the majority of them recognised food ritual practices and prohibitions as a consistent part of their Mandaean identity. In their words, to be a practicing Mandaean also meant – among a countless number of purity rules concerning food – not eating cow meat and other land animals except for ram, performing *lofani* i.e. a ritual meal for blessing the dead namely their deceased family members and friends, and dressing in white and reciting prayers while slaughtering a ram or poultry.

### **“Every family used to have a cow”: Mandaean food in the past**

“Until forty years ago, almost every Mandaean family used to have a cow. Remember, according to the Principle of Life we are not allowed to eat land animals and female mammals, but we can eat herbivore birds, rams, and fish, of course; that's it. Why the ram? It is the exception, plus it is an herbivore, it is written in the *Ginza*, the holy book. We used to have a cow to have fresh milk, make yogurt and cheese, but the cow would not have been eaten whatsoever.”

A cow is considered as part of the family. Auntie T in recalling the war in her interview remembers going back to Ahvaz, which was under attack, with her brother O from the village where several Mandaean families had taken shelter from the bombings to save their cow and bring her to the village. They were happy to find the cow alive, and they were successful in their mission. Auntie also speaks about

how “back then” there was more space so that everybody could rear chickens, geese, ducks, and a cow perhaps, and an outdoor oven for baking bread. She recalls the outdoors more than the indoors, and although she comes from a highly religious family and has the same authority as a priest in terms of religious knowledge, she does not show any signs of nostalgia. She seems to tell you with her eyes that “things change; it is what it is, and I am content”, but she brightens up when recalling moments of preparing the food, especially bread, and sharing it with her large family.

Some traditions regarding food-related rituals are still kept among priestly households and practicing families. Uncle C, a *halali* (literally: a man in the state of purity descending from generations of men and women in the state of purity, and equipped with religious knowledge) laymen, allows me to sit next to him and record while he is performing *lofani* for the family of a deceased neighbour. He has been doing these ancient practices since he was young, and he serves the community with his knowledge. On the road between the river and his neighbour’s house, he relates that Mandaean ritual meals have different degrees of sacredness; *lofani* is the simplest thing to do inside the household but is different from the *lofanis* performed on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 45<sup>th</sup> days after the death of a Mandaean. In Lady Drower’s accounts of the private family *lofani*, two or three or more family members gather in the courtyard and perform the *rishama*, where they sit around a dish, tray or clean white cloth with the ritual food on it (E. S. Drower, 1937, p. 204). Uncle C prepares his own dishes out of clay and water from the river. The five sacred foods of *zidqa brikha* should be present as well as bread, vegetables, and fruits. Salt is necessary. Fish or bird’s flesh except chicken or mutton fat

can be included, but are not necessary. Uncle C brought a big fish, shared with the house cat after the ritual. It is a must to use water coming directly from the river. Every food or utensil used for the ritual, except the salt for obvious reasons, is previously baptized in the river three times. In Lady Drower's times, *lofani* was performed by the master of the house or his representative; however, nowadays the representative is usually a friend of the family who is *halali* enough to perform rituals and most of all, knows how to perform the ritual correctly. For Uncle C, performing *lofani* for his neighbours is a spiritual duty and also a merciful action for those families who cannot afford to pay a *tarmida* i.e. a junior priest to honor and remember their deceased loved ones. Uncle C ate a bite of everything he placed on the clay dishes and drank a bit of water. The rest of the food was to be thrown in the river or shared with the family cat. As one of the daughters of the household pointed out, "everybody knows that if you look in a cat's eyes for too long you are possessed by a *djinn* almost automatically, so we'd better keep him happy isn't it?" Uncle C showed me how he performed a household *lofani* and a general *lofani* remembering all dead souls, which can also be performed in the house. Collective rituals are very common and popular among the community; they boost a sense of belonging and are used to maintain the community boundaries. However, as we found out as participant observers, rituals and purity rules related to food are increasingly becoming a private matter, shared only between members of the same extended family or even just between members of a single household.

**“We have three geese on the roof: two are mine!”**  
**Mandaean food nowadays: fast food culture and impact of modernity**

“Do you know, Auntie, do you know that we have three geese on the roof? They live just above you! Two of them are mine, and I take really great care of them; the other is my brother's, and it's always dirty. They make eggs and I always come upstairs to fetch at least an egg every day. If they make eggs, they are not going to kill them, I would be so sad if this happens.” These were the first words M, my neighbours' nine-year-old daughter, told me when I first stepped on the stairs of my first floor flat above her house. I guess at the time she must have been really worried that I would eat what I discovered later to be her pets. During the following months, I learned from her how the chickens and geese that she would eat weekly were very different from the ones she took care of since they were tiny chicks. The relationships the Mandaean children develop with animals and with the food they eat have nuances and paradoxes which I clearly noticed in their drawings and stories, and are worthy to be reported and analysed in another context.

In order to understand what is really happening with food in the Mandaean communities overall, we should analyse the data collected on the field in a more conceptual way, thinking about food as a commodity in our daily life, or food in our respective religious rituals. Food preparation and cooking can constitute in itself a way of practicing religion or performing spirituality (as noted by McGuire, 2008). Is the laypeople's relationship with food opposed to a strict religious lifestyle?

During the fieldwork, we hardly tried to apply labels to an immense variety of behaviors concerning food purity in my hosting community. For instance, Mrs. A, a mother of two young children, prayed three times a day in her white clothes facing north, with what we might dare to describe as a peaceful and luminous glow on her face, especially during her morning ablutions. During her menstrual period, she wore cotton gloves and socks, to prevent a ritual impurity from being transmitted, and did not allow her children to touch her or her utensils. However, she did follow Mandaean religious rules regarding food just for meat and fish: she would ask her husband or brother to buy and slaughter a chicken, a duck, a goose, or a ram during the festivities, and she would then store and freeze the meat and cook different dishes according to her recipes. She explained that the Mandaean women are not allowed to kill anything because it would be against the Principle of Life: somebody giving life is not supposed to take other lives. She was very happy to have me, a Christian woman, as a neighbour: not only could I deal effectively with spiders and cockroaches, but as a woman without a *malwasha* (Mandaean spiritual name), I could also be around and help her in the kitchen and in the house even during my menstrual cycle. She usually said: “You do not have a *malwasha*, the rules do not apply to you, you don't have to wear gloves! Come and join us for lunch!” We drank and washed fruit and vegetables with tap water (double filtered, because in Ahvaz the water is highly polluted), but not necessarily river water and that was more than enough.

The wife of a priest living three houses down the road explained during her interview that she used to follow her husband's purity rules concerning food, including drinking

just water coming from the river. She described that time with a light sense of guilt: “I was once with him; it felt very good. But I could not keep it; I missed my mother's dishes too much.” Now they eat separately and her husband cooks for himself with his purified pots and utensils. She drinks and washes vegetables with tap water, but she never eats meat coming from the outside, just like my neighbour A.

On the other hand, Professor W who became a dear friend during my research, had a high degree of spirituality and she connected her deep scientific knowledge with her religious beliefs. She was also deeply involved in the community's activities. She was not at all concerned about the purity of food, and I cannot recount the times when in the middle of one of our deep conversations, a childish smile would raise on her cheeks, like to concoct something forbidden; she would ask me and her sons if it was the case to order chicken wings and pizza from the *kebab* shop around the corner. Unlike A's kids, younger in age and therefore following more of their mother's diet (except for popsicles, chocolate, cakes, gums and most of all crisps), Professor A's children were completely aware of the secular environment they lived in with their mother.

These are just living examples of the infinite nuances concerning food among the Mandaean: we could find descriptions of ritual meals in Lady Drower's books, we can observe a *zidqa brikha* during a wedding, we can record the ritual slaughtering of a dove, and we might find ourselves helping with our supposedly impure hands. Auntie S preparing rice bread while constantly connected with her relatives in Texas and Turkey through Skype. We can also meet a group of young Mandaean eating pizza in the most

famous fast food in Ahvaz the night after the end of *panjeh* (the Mandaean festivity consisting of five days of constant light, in which rituals are performed continuously and food purity rules are crucial).

As noted before, Mandaeism is a religion claimed by many experts to hold the last Gnostic living tradition. Some might argue that when we recall the classic gnostic concept of human beings bonded to their body-prisons and their earthly needs, the attention that Mandaeans place upon food purity and earthly rituals is a big enough paradox to eliminate every link between Gnosticism and Mandaeism. However, this apparent paradox can be recomposed if we take a closer and more attentive look at the Mandaean living community such as observing somebody performing *lofani* to remember a dead neighbour, eating with a family or be offered a piece of bread with nuts and almonds during a wedding. Although we can define its theology as still developing (Arabestani, 2016), Mandaeism channels the message of “pure” food in a “pure” body for a “pure” soul. In other words, if a practicing Mandaean considers life to be precious, pure and spiritual if she/he follows the religious rules, the food is—or should be—treated with maximum attention and purified. Taking care of the earthly body symbolises the care for the spiritual body; thus, the link with Gnosticism emerges full force. Food purity is highly symbolic and relates to the World of Lights, not so much with this world. One might at first be completely caught off guard by the low levels of hygienic standards as opposed to the high levels of spiritual awareness that is found in the majority of the places. Only at a later stage that the observer can understand how people's worries about the body and food purity concern the spiritual and religious side of an individual, much more than her/his

material surroundings. The symbolic aspect of food-related purity rules and rituals is also clear in the stress that Mandaism puts on running water; drinking from highly polluted rivers like the Tigris or the Karun, despite the boiling purification process that clearly cannot dispel the chemical pollution, is not a healthy practice that helps develop a strong immune system. Rather, it has a clear link with the *yardna*, the river mentioned all over the Mandaean holy scriptures i.e. the channel through which the connection between the World of Light and this world can be re-established and kept alive.

### **Food in the diaspora: cpeculations and conclusion**

Nowadays, massive cultural changes are happening among Mandaean both in the homeland and in diaspora. Theoretically, if we compare food with Life i.e. the basic principle upon which Mandaism is built, food-related rituals might be seen as one of the pillars of the Mandaean society. Therefore, eating is as precious as giving life, protecting life or glorifying life, and all the religious elements present in Mandaism reflect on food practices.

Food practices serve as a lens to see how the community is constructed. Moving away from a strictly ritualistic religious identity, the Mandaean community is currently building a new theology and a new understanding of spirituality. However, these processes are slow, partly because of the cultural boundaries of the Mandaean homelands. In fact, dominant Arabic and Persian cultures of Mandaean's neighbours are so embedded in the identities of the people that reflecting on spirituality has become a less imminent priority.

While in Ahvaz, the infinite ways in which Mandaeans deal with what they eat relates heavily to the process of the community's fragmentation. In the diasporic context, not only do we find fewer possibilities to preserve the food purity and ritualistic consideration, we also encounter evolving practices ( such as the *lofani* made by women in their household).

One of the main ongoing debates between *Ahvazi* Mandaeans and their relatives in diaspora with regards to food purity is that in *Ahvaz*, people express a general concern for their diaspora relatives and their struggle to find suitable water in their proximities and time to eat properly; on the other hand, the diaspora community is worried about massive water pollution affecting their relatives in their homelands.

Food and water pollution are related to the very subjective concept of dirt, which is often linked with the perception of prohibition (see: Douglas, 2001[1966]). The desire for “dirty food” or “impure food” like a burger made with cuts of beef, or pizzas, fast food, kebabs with meat clearly processed by non-Mandaeans might be related to the breaking of prohibitions. In a way, it might seem comparable to the desire for a non-Mandaean sexual partner in the face of an endogamous community. In fact, we received reports and implications about young Mandaeans mentioning non-Mandaeans of the opposite sex as a potential partner or spouse. However, according to our direct experience and to the information provided by the interviewees in Ahvaz and in diaspora, the attraction that some Mandaean people feel towards “dirty food” as well as towards non-Mandaean sexual partners has little to do with

prohibitions. Instead, it strongly depends on their surroundings, in other words, on the *mahalle* (neighbourhood). For instance, those who grow up in a Mandaean priestly family in Ahvaz have strong models and little challenging inputs from the outside world because of their isolated way of life and the strict ritual boundaries that separate them from blending with the wider society. Whereas Mandaean lay families all over the world are constantly exposed to outside mainstream environments, which hold a different narrative about how to behave in the society, eat, drink, and even make relationships. The discomfort of feeling as outsiders or even disrespected enables a “sex-food-dirt drive”, mainly a tool to be integrated, accepted, or anonymized in the wider society. The paradoxes and nuances in the Mandaean communities concerning the personal embodiment of food ritual purity are directly linked with an individual's identity feelings, the role she/he is born into inside the family and the role that the community and the larger society had placed upon her/him.

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# IN BETWEEN QUANZHOU AND KLANG: A CASE STUDY OF ‘NIU PAI’ AND ‘BAK KUT TEH’

Lee Han Ying

## Introduction

In the history of China, the Chinese had been involved in the agricultural sector since the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD) (Hsu, C., 1980: 15). The oxen had been widely used as an agricultural tool for plowing land; therefore, the Chinese traditionally prefer not to eat beef (Perkins, 2013: 542). During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), concurrent with the spread of Buddhism in China, the practice of beef-eating had significantly declined (Swislocki, *ibid.*). In the Buddhist doctrine, it is ‘immoral to eat cattle that till the field for us’ (Lai, *ibid.*), which may have been influenced by the Hinduism remark that in the *Vedas* cows are occasionally referred to as “not to be killed” (Gaffney, n.d.).

In the context of Song (cited in Goossaert, *n.d.* :237), ‘beef taboo, usually termed *niu jie* (牛戒), is the moral injunction to not kill bovines or to eat their flesh’. The oxen and buffalos are both categorized as bovines and although these two species can be found in different geographical locations, the Chinese treated them as similar in the context of zoological and dietetic characteristics as well as for sacrificial and ethical considerations (Goossaert, *ibid.*). According to Lai (2000), beef taboo exists in the Chinese society as a subsistence-driven device behaviour. In China’s long economic history, whenever the country has peace for

around 50 to 100 years or not being inflicted by natural disasters, China will experience a high population growth (Lai, *ibid.*). When food production could not support the population growth, they will give up the land for beef production and use it for agriculture.

On the other hand, beef eating culture in China may be influenced by Muslims of Arabian, Persian and Turkish descent that had voyaged to China since the Tang Dynasty in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Chen, 2008). For Muslims, pork is a forbidden meat (Harris, 1985: 59). According to the *Veritable Records* (cited in Haar, 2006), during the Ming Dynasty in the year 1519, Emperor Zhengde had issued a prohibition against the rearing of pigs thus resulting in all the pigs being slaughtered. Yang Tinghe wrote:

‘In the winter of the fourteenth year, the emperor in Yangzhou issued an edict which prohibited ordinary people raising pigs... when you ate the meat of pigs you would suffer from infestations... the word for pig, *zhu* 猪 sounded the same as Zhu 朱, the family name of the imperial house (*guoxing* 国姓)...’

Besides that, Gruzinski (2014) mentioned that Emperor Zhengde had ‘prohibited the slaughter of pigs so as to improve relations with the Muslim powers of central Asia’.

During the Qing Dynasty in the year 1729, Emperor Yongzheng issued an edict to ban cattle slaughtering which then led to the protest by Muslims (Spence, 2001:125). The ban was not aimed at halting the livelihood of the Muslims, but rather to increase the amount of cattle for agricultural productivity (Spence, *ibid.*). Throughout the history of the

Chinese, there had been prohibitions on the slaughtering of cattle and pigs, which eventually influenced the eating culture of the Ethnic-Chinese population of today. Accordingly, Richard Wilk (cited in Nützenadel & Trentmann, 2008) mentioned that ‘cuisines are connected directly to the cultural and physical ecology of food production, to structures of trade and politics that are far beyond the control of cooks and diners’.

### **The Meaning of Pig**

The pig has always been an important feature in Chinese history and it is best illustrated by the Chinese ideograph meaning “home” (家 *jiā*), which consists of the symbols for roof and pig (Simoons, 1994:47) drawing the meaning of “the place where a family lives” (Huang, 2011). The meaning behind the word formation “home” is a stable place with a husbandry of pigs that is able to provide food security (Vividict.com, 2010). Pigs are omnivores that can survive by eating any forms of table scraps, weeds, and chaff and therefore it is an effective household scavenger (Simoons, 1991: 296). In the viewpoint of Traditional Chinese Medicine, pork also has the effect of ‘moisturizing dryness by nourishing yin’ (Yang, 2003). According to Fuchsia Dunlop (cited in The Economist, 2014), pork has ‘the perfect flavour for Chinese cuisine’ and therefore it has been the main ingredient in Chinese cooking and an indispensable part of meat in the Chinese culture.

### **Empirical Fieldwork Findings**

In a recent empirical fieldwork in Quanzhou, Southern Fujian of China, I tasted a dish called ‘*niu pai*’ (牛排) in

*HaoChengCaiNiuPai* (好成财牛排) Restaurant. The restaurant was founded in 1910, and was awarded ‘China-Time Honoured Brand’ (中华老字号) by the Ministry of Commerce in 1999 and is also considered as one of ‘Fujian Famous Snacks’ (福建名小吃) by the Fujian Restaurant Cuisine Association (福建省烹饪协会) in 2005. A Southern Fujian dish called ‘*niu pai*’, literally translated as “Beef Steak”, is made up of beef ribs braised in a broth of soy sauce, ginger, curry powder, star anise, Chinese angelica (当归) and more than thirty types of Chinese herbs. It is usually served with ‘*xian fan*’ (咸饭), a bowl of shallot-flavoured rice, mixed with carrots and cabbage. The taste of ‘*niu pai*’ and ‘*xian fan*’ reminds me of ‘*bak kut teh*’ (肉骨茶), a *Hokkien* Ethnic-Chinese dish in Klang, in the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The Ethnic-Chinese in Malaysia were once immigrants from China and the largest shift occurred during the late nineteenth century (Voon, 2007). In Malaysia, the *Hokkien* Ethnic-Chinese (福建人) is the largest sub-ethnic group among all the Ethnic-Chinese. The genealogy of *Hokkien* Ethnic-Chinese in Klang can be traced back to the Southern Fujian Province (福建省) in China, particularly the cities of Quanzhou, Xiamen and Zhangzhou. Despite sharing the same genealogy, these two dishes have distinct similarities and differences, especially in terms of the meat product used. According to Beardsworth and Keil (1997): “The role of food and food preparation conventions in symbolizing ethnic differences is also significant, given the fact that these conventions are such central features of cultural distinctiveness, and can retain their potency among minority groups for several

generations after their physical separation from the parent culture.” Hence, this paper aims to decipher the dish that shares the same culture, but are served in two different geographical locations.

### **‘Bak Kut Teh’ in Klang**

‘*Bak kut teh*’ (肉骨茶, *rougucha*), pronounced using the *Hokkien* dialect, literally translates as ‘Meat Bone Tea’. Although there are insufficient records about the origins of ‘*bak kut teh*’, this dish has become an identity for Klang as people often associate ‘*bak kut teh*’ with the *Hokkien* Ethnic-Chinese in Klang. The Chinese herbs that are used to cook ‘*bak kut teh*’ differ from one restaurant to another. However, generally it entails pork ribs braised in a broth of soy sauce, star anise, Chinese angelica, processed rehmannia root and other Chinese herbs. It is usually served together with a bowl of shallot-flavoured rice. This dish is usually eaten early in the morning; however, there are certain restaurants that sell it for lunch and dinner.

Both ‘*niu pai*’ and ‘*bak kut teh*’ use similar types of Chinese herbs, which contribute to the flavour and medical purposes. The weather in both Quanzhou (during the summer) and Malaysia is hot and high in humidity, with the only difference being that Malaysia experiences such weather all year long. Therefore, the Chinese herbs in the broth are able to serve as a source of nourishment in Chinese eating culture and apply the concept of diet therapy (食疗). Ferrero (cited in Belasco & Scranton. 2002:196) mentioned that: “Foodscapes will allow an analysis that deals with transnational food practices and their dynamics that usually characterize, and potentially subvert, consumer societies.” The notion of foodscapes could also be used to explain ‘*bak*

*kut teh*', whereby the Chinese eating culture and concept of diet therapy are still being applied by the *Hokkien* Ethnic-Chinese in Malaysia although they have migrated to another geographical location.

According to Zhoubin & Zhujie (2014), around one century ago, most of the *Hokkien* Ethnic-Chinese worked at ports as carrier workers, usually bare footed; therefore, they were easily inflicted with diseases like arthritis and rheumatism. In order to prevent these diseases, the Ethnic-Chinese braised a pig's head and pork knuckles in a broth of Chinese herbs brought from China such as Chinese angelica and processed rehmannia root to produce a dish that is rich in collagen and beneficial for improving the health of the bone and joints. The theory of symbolic interactionism coined by George Herbert Mead (cited in Blumer, 1969: 2) states that: "Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them." The creation of '*bak kut teh*' is based on the concept of diet therapy adapted from their ancestor's knowledge to revitalize and rejuvenate their health. The term '*bak kut*' refers to the part of the pork meat near the bones i.e. the pork ribs, which is usually the cheaper cut. For the Chinese, the concept of 'sympathetic magic may be involved in determining the classification of foods as strengthening' (i.e. Walnuts are thought to invigorate the brain because they resemble that organ) (Simoons, 1991: 25). Thus, eating the part of the meat closest to the bones might strengthen bone and joint health. The dish '*niu pai*' is said to be an influence of the Muslim population, basing it on the doctrine of not eating pork. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2010), a majority of the population in Malaysia i.e. 61.3% are Muslims. Considering that the *Hokkien* Ethnic-Chinese has

been living in the same community as the Muslim majority, why then is pork still being used in '*bak kut teh*'? According to my informants, which consist of 5 owners of '*bak kut teh*' restaurants, the main reason would be that the flavour of pork is irreplaceable by either chicken or duck. Pork contributes to the sweetness and thick consistency of the broth. Moreover, they have never considered beef because the majority of Chinese in Malaysia do not eat beef and prefer to eat pork. According to Beardsworth & Keil (1997: 53): "The role of food and food preparation conventions in symbolizing ethnic differences is also significant, given the fact that these conventions are such central features of cultural distinctiveness, and can retain their potency among minority groups for several generations after their physical separation from the parent culture." Although the Ethnic-Chinese has adapted to the local culture as evident in their dishes (e.g *Hokkien Mee*), it would be interesting to know the reasons for their insistence to serve and eat pork, which could be investigated in future studies.

In spite of that, this study also discovered that in 1930 in Malaya, pig rearing was a significant economic activity in three western states namely Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan (Lim, 1971.). Small groups of Chinese settlements in the Peninsula cultivated vegetables and reared pigs and poultry. For the Malay community, the buffalo is the most important animal but it is slow-breeding and inefficient, whereas the pig required little care, possessed a quick growth rate and reproduced prolifically. Most importantly, there is high commercial demand for pork. I assumed that the answer to why pork is used for '*bak kut teh*' is not merely for cultural reasons. Instead, the economic situation played an important role in influencing the pork eating habit

among the Ethnic-Chinese in Malaysia. Pork is easily sourced and cheaper compared to other types of meat. Even though pig is a taboo for the Muslim Malays, Wilkinson (cited in Lim, 1971) noted that “whilst some of the fundamental doctrines of Islam are not always observed by the Peninsula Malays, other issues of theoretical importance are strictly enforced.” Ethnic-Chinese in Malaysia enjoy the freedom of eating pork.

## **Conclusion**

Although in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the Chinese no longer work as carrier workers at ports, this dish can still be found in Klang. The habit of eating ‘*bak kut teh*’ for breakfast is still being practiced by most of the Klang Chinese community. The rationale behind serving ‘*bak kut teh*’ today could be explained by ‘the source of meaning’ of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, *op. cit.*). The origin of the ‘*bak kut teh*’ is the “natural part of the objective makeup of the thing” (Blumer, *ibid.*: 3) as this dish served as a healing and health-building food for the Ethnic-Chinese that used to work as carrier workers. Today, it “regards ‘meaning’ as a psychical accretion (e.g. sensations, feelings, ideas, memories, motives, and attitudes) brought to the thing by the person for whom the thing has meaning” (Blumer, *ibid.*). As explained by Nützenadel and Trentmann (2009): “Cuisines are connected directly to the cultural and physical ecology of food production, to structures of trade and politics that are far beyond the control of cooks and diners.”

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# MAMAK STALLS: INCLUSIVE FOOD SPACE IN MALAYSIA?

Anisha Chai & Eric Olmedo

## **Introduction:** **Social cohesion in multi-ethnic Malaysia**

The diverse social construction of the Malaysian society is a reflection of its historical development and is attributed to colonization and migration that transpired in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Malaysian society is comprised of multiple ethnic communities. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016), ethnic Bumiputera (sons of the soil) makes up the biggest community at 68.6 percent, followed by the Chinese at 23.4 percent and Indians at 7 percent. While the Malays, Chinese and Indians make up the largest ethnic groups in the Peninsula, the ethnic distribution in Sabah and Sarawak is even more diverse with many ethnic minorities. Due to its ethnic diversity, the everyday life of the Malaysian society be it social, economic or political, is immensely shaped by its ethnic divisions and their attendants. However, Malaysia has also been praised for maintaining certain success in managing ethnic conflicts and ethnic relations. Numerous endeavours have been undertaken by various stakeholders to ensure integration and cohesiveness of the Malaysian society.

As opposed to the conventional measurement of social cohesion using wealth and income distribution, the concept of “*Mamakization*” was proposed as an analytical tool to

investigate social cohesion through the social practice of eating out in the iconic Malaysian *Mamak* stalls (Olmedo & Shamsul, 2016). The “*Mamakization*” model articulates social cohesion from an economic dimension using the Alternative Food Network as well as a sociological dimension based on the in-alienated social transaction. It is posited that *Mamak* stalls are a “great good place” characterized by their inclusivity and locality. As *Mamak* stalls are providers of inclusive cuisines i.e. the key prerequisite that enables social transaction to take place among the various ethnic groups in Malaysia, this study attempts to explore the types of cuisines served in *Mamak* stalls with the aim of constructing a typology of *Mamak* stalls through observations and semi-structured interviews. The typology of the *Mamak* stalls and the range of food served in *Mamak* stalls can be used to read how the various Malaysian ethnic groups transcend ethnic and sociological boundaries and engage in a social transaction that promotes inclusivity.

### **Indian Muslim and *Mamak* stalls**

The precise date of the Indian Muslims’ arrival in Malaya is unclear and it is believed that they first came to Malaya for trade in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century (Chuah, 2011; Mujani, 2012). Indian Muslims are commonly referred to as *Mamak* in Malaysia. The term *Mamak* originates from the Tamil word “*maama*” for maternal uncle. There are two versions of why the term *Mamak* is used to address the male Indian Muslim. It is believed that Malaysians like to encourage their children to greet their elders as uncle or auntie and hence, this became a more polite and respectable way of greeting Indian Muslim elders. On the other hand, the term

*Mamak* carries the notion of the Indian Muslims' assimilation into the Malay culture for those who had married into the Malay family (Duruz & Khoo, 2014).

*Mamak* stalls are eating places run by the Indian Muslims. *Mamak* stalls can be operated either as a roadside stand, an individual stall located within a coffee shop or a food court, or a modern chained *Nasi Kandar* restaurant. In the former two settings, due to space constraint, the array of food served is relatively simpler. The modern *Mamak* chain restaurants are usually operated on a 24-hour business cycle offering extensive menu selections of not only *Mamak* cuisine, but also food of other ethnic origins. *Mamak* stalls have become ubiquitous in many urban areas in Malaysia.

### **Food in the *Mamak* stalls: Beyond the *Mamak* cuisine**

The Klang Valley is the chosen site for our fieldwork. It is the most urbanized area in Malaysia and has witnessed massive migration of people from less urbanized areas over the last decades. Plurality and diversity of population, in terms of ethnic origins and social economic status, are the key features of the population in the Klang Valley. Based on the data collected during our fieldwork in Shah Alam, Sunway and Kuala Lumpur City Centre and Cheras, the recurring *Mamak* cuisines that reflect the Indian Muslim identity in Malaysia are *Nasi Kandar* (rice and curries), *Roti Canai* (flat Indian bread), *Mee Goreng Mamak* (fried noodles) and *Teh Tarik* (pulled tea).

- *Nasi Kandar*: *Nasi Kandar* is a Malay term that refers to the way curry rice was sold back in colonial Penang. The vendors balanced a pole on their shoulders as they

carried big containers of rice and sold them on the streets in Penang. The modern-day *Nasi Kandar* is usually offered in a restaurant shop rather than being sold on the streets. Duruz & Khoo (2014) narrates that the original *Nasi Kandar* typically consists of plain rice served with a combination of fish curry and beef curry, steamed okra and boiled egg. According to my informant Chef Hamid Jaafar, the mixture of spices in the curries that contribute to the dish's distinctive taste is usually passed down from one generation to another and is kept within the family members. It is this tradition that allows the different *Mamak* stalls to maintain their own unique flavour that differentiate theirs from other *Mamak* stalls.

- **Indian Breads:** The varieties of Indian breads found in *Mamak* stalls are numerous, some of these are originally Indian and some are uniquely created in Malaysia. The fluffy *Roti Canai* is probably the most popular Indian bread among Malaysians. Using the same dough, other variations of *Roti* such as *Roti Telur* (with egg), *Roti Banana* and *Roti Tissue* were created, all of which are served with curries, dhal or simply sugar.
- ***Mee Goreng Mamak:*** *Mee Goreng Mamak* typically consists of yellow wheat noodles stir-fried with fried Indian fritters, fried *tofu* (*bean curd*), egg, bean sprouts and/or green mustard, tomato based gravy, chilli paste and sweet soy sauce. Chinese influences in *Mee Goreng Mamak* are evident. It is believed that the dish is derived from the Chinese *Chow Mein* and its main ingredients are Chinese, but with the addition of spices and chilli, a variation that is distinctively Malaysian.

- Drinks: *Teh Tarik* is a hot milk tea drink and is the most popular drink that one can find in the *Mamak stalls*. It is made of black tea, condensed milk or evaporated milk. Its name is derived from the process of pulling to create bubbles and cooling the tea.

However, to compete for a wider customer base, many other ethnic foods are also offered by the *Mamak stalls*.

- *Tandoori* Food including *Tandoori Chicken* and *Naan* are often associated with the Punjabi ethnic group, even though its domain of influence is not as huge as curry. It can be seen in almost all *Mamak stalls* during dinner mealtime.
- The *Tom Yam* corner is another common feature of the *Mamak stalls*. It is almost certain that the *Tom Yam* corner does not only serve Thai food, but also many other food items that Malaysians favour. Besides the all-time favourite *Tom Yam*, different types of fried rice, stir-fried meat and vegetables are also prepared here.
- The *Western* corner is reflective of the colonial influence in the Malaysian food culture. Typical western dishes that can be found here are English breakfast, chicken chop, lamb chop, fish and chips and at times steak.
- Halal Chinese food is gaining popularity in *Mamak stalls*. Based on our fieldwork, we observed that several *Mamak stalls* in the Shah Alam vicinity sell Chinese Muslim food and one particular bistro in Kuala Lumpur serves the *Dim Sum* menu.

## Deciphering the oscillation between the *Mamak* and the “*Malaysian*” food identity

The prerequisite for *Mamak* stalls to be regarded as an inclusive food space is their compliance with the *halal* requirements. As *Mamak* stalls are operated by Indian Muslims, the Muslim identity is relatively straightforward. The informants interviewed all stressed that the food served in *Mamak* stalls are *halal* compliant as all the meat items acquired are *halal* certified. Non-Muslims may be hired to work at the *Mamak* stalls, but they are not assigned to handle food preparation and are mostly involved in cleaning related tasks.

The core of the *Mamak*'s meal is relatively consistent among the *Mamak* stalls and the items sold reflect the traditional *Mamak* food identity, a unique hybrid of South Indian cuisine incorporated with ingredients available locally and cooking techniques regardless of ethnic origins. From the fieldwork and interviews, we noted that despite the fact that *Mamak* cuisine is of South Indian origin, the dishes offered are not entirely South Indian in nature. While the Indians prefer hot and spicy food, the curries that accompany the *Nasi Kandar* appear to be less hot and spicy and in fact slightly sweeter when compared to those found in India. Dishes such as *sambal udang* (prawn cooked with chilli paste), *daging masak kicap* (beef cooked with soy sauce), and stir-fried vegetables with a pinch of turmeric powder and mustard seeds were added to offer more choices and to cater to a broader clientele. While *sambal* is more of a Malay dish and *masak kicap* utilizes soy sauce which originated from the Chinese food culture, these dishes have been “*mamakized*”, a term used by Duruz and Khoo (2014).

The influences of other food cultures on *Mamak* cuisine are evident. The borrowing of ingredients and cooking techniques in the cuisine itself reflects the interaction and integration between the Indian Muslim community and other local communities. Cooks who were hired from India are required to undergo cooking training to learn the Malaysian way of preparing the South Indian cuisine. The *Mamak* cuisine has clearly been adapted and hybridized according to Duruz & Khoo (2014) similar to the development of the *Nyonya* cuisine in Southeast Asia which has been dubbed as “a product of cultural localization arising from cultural interaction” (Tan, 2017:172). Both cuisines are products of an on-going dynamic process of interaction and adaptation. The availability of other ethnic foods shows that *Mamak* stalls are very adaptive and responsive to the market needs. The transactions of selling, buying and consuming the food in the *Mamak stalls* manifest the ethnic plasticity and the multiculturalism of the Malaysian social structure. In this context, the consumers are left to express and define for themselves who they are, consciously or unconsciously.

### **Ideal-typization of *Mamak* stalls in Malaysia**

Inductive logic reasoning stemming from our fieldwork led us to come up with this first tentative typologization. We do not wish to stop at a mere typology. Drawing from Weber’s construct of ideal-types (Weber, 1904:58), we circumscribed the properties of each type of *Mamak* Stall, the latter being measured as specific modalities of social cohesion in the context of Malaysia. Properties are critically discussed afterwards.

**Table 1.0** Typology of Mamak Stalls in the Klang Valley

Categories of Mamak Stalls → Main features ↓	Longitudinal isomorphism	Normative isomorphism	Mimetic Polymorphism
External communication	Indian Muslim, with or without Sufi reference	Indian Muslim, refers to origins	Identity blurring (restoran, bistro, etc)
Menu/cuisine	Symptom of “secret recipe” through generations Indian Malay	Standardized. Supplies from central cold kitchen Indian Malay Western	Core Mamak fare Market-oriented food offerings Indian Malay Western Chinese
Management	Malaysian	Indian	Indian
Staff	Local / Foreign Segregation of Non-Muslims	Local / Foreign Segregation of Non-Muslims	Foreign Segregation of Non-Muslims
Socio-economic role	Heritage memory	Glocalization	Social inclusivity

In their seminal paper published in 1983, Paul J. DiMaggio and William Powell revisited the prophetic symbol of the “iron cage” as inherited from Max Weber when he predicted that organizations would be trapped in an unmovable iron cage as a consequence of irreversible bureaucratization. This bureaucratic rationalization takes its roots in the protestant ethic of capitalism and became the main engine of its

expansion. DiMaggio and Powell expounded bureaucratic rationalization more than they refuted it by coining the concept of isomorphism, which describes linear patterns of homogenization of connected organizations, as an effect of economic globalization. The 3 typologies of institutional isomorphism that they proposed i.e. coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism and normative isomorphism are in fact variations of organizational responses to market change. Nonetheless, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) seem to advocate for romanticized notions of pluralism and diversification, without elaborating on whether they are dealing with product line or human resources, even though the latter is echoed by mentions of “capitalist elites” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983: 157). In the context of Malaysia, our small-scale empirical observation led us to observe specific patterns that do not contradict DiMaggio and Powell’s theory at first sight, but ends up questioning the construct of iron cage as a time continuum.

Two of the three ideal-types conceptualized by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) can be found manifesting into the Malaysian empirical field. We propose to substitute “coercive isomorphism” with “longitudinal isomorphism” as the main purpose of these *Mamak* stalls is to connect with the alleged origins of *nasi kandar* in Penang island. Food nostalgia is echoed by the old myth of the “secret recipe” transmitted through generations, hence the term “longitudinal”. This original and secret recipe came from the time of the company’s founder: a migrant Indian labourer who opened his stall in George Town, Penang. In post-independence days, the fame of a particular succulent dish captured sizable market shares in towns; the vision of the market was however circumscribed to the

neighbourhood. This kind of strategy does not necessarily give a competitive edge for larger-size markets if it is not backed up by proper marketing and promotional techniques. This statement leads us to the second ideal-type, the “normative isomorphic” organization where food supply and production are standardized. The outlets are normally part of a brand (i.e. “Pelita – Nasi Kandar”), which acts as the franchisor. The identity of the concept remains clear: “Nasi Kandar” and anchored in history, Pelita has its headquarters in George Town, Penang, Malaysia. Pelita even pushed the concept further by venturing overseas and opening an outlet in Chennai, India, where the origins of iconic *Mamak* food such as the *roti canai* or *roti Chennai* can be traced back to. By venturing overseas to the alleged motherland, Pelita bets on glocalization, revisiting the country of origins with the Malaysianized version of the Indian *paratha*. The third ideal-type termed “mimetic polymorphism” stems from a pragmatic liberal economy perspective. Owners and managers analyse the business concept through an expansionist lens and decide to penetrate untapped market segments such as the Ethnic-Chinese by offering Muslim Chinese dishes as part of the menu. Concurrently, the *Mamak* identity tends to dilute, leading to drop the whole “Nasi Kandar” branding exercise and replacing it with more generic terms such as “restoran” (restaurant) or “bistro”. We can safely assume that the sequence of the three ideal types of organization presented above matches the different stages of market evolution: from the rise of a particular ethnic food to glocal food homogenization.

## Conclusion

*Nasi Kandar* sold in *Mamak* stalls is gradually being recognized as a national food and *Mamak* stalls as national space due to their accessibility and affordability (Duruz & Khoo, 2014). The accessibility of the *Mamak* stalls goes beyond geographical coverage and with the 24-hour business cycle, it is a food space that enables transcendence of ethnic and sociological boundaries. *Mamak* cuisine and food of other ethnic origins served in *Mamak* stalls are inclusive i.e. *halal* under the religious canopy thus making it permissible for Muslims to consume apart from being reflective of market needs. This is imperative in enabling the social transaction among the various ethnic groups in the Malaysian context.

We propose to substitute the concept of “religious canopy” by Berger (1967) with that of “cultural canopy” as the Islamic religion is intimately linked to Indian ethnicity as far as the “Mamak Stall” concept is concerned. It is, in our opinion, the “connectedness” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983: 148) of the Indian-Muslim cultural system (migration of labour, cuisine, religion) that favours rapid expansion. The cultural canopy is leveraged upon to hasten, not homogenize, but rather prompt responsiveness to the diversity of the local neighbourhoods’ markets so as to maximise scale and profit. This must be done in minimum time as the majority of staff working in those “mimetic polymorphic” organizations are migrant labours relying on one-year working permits; in that sense, *Mamak* stalls tell a story of national cuisine aptly prepared and served by foreign workers echoing a distant colonial past. One could read this success story of migration as an ironic revisitation

of iconic national foodspaces, or even as a local illustration of subaltern studies (Ludden, 2001). From a food study's outlook, our concern is much more pragmatic: can "Mamak stalls" sustain their success story outside of their transnational heritage trail between India and Malaysia? A first glance at Australia seems to advocate for a yes, but a closer look teaches us that the cultural canopy is often taken over by the local Malaysian diaspora, and at times reinterpreted with occasional ethnic shifts in ownership and management. The risk is again in the form of further dilution of the original concept of the "Mamak Stall", which is gradually morphing into Malaysian fast food outlets in Australian cities and suburbs. The complexity and multidimensionality of the *Mamak* stall as a holistic food system, harbouring a range of sociological and cultural markers (social space, cuisine, religion, ethnicity, social transaction, migration) sets the limitations for aggressive globalization, in opposition to popular glocal foods such as pizza or California sushi roll where the whole cultural system is embedded into one sole food item.

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# **THE ROADS TO THE FORK: HOW HUMAN AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS HAVE SHAPED EATING UTENSILS**

Christian Kelly Scott

## **Introduction**

The humanistic experience of eating is the blending together of many uniquely anthropological aspects of life. Cultivation, harvesting, cooking, food, preparation, service and dining all come together courtesy of a tool that enables all of this: the mighty utensil. When I set about writing this paper to examine the history of eating utensils, I was unprepared for the magnitude and diversity of our history with utensils. I had envisioned writing a paper that would stem from the history of the first utensil and then build upon this foundational history. There has been no definitive foundational historical moment for the eating utensil since the dawn of humankind. I had looked forward to breaking down chopsticks, forks, knives, spoons, and... oh when the spork came forward, it would all crescendo. However, that was not what had emerged in my research. What I have found is that the history of utensils is deeply intertwined with the history of civilization, agriculture, dining, culina, religion, food, society, culture and humans as a whole. It is through these historical lenses that the history of eating utensils emerges.

In this paper, I will document how different classifications of environments have shaped this history. The fork, for example, can be demonstrated as a reflection of the western society with the influences of Christianity, monarchies, high society, and dining history. The chronology of the fork sheds a light on the social environment of the time, the state of dining customs, and the proliferation of western culture through the processes of colonization and proselytism. It is widely cited as being brought into popular use after the spoon, yet it seems to occupy a unique position in our human history as a marker of environmental factors (Ward, 2009). These sorts of historical markers are found amongst social movements, religious expansion, cityscapes, and many other aspects of human history. It is helpful then to examine the history of eating utensils as they relate to these different historical environments. These tools for consumption and preparation then cross into a transcendent abstract position which is that of human environmental indicator. It is with this idea in mind that we examine the utensil as an indicator of human history. It could be said that as I set out to recount the history of forks, spoons, and chopsticks, I have instead simply utilized everybody's favorite eating buddy to tell a uniquehistorical narrative of humans. This then begs the question: how are utensils reflections of our social and natural world and its history?

I suggest that these environments can be classified into seven typologies: social, cultural, natural, built, political, religious, and culinary. These typologies provide an insight into the ways in which utensils have been shaped by our everyday lives. A piece of cutlery that is the medium between food and our bodies actually possesses historical and symbolic social importance. For the purpose of this paper, the hand will not

be included as a unit of analysis. This paper examines the ways in which these environments have shaped the utensil and what we can therefore learn about human history through this examination. The human hand is excluded from this examination because of the unique place it holds in various cultures around the world as a method of food consumption. The history of the hand as an eating utensil can be traced back to the beginning of human history and has strong parallels with elements of cultural identity, colonial resistance, culinary purity, and social segregation. The irreplaceable role of the hand in kneading bread signified the workers' resistance to the industrial revolution and the Indian culture of interacting with the traditional *dosa* with the hand are but two examples of these nuances (Giorgio, 1999). These themes, however, should be saved for another body of work as this article's parameters will remain within the notion of eating utensil being an external object, detached from the human body.

## **Food History**

The history of food and agriculture has experienced a proliferation in contemporary academic literature and popular media (Albala, 2009). This popularity has urged academics and the greater public to engage in issues related to food and agriculture in a different way than previously pursued. It is because of this accumulation of intellects and expanded readership that some authors have made the call to expand the barriers of the historical analysis to be more inclusive of other disciplinary perspectives such as sociology (Albala, 2009; Garcia, 2016). This paper takes aim at addressing questions related to food history, expanding upon the works of many authors studying the history of food and

utensils (Brooks, 2014; Sonnenfeld, 1999), and seeks to examine this history through a sociological lens. This undertaking will be conducted similar to how Randi Haaland utilized ethnographic studies and historical documents to determine these timelines in different sequences in Neolithic innovations through a more anthropological lens (Haaland, 2007). The history of eating utensils, as stated earlier, follows no clear linear path and to accredit its “invention” to single cultures or individuals would be to misappropriate the core elements of human history. It is instead thought that eating utensils are reflections of the environments in which they are present and are therefore a representation of these environments. The seven typologies of environments are highlighted below and although they are far from exhaustive, they had allowed me to observe a narrative of human history through the examination of eating utensils.

## **Social Environment**

“A knife and a fork are not merely utensils for eating. They are utensils for eating in a society in which eating is done with a knife and fork” (Broknowski, 1978). Throughout history, eating utensils can serve as markers for distinct social settings and environments that were reflected in the ways the utensils were crafted, utilized, and situated within these systems. Spoons are sometimes considered to be the oldest utensil and were utilized by the early Egyptians. In fact, spoons were even buried in the tombs of Egyptian emperors, signifying their importance beyond a simple eating utensil and transcending them to the status of societal relic of the time (Jones, 2013).

Utensils were found in archeology in 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and were also buried within the tombs of powerful families in the Etruscan society (Sassatelli, 1999).

The industrial revolution shifted labor in the household and eliminated hand servants in the late Middle Ages (Flandrin, 1999a). In reflecting the social environment that was prevalent for elaborate banquets during the early Middle Ages, one author stated: “Like the advent of printed books, the introduction of new utensils and new table manners has for a time the effect of increasing the distance between social classes” (Flandrin, 1999b, pg. 369). The introduction of new cutlery also played into the social environment with the idea of producing utensils that were synonymous with occupation and social class. The fish knife indicated fish mongers and the butcher knife identified the butcher in patrilineal societies during the Middle Ages. These utensil markers then became indicative of the family and the ways in which households not only maintained a livelihood, but also navigated issues of social class and peasant/seafaring identity.

The social environment that shaped utensils allows for a culture of eating away from home in modern day America, given the fact that out-of-home food expenditures (dining out) had exceeded in-home food expenditures (retail purchases) this past year for the first time. Modern day American society has shifted from 90% in-home purchases to now less than 50% when compared to out-of-home food purchases (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). This social environment of dining out has shaped the utensil as an indicator of socioeconomic mobility.

Plastic cutlery, as I will elaborate on later, entered the marketplace in response to fast food and mobile dining.

## **Cultural Environment**

The shift from cooking over an open fireplace was facilitated by utensils (Brooks, 2014). The fork is said to have been “invented” by the Byzantium and entered western households in Italy as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Flandrin, 1999c). The Western and Victorian culture advanced the development of the ornate fork. In the early Middle Ages, individuals were urged to sit upright while dining because such a posture facilitates the use of the knife when cutting food. As a result, roasted meat became an even more prevalent dish. The utilization of forks grew and proliferated when the Black Plague occurred and table sets became popular (Flandrin, 1999c). Knives were originally weapons that are then rounded in banquet settings to demonstrate trust and non-violence (Ward, 2009). In Scottish culture, the Sgain Dubh or a knife that is tucked in a Scotsman’s sock is used as a day-to-day utensil for eating. The display of the knife indicates that the Scotsman had come in peace and bears no ill will against anyone. The cultural indicators of utensils were summarized by one author: “Utensils are very important in explaining culinary processes and dietary habits. Many utensils were not used exclusively for food preparation” (Motis Dolader, 1999, pg. 232).

Etiquette at the table took center stage in the late middle ages. Navigating the table and utilization of utensils became central to the navigation of everyday social spaces (Montanari, 1999b). “The development of table manners, which occurred at the height of the Middle Ages in

both cities and courts, played a part in the cultural establishment of privilege, defining its style as much as its content. Courtly and urban manners were defined, first and foremost, by exclusion – a rejection of anything rustic – and nowhere was this more evident than at the table. Tableware, and the way the table was laid, also served to distinguish one class from another, as did the art of cooking itself... The aristocracy has their own dietetics, gastronomy, and etiquette, as did the peasants. Food and table manners became the most effective way to confirm and consolidate the established order” (Montanari, 1999b, pg. 250).

In early America, wooden ware utensils were a reflection of everyday life and the gender labor division during the time. Women’s interactions in housework are argued to be a form of ‘domestic feminism’ (Strasser, 1982). One author characterized the way in which the local culture in early American North Dakota influences the daily lives of women whereby they interact with food through its preparation using a wood stove and iron pots. She said of the phenomena: “Investigating the changing work of the household, I came to understand the everyday objects and common ideas about daily life as historical phenomena: literally they come and go” (Strasser, 1982, pg. XV). The cultural environment at the time was steering the existence of precise utensils. American cultural exchanges were facilitated by the adoption of various forms of utensils ranging from special spoons to chopsticks (Marino & Crocco, 2015).

In many ways, food practices are reflections of cultures; as such, the rituals and traditions associated with eating food are reflected in utensils (Garcia, 2016). Tea ceremonies and

rituals in Japan are intricately enhanced by their pageantry and complexity through the development of specialized utensils (Fujioka, 1973). This symbolism in food-related items exists within the Near East and African traditions. Cooking pots represented a theme in Africa that reflected local culture, ecology, and cuisine. This prevalence of cooking pots delineates household roles, community gatherings, and the local discourse (gossip) as well as supports the development of not only food staples (porridge), but also metaphorical associations with food and utensils. This cultural history involving pots spans back thousands of years; at least in so far as the fact that pots were utilized, it is impossible to say if the intricacies had persisted for such a long period. For the east, plant domestication had a clear role in the development of local food culture and specialized utensils. The development of grains in the cradle of civilization in Mesopotamia paved the way for not only “civilization”, but also for bread baking with the invention of the stone hearth and bread cakes (Haaland, 2007).

## **Natural Environment**

The planet’s natural environment has shaped the history of utensils tremendously. Quite literally, the natural materials used to craft utensils form the basic building blocks for these hominid tools. Wooden forks fashioned during early American life were a reflection of the natural resource abundance of the rapidly expanding (and consuming) nation (Gauld, 1948). A new system of cooking and consumption had emerged following the Neolithic period due to the abundance of clay (Perles, 1999).

Utensils are a direct reflection of an area's agriculture and culture, in the way that apples and butter merited their own distinct knives in early American households (Gauld, 1948). The natural environment that enabled terraced agriculture in the Far East led to water-based dishes that proved perfect for rice cultivation and the utilization of thin bamboo lumber to create chopsticks. Le Grand d'Aussy described how local cuisines in France are rooted in the soil and thus able to resist change. However, in the 1800s, there was a shift in the ways in which natural spaces were utilized in the west due to agricultural monocultures (Csergo, 1999). The natural environment has even served to physically shape spoons from sea shells in coastal areas throughout human history (Jones, 2013). The natural environment also provided the settings in which to cultivate cash crops like tea and coffee, and the utensils that accompanied both then served as markers of migration, trade, globalization and colonial expansion throughout the world (Flandrin, 1999c).

Eating out at restaurants became a common practice in the 1950s and 60s. This created a shift in the relationship we have with food from one that is cooking-based to one where the dynamic (eating out) is based entirely on consumption. In fact, Americans now spend more on food while dining out than when purchasing food from a retail outlet (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Fordism brought about an emphasis on efficiency and when these principles were applied to the food system, utensils began to be seen more as expendable items (Fischler, 1999). Plastic cutlery, for instance, affects our natural environment via its contribution in petroleum consumption, carbon emissions, and environmental pollution. In this way, utensils influence our natural environment in shaping the natural world's future.

Throughout history, human pressures on the natural environment have influenced social life tremendously. The deforestation in 1693 France was a result of grazing and agricultural pressures. This deforestation led to peasant uprisings in Normandy and other regions in Western Europe as a result of the privatization of uncultivated areas and the establishment of guards to these lands. This shows the power of shifting social divides, symbolized by cooking and eating utensils, in bringing about social unrest and serves as a social environmental indicator of social segregation and class division (Flandrin & Montanari, 1999). Hence, the natural environment and its depletion was one of the catalysts for social movements that were then symbolized through the use (or rejection) of cutlery.

## **Built Environment**

Utensils have influenced built environments in very interesting ways as well. In many ways, eating utensils serve as markers of specific built environments throughout human history. In prehistoric times specifically 900 A.D., the Puebla Native Americans used axes to grind and consume food and to build village structures (Rautman, 2014). The shift from cooking over an open fireplace was facilitated by cooking utensils that enabled a distance from the flame allowing for a more upright cooking and preparation position; the establishment of the fireplace restructured the concept of human dwelling and forever altered our built environment (Brooks, 2014). Utensils shaped the built environment through the construction of houses in the late middle ages, with special rooms for storing valuable possessions, frequently utensils. There were even special storage areas delineated off of the kitchen for the storage of utensils, large

and small, from pots to cutlery (Piponnier, 1999). In early America, modern transportation, preservation methods, and the industrial revolution created consumers out of producers, and the fork delineated this progression (Strasser, 1982). This was a unique time in American and global history as the industrial revolution brought about infrastructure, innovation, and the possibility of people and goods moving farther and faster from their origins. As forks spread throughout this improved connectivity, it became one of the first signs of industrial progress. In this way, the fork represents technological advancement, and the road to the fork

Marino & Crocco argue that American urbanization was heralded with the arrival of the pizza. The authors demonstrate how the pizza had shaped Trenton, NJ and chronicled the history of Italian immigrants arriving and dispersing throughout America. The pizza cutter and the pizza pan are highlighted as the physical indications of this process within the context of a built environment (Marino & Crocco, 2015). The irony of this pizza party is that pizza is often consumed by hand. But the utensil as an environmental marker is still ever present as the fork, spoon, and knife became even more popular staples in the restaurant industry.

The American trend of dining out, which is steadily increasing year after year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), has led to a proliferation of restaurant and dining out amenities that shape our built environment in ways that signify distinct community elements (Silver & Clark, 2016). These dining amenities that are affecting our built environment can be signified through the utensils that are integrated into the dining experience. We see the establishment of tea and

coffee houses that are represented through specific utensils (de Lempis, 1999).

## **Political Environment**

Cutlery became a social status indicator in the late middle ages that highlighted the royal and noble/aristocratic model of consumption (Montonari, 1999b). In the early middle ages, cooking pot was the staple for peasants (Montonari, 1999a). The fork became the status symbol of royalty and monarchies throughout medieval times (Jones, 2013). The presence of a servant/lower class cup bearer that was specifically tasked with the management of utensils during banquets serves to further display the political hierarchy present during these food events (Riera-Melis, 1999). Pastry molds signified wealth and prosperity in the late middle ages (Piponnier, 1999). This political environment was illuminated in Catherine Allen's work examining the Mesoamerican pre-Colombian Andes shifting social and political movement (Allen, 1998). In this historical example, social stratification is demonstrated as a mobilizing force for the masses instead of a symbol of political hegemony as demonstrated in medieval times.

Adam Smith proposes that currency is a function of a market-based economy prefaced on the agreed upon societal acceptance of currency at which prices are set through the interactions of market and natural prices. The key here is that coined currency is the mechanism that makes transactions between distant places possible. Smith highlights that many metals have been coined, but the first one is usually the one used as the standard in commerce. In Europe, that metal was silver (Smith, 1776). Although the

United Kingdom eventually switched to the gold standard, the legacy of the British silver standard served to imprint the status of silver as a valuable metal even today. Silver became a marker of colonialism and political power. This extended beyond currency to the dining table where silverware created a political environment where elites would use silver forks, knives, and spoons with distinct measures of mineral purity to reflect their 'shine'. Shine here is a poor pun but the power disparities in the colonial British and Spanish empires cannot but be understated as the race to push west created markers of social stratification with silverware (Flynn & Giraldez, 1995). The class markers of having fine silver differentiated the royal court aristocrats with the pauper or colonial subject. This social pressure of status symbolism by elites, royals, and familial legacies extends into the modern day where we see the time-honored tradition of passing down silverware sets through generations that serve as intergenerational markers of wealth, class, and privilege.

To flip the script back to the ways in which the political environment is shaping utensils in a manner that highlights political power disparities and social stratification, the shifting of dining culture had transformed eating into a more flexible activity in contemporary times. This has the effect of demonstrating plastic cutlery as a reflection of the streamlined neo-liberal modern-day food regime. The spread of utensils again highlights these political differences and a political climate of consolidation of autonomy and capabilities at the top with the spread of western colonialism. In *Kitchen Utensils: Names, Origins, and Definitions through the Ages*, the author credits the arrival and spread of utensils in "the new world" to the early

American pilgrims (Brooks, 2014). Sociologist Norbert Elias classified his “civilizing process” in Western Europe as having the fork and the adoption of it at the center of this process. Setting aside the clearly neocolonial language associated with this claim, there are obvious indicators that support the fork as heralding the increasing nature of anglicized “progress” with the shifting materials used for fabricating the fork as it moved from wood to gold and silver (Romagnoli, 1999). This progress extends from Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* on a community level to the individual household when the mark of political power, high class, and significant influence is displayed with fine silverware sets.

### **Religious Environment**

The religious environment has shaped the utensil in a variety of ways. Forks were met with a large degree of resistance by the Christian church and the Jewish faith during the early beginnings of the adoption of tableware (Jones, 2013). In 1004, the niece of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II died from what was widely credited at the time as a result of her using a fork, an act that was deemed as a clear defiance of the gods. It was said to be virtuous to consume food with the hand and that her use of forks was grandiose. One of the local clergy said: “God in his wisdom has provided man with natural forks – his fingers. Therefore, it is an insult to him to substitute artificial metal forks for them when eating (Ward, 2009).” In reality, the royal niece died of one of innumerable communicable diseases of the day, but the idea remains that the religious environment of the day was a clear deterrent to the adoption of the fork. Inversely, the adoption of eating utensils in the Jewish

religious environment was illustrious due to the environment that exists where partaking in food is primarily a social activity in Jewish customs (Motis Dolader, 1999). In this way, utensils heralded a religious environment of communal dining. Specific utensils signified Jewish high society with the type of wares and the setting of the table place in the early middle ages (Dolader, 1999).

## **Culinary Environment**

The utensil has also shaped and been shaped by the culinary environment. The history of the utensil is so entwined with that of culinary food history that it is fair to say that the culinary environment exists in symbiosis with the history of eating utensils. They are distinct, however, in that the nature of culinary history is that which is related to cooking and the utensil relates to phases of consumption, preparation, and cooking. The utensil is in the medium of a physical object, contrasting to the culinary environment of a series of actions as they relate to food. The culinary environment has shaped eating utensils in the fabrication of utensils that were designed specifically for a targeted culinary item. The abundance of a unique item in the culinary praxis frequently yields specialized eating, preparation, and cleaning utensils. This is exemplified in the role of the culinary indicator that specialized in fork play. Oyster, pickle, and fish forks have played historical roles in the culinary environment in which they appeared in. These utensils were markers of a particular culinary practice: with oysters it was the nature of seafood and the varied ways in which the mollusk was consumed, with pickles it was the preservation techniques that were popular in culinary practice, and fish forks were reflective of the rich protein source from the sea being incorporated into

more technical dishes to the point where they “required” a special utensil for eating the “proper” way (Goldsmith, 2012).

Another example can be found in the porridge spurtle which was traditionally used in Gaelic households and early American households for the exclusive purpose of stirring oats in porridge. This reflected a culinary environment for the consumption of a cereal crop that served as a staple for many families (Gould, 1948). An additional culinary marker by a utensil is the ladle and the significance that the utensil has gained in soup kitchens as a marker of a culinary environment of charity, warmth, and hospitality (Kislinger, 1999). The culinary environment has also had a profound influence on the consumption and ritual of tea (Fujioka, 1973). The theater, tradition, and pageantry of Japanese tea sets are facilitated through the representations of learned history and ancient traditions that are reflected in the utensils for tea drinking (Fujioka, 1973).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

These varied historical perspectives led to an interesting question that was asked at the beginning of this paper i.e. how are utensils reflections of our social and natural world and its history? Well, the answer is not immediately clear due to the non-linear route that the eatingutensil has taken (or not taken) into our everyday lives. What is clear is that the utensil as a historical marker can be useful in examining issues of power, social class, environmental degradation, and many other environmental factors. The social construction for the meaning of the utensil is something that warrants further research and closer inspection. The

prescribed meaning that cultures have placed on utensils throughout human history demonstrates a unique tool in examining historical and societal situations. When the eating utensil crosses over into this area of environmental indicator and is examined as such, we are able to view the use of utensils as a demarcation of a particular lived experience and historical context. Chopsticks in the east, forks in the west, pottery in the south, and fish knives on the coast are reflections of all of these environments embodied in a tool for consumption.

The utilization of the utensil is also a reflection of the physical and natural environment in which it is situated. The symbolism afforded to the utensil as a marker of social stratification is something that, although not unique to the utensil (see vehicles, houses, and clothing), is significant in the demarcation of a simple universal act: eating. As the deskilling of the consumer in the food system rapidly expands in our modern-day society, it is helpful to step back and examine the medium in which that deskilling takes place. From disposable silverware to Wusthof knives, the tools that we use to interact with food have overt ramifications on our own health and implied/hidden ramifications on our social status and cultural history. Taking this into the modern day, employing a reflexive historical perspective is useful when we examine how millennials use expensive knives from specialty kitchen supply stores in Bohemian-style planned outdoor malls situated in a trendy upscale neighborhood purchased with a credit card on Apple pay with an Apple watch that earns triple travel miles. What can we learn from how we use that knife to de-rib a bunch of locally grown kale from an organic incubator farm CSA? How does the story of this

particular utensil relate to that of early butcher knives cutting into fresh mutton among peasant quarters in the middle ages? These vivid caricatures of the realities of these environmental circumstances of that time come to life through the examination of the utensil, and the ways and means that it achieves its purpose.

The physical shaping of the utensil throughout history has been demonstrated to be a direct reflection of the environment in which it was derived from. The agriculture, culinary menu, and materials are all reflected in the final product that the utensil represents. Bamboo chopsticks, wooden forks, and sea shell spoons have all been demonstrated as reflections of these environments. The tin silver, copper, and marble installments of utensil mediums are more recent reflections of society and cultures that are situated within the natural environment of human history.

This paper is not meant to be an “ode to the utensil”, but it can be said that it does argue for the significance of the utensil both historically and in the modern era. With shifting patterns of consumption and a dynamically shifting food system, examining the utensil enables it to transcend from being a tool for the consumption and production of food into a tool for exploratory truth in society and human history. Never before in human history has the food system been as dynamic and changing as it has in the past one hundred years. This rapid change in the production of food has also spurred dramatic changes in the consumption of food and the way in which we interact with it. Utensils proved a unique gateway into the nexus of history across these seven environments.

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# **PENANG HERITAGE FOOD AND COMPARISONS WITH THAT FROM MELAKA AND SINGAPORE**

Ong Jin Teong

## **Introduction**

Traditional Penang food is strongly influenced by the dominant Malay and Hokkien cuisines, giving rise to the Nonya cuisine. There are influences from Thailand and Burma, and from the Indians who were involved in trade in the Malayan Peninsula centuries earlier. These influences distinguish Penang traditional food from that found in Melaka and Singapore. The Hainanese and English influences came about because the Hainanese had worked for the British expatriates and in virtually all the British F&B and government establishments in Malaya.

There is interest to obtain recognition from UNESCO to establish Nonya Cuisine as an intangible heritage, but the cuisine firstly needs to be characterized. There are differences in Nonya food events within families, so differences between the ASEAN regions are expected. However, it is the similarities that define Nonya cuisine.

Some of the materials and photos (marked with \*) used in this paper are taken from the author's award winning books [Ong, 2010 & Ong, 2016].

## **Influences in Penang Heritage Food**

### ***Malay Influence***

Malay dishes are characterized by the use of coconut milk, sour tamarind, hot chilies, shallots, garlic, lemongrass and fragrant root gingers like turmeric, galangal and *cekur*. Many leaves and shoots like kafir lime leaf, *cekur* leaves, *daun kadok* and *kesom*, are also used together with a key Southeast Asia ingredient - *belacan*.

Malay cooking is also influenced by the use of seed spices like coriander, fennel and cumin brought over by Indian and Arab traders in the 14th century. *Gulai ayam* or *gulai kay* to the Penang Nonyas is a form of chicken curry that uses such spices.

Malay curries are referred to as *gulai* in the Northern states of Malaysia, and the Nonyas in Penang widely use the word to describe curry dishes. However, the term is not included in the name of many classic spicy Malay dishes like *masak assam pedas* (sour & hot curry), *masak lemak* (creamy dish using coconut milk), *masak pedas* like beef *rendang*, a dry beef curry.



**Figure 1 (a)**  
Sambal Belacan



(b) Herbs & Spices



(c) Batu Giling

Traditional Malay dishes like curries are simpler than the Nonya or Indian equivalents. Different varieties of *gulai* are flavoured with different herbs and, in general, one or at most two herbs are used in any given dish. For example, *kesom* is used for *assam pedas* and Indian curry leaves are used for fish curry, unlike more recent fusion curries which mix several herbs together.

Traditionally, the ingredients are pounded in a *batu lesong* – a granite mortar and pestle. The end product of the pounding and mixing of the wet and dry ingredients is the *rempah* (spice paste). In Malay cooking, the ingredients are not so finely pounded. If the spices are to be more finely ground, a *batu giling* is used.

Normally, the *rempah* is gently fried (*tumis* in Malay) with coconut oil until it is fragrant, after which fish, prawns, chicken or other permissible meat is added.

The more common Malay influenced dishes are: Nonya *nasi lemak* served with *sambal belacan*, *asam udang goreng* (fried prawns), fried *ikan kuning* (fish), *ikan asam pedas* and cucumber.

*Nasi ulam* is a Malay rice salad that includes salted fish, flaked fish or prawns, *kerisek* and *ulam* which is a Malay collective term for a variety of edible plant shoots, leaves, roots and flowers (finely sliced).

*Roti jala* is a lacy pancake served with chicken curry with strong Southern Indian influence. The techniques and devices used to make *roti jala* have evolved with time.



**Figure 2** (a) Nasi  
Ulam\*



(b) Nonya Nasi Lemak



(c) Roti Jala Funnels

The Nonyas adapted the traditional Malay *bubur pulut hitam* by adding dried *longan*, a Chinese ingredient to give it a more interesting texture.

*Bubur cha cha* and Nonya *pengat* are two Nonya desserts inspired by the different varieties of Malay *pengats*.



**Figure 3 (a)** Nonya Pengat



b) Cha-Cha added to Bubur Cha-Cha



(c) Acar Awak

The soup of the Penang *asam laksa* shares the same ingredients as *ikan asam pedas*. Laksa is a Persian term used for the *beehoon* in *asam laksa*. Sliced vegetables garnish this famous Penang dish. In the olden days, the *laksa beehoon* was made from rice using traditional utensils.

*Acar awak* is another Malay dish adapted by the Penang Nonyas by adding more spices, ground peanuts and sesame seeds.

### ***Hokkien Influence***

Hokkien influence in Penang food is significant since the majority of the Chinese in Penang originated from the southern Fujian Province.

One clear Hokkien influence is the use of cured ingredients like dried cuttlefish, pickled vegetable, salted fish and salted vegetable, which are used in Penang heritage dishes like *ju hu char*, *kiam chai ark* and steamed pork with salted fish.

Fine slicing technique is also stressed in Hokkien cooking and hence in Nonya cooking as well, particularly for seafood, to ensure that the flavour of the ingredients is unlocked.



**Figure 4 (a)**  
Finely Sliced Vegetable



(b) Ju Hu Char



(c) Pohn Piah Fillings\*

Another characteristic of Hokkien food is the predominance of soupy dishes and porridges e.g. *Hokkien mee* (noodles served in a prawn based soup) and *koay teow thng* (flat rice noodles served in duck based soup).

Hokkien food widely served in Penang has a reputation for being simple and basic without embellishments like fried soya-bean cake, fried oyster, and stewed meat in soya sauce.

Fujian is the largest bamboo growing area in China with 140 varieties of bamboo in existence. This is why bamboo shoot is an important ingredient in Hokkien cooking – used as the main ingredient in *ju hu char* and *poh piah* & *koay pai ti* fillings. *Koay pai ti* is a hors d'oeuvre of crispy shells with fillings similar to that of *poh piah*. It has been largely replaced by yambean.



**Figure 5** (a) Koay Pai Ti

(b) Fried Poh Piah\*



(c) Mamak Poh Piah

Traditionally, the left-over *poh piah* fillings are wrapped up in smaller skins and deep-fried to give rise to *poh piah chnee*, now a popular finger food. There is also a mamak version of *poh piah* that has a different spicy sauce.

### ***Hainanese Influence***

The original tastes of Penang Hainanese food that the author grew up with is now lost. The Penang variety has some distinct characteristics due to the strong Penang Nonya influence. *Choon piah* is a uniquely Penang dish similar to fried *poh piah*, except for the different skin and fillings.

The Hainanese not only learned to prepare British dishes, but also had very successfully incorporated local ingredients like soya sauce and spices into many dishes like *min chee*, curry puff, chicken chop, chicken stew, mutton stew and chicken pie. Hainanese chicken pie and chicken chops are certainly more appetizing than the original English versions.



**Figure 6** (a) Choon Piah

(b) Roti Babi/Ayam



(c) Min Chee

The Hainanese mastered Nonya food like *gulai tumis* and *curry kapitan*, and developed the inclination to serve *sambal belacan* with their fried noodles and *sambal pencuri* with their stewed mutton because they used to cook for the well-off Nonya families. They had modified some Nonya dishes like *choon piah* and *roti babi/ayam* to suit the Western taste. *Roti babi* is made by cutting a pocket into a thick slice of bread and stuffing it with meat, onion and yambean filling; it is then dipped in beaten egg and deep-fried.



**Figure 7 (a)**  
Hainanese Curry Puff



(b) Hainanese Chicken Pie



(c) Hainanese Satay

Worcestershire sauce, made famous by the Lea & Perrin brand, is an important condiment served with Penang Hainanese food. The Hainanese and the Nonyas made their own Worcestershire sauce.

Hainanese Satay is a unique Penang dish that has a spicy sauce made of sweet potato unlike the Malay peanut sauce.

## *Indian Influences*

The immigration of Hindu and Muslim Tamils to Penang from India occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries. Earlier, Indian influence had already asserted itself in Malay cooking with the introduction of Indian seed spices like cumin, fennel and coriander through Indians trading in Asia. The Indian Muslim immigrants from the Malabar coast, locally referred to as *mamak*, have now been integrated into the Malay community.

They use more meat like mutton, chicken, fish and other sea food in their cooking as compared to the Hindu Tamils. Coconut and ingredients like peas, potatoes, carrots, egg-plants, okras, drumstick, cabbages, pulses *gula melaka* tamarind and curry leaves feature prominently in Tamil cooking.

*Roti canai*, a common food found all over Malaysia is known in Singapore and some other places as *roti paratha*. *Murtabak* is a *mamak* dish made by wrapping a filling of meat, eggs and onions in thin *roti canai* dough. *Murtabak* most probably has Arabic origins; *mutabbaq* in Arabic means "folded".



**Figure 8 (a)**  
Roti Canai



(b) Murtabak



(c) Mee Goreng & Mee Rebus

*Mee goreng* and *mee rebus* (fried and boiled noodles respectively) used to be sold from mobile hawker carts equipped with two charcoal stoves - one for blanching the noodles and the beansprouts, and the other for frying the *mee goreng* using a wok. Both dishes are truly multiracial fusion foods. They are prepared by the mamaks using Chinese ingredients like Hokkien noodles, beansprouts and fried *taukua*, and cooked in chili-based gravy using dried cuttlefish. The additional gravy used for the *mee rebus* is sweet potato based and dried seafood. The Southern versions are not the same.

Most of these ingredients are used in *pasembor* which is also sold by the mamaks. In other parts of Malaysia, *pasembor* is called *rojak* which is quite different from the Penang *rojak* - a fruit dessert salad.

Two snacks often sold in hawker stalls were *samosa* and *masala vadai*, which is a deep-fried savoury snack made of dhal, sliced onions and chilies. They were sold by Indians together with *pisang goreng* and *ubi goreng*.

In the olden days, a choice assortment of nuts, pulses and *muruku* were sold from the *kacang putih* stalls operated by Indians who plied the streets. The nuts were packed in cones made out of pages of used exercise books. Back then, each cone of *kacang putih* costed 10 cents!



**Figure 9 (a)**  
Kacang Putih Girl



(b) Nasi Kandar Stall



(c) Sugee Cake

The name *Nasi Kandar* came from the wooden pole used by mamak hawkers to balance two containers or baskets containing rice and curries. As everything had to be carried around, the selection of curries they served was limited. Some of them settled in a fixed location, like one outside the Kapitan Kling Mosque in Pitts Street. *Nasi Kandar* is similar to *Nasi Padang* from Padang in Sumatra and *Nasi Dagang* from the East Coast of Malaysia.

The Nonyas also make Eurasian cakes, but with more spices and ingredients as compared to the Eurasian version. *Sugee* is a North Indian name for semolina. There is evidence to suggest that sugee cake originated in the Indian sub-continent with a lot of Portuguese and English influences [Ong, 2016].

### ***Thai influences***

Some ingredients that characterize Thai cooking are tamarind, pepper, *daun limau purut*, *daun kadok*, *timun kunci* (a type of ginger), pea brinjal and the small but very hot chili.

The Burmese had also influenced Penang food. An important ingredient used in Penang cooking which originated from Burma, now Mynmar, is *tanau kiam hu* (salted fish).

The Thais serve their thick rice noodles (*khanom cheen*) with different curry sauces and fresh vegetables much like *laksa lemak* e.g. *khanom cheen nam prik* which has gravy made from *nam prik* plus ground peanuts and mungbeans.

*Timun kunci* is used to give Siamese *laksa* a special flavour. Both Penang *assam laksa* and Siamese *laksa lemak* have fresh vegetable condiments which are finely sliced, in line with Hokkien/Nonya traditions.



**Figure 10** (a) Siamese Laksa\*



(b) Otak Otak



(c) Kuih Koci Santan

*Timun kunci* is used in *hor mok pla* (steamed fish curry) from which Penang's *otak otak* probably evolved. There are other types of *otak* from other parts of Malaysia and Singapore; the packaging used in Penang is quite different. *Hor mok pla*, the Thai equivalent, is steamed in a cup made of banana leaves, but elsewhere in Johor and Singapore for example, the *otak* is put in two coconut leaves and grilled. Penang *otak* is wrapped up in banana leaves, elegantly fastened together with a short mid-rib of coconut fronds, and steamed. Packaging is shaped like *kuih koci santan*, another *kuih* influenced by the Thais; it is a more sophisticated version of the *kuih bongkong*.

*Kerabu* may have originated in Thailand where similar salad dishes are found. In the Penang version, the Thai fish sauce and chilies are replaced by *sambal belacan*. There are also differences in the vegetables used. The Thais serve a greater variety of *kerabu* using different main ingredients which could consist of vegetable, fruit or meat. In Penang, there are three types of *kerabu* dishes: *kerabu* with fruit or vegetable, *kerabu* with meat, and *kerabu* with coconut milk.

**Figure 11 (a)** Kerabu\*



**(b)** Perut Ikan



*Perut ikan* or fermented fish stomach served with fresh vegetables is another characteristically Thai dish. In the Nonya kitchen of yesteryears, the fish stomach and the roe were preserved when fishes were cleaned. They were kept in airtight bottles to ferment. After about a month, the *perut ikan* can be used to cook this dish. The main ingredients of *perut ikan* are finely sliced vegetables commonly used in Thai cuisine e.g. *daun limau purut*, *kacang botol*, long beans and a variety of brinjals. There is an *assam* and a *lemak* variety of *perut ikan*.

### **Differences between Nonya Food from Penang and that from Melaka and Singapore**

For many of the dishes, the differences between Nonya food from the North and the South are only in name e.g. *Hokkien mee* & *Hokkien char*, *hu peo* soup & *hee peow* soup, *sambal heh bee* & *sambal udang kering*, *too kua kean* & *hati babi*, *babi chin* & *hong bak* and *ngoh hiang* & *lor bak*. Hence, the differences are not so significant.

There are many dishes which have no equivalence like *ju hu char*, *pnee hu char*, *perut ikan* or *kerabu* from Penang and the North and *mee soto*, *sayur lodeh* or *gado-gado* from Melaka and Singapore in the South.

In general, the Southern Nonya dishes from Melaka and Singapore are sweeter e.g. in the simple *sambal belacan*, sugar is commonly added.

*Tau cheo* (fermented soya beans) is used more extensively in the South such as in *poh piah* and *koay pai ti* filling. It is easy to tell whether a Nonya is from Penang or from the

South by the way the *poh piah* is eaten. Penangites will usually spoon some gravy from the filling over their *poh piah*s; Singaporeans will take their *poh piah* dry and not sliced.

*Buah keras* and *lengkuas* are also extensively used in the South; *buah keras* is used for thickening curries and soup. In Penang, it is used more selectively e.g. in *otak otak*, *curry kapitan* and *acar awak*. *Lengkuas* is also more selectively used in Penang e.g. it is used in Siamese *laksa* but not in *asam laksa*.

The *cekur* or *kencur* root is more commonly used in Penang Nonya cuisine e.g. in *rempah udang*, Nonya *bak chang*, *roti babi* and *hong bak*. The *cekur* leaves are more frequently used by the Nonyas from the North and the South for other dishes.

The blue colouring from the *bunga telang* flower is used extensively in the South to colour several *kuihs* like *apong bokwa* and especially *kuihs* using *pulut* like Nonya *chang*. It is however used very selectively in Penang mainly for *pulut inti* and *pulut taitai* because in the Hokkien and Nonya tradition, blue is associated with mourning; blue *bee thye bak* is served at funerals. However, the blue colouring for these two *kuihs* served in Nonya weddings is acceptable because *pulut taitai* and *pulut inti* are served respectively with *kaya* and *inti*, both of which have the auspicious golden colour which over-rides the blue.

It will be easier to define the unique characteristics of the Nonya Cuisine once the differences between the Nonya foods from the different states are better understood. This

will be the subject of a future paper. The characteristics include the common ingredients used by the Nonyas as well as their cooking methods and techniques.

### **Summary**

The Malay, Hokkien, Indian, Thai, Hainanese and English influences on Penang Heritage food have been elaborated in this paper. The differences between the traditional dishes especially Nonya food from the North and that from the South have been briefly explained. The way ahead is to work on what defines the unique characteristics of the Nonya Cuisine.

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ONG Jin Teong, *NONYA HERITAGE KITCHEN – Origins, Utensils and Recipes*, Landmark Books Pte Ltd, 2016

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## Author's biography

**Ong Jin Teong** is an Engineering & Food consultant. He had published two award winning books, *Penang Heritage Food – Yesterday's Recipes for Today's Cook* and *NONYA HERITAGE KITCHEN – Origins, Utensils and Recipes*, after retiring as a professor from the Nanyang Technological University's College of Engineering.

# MIDWIVES AND HERBAL REMEDIES: THE NEW NORMAL IN MODERN PRACTICE

Kartini Aboo Talib @ Khalid

## Introduction

Women are profound in the cycle of life although their reproductive role is often used by the state and market to discriminate them from equal position, payment and benefit. This paper is exploratory and attempts to share about women, their reproductive role and the process of care after childbirth using traditional methods for maintaining good health. Such traditional methods have been combined with modern medicine and continue to uphold the heritage of herbal remedy. Thus, the new normal<sup>1</sup> means that normal practices in the past are being relived in the modern day and accepted for use in hospitals which ultimately help in speeding up the healing process after childbirth.

## The sharing expression

This exploratory study applies the method of unstructured interviews with four midwives across west peninsular Malaysia specifically Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang and Selangor. The midwives have more than twenty years of

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<sup>1</sup> The 'new normal' is a term used by Ian Davis to explain a market phenomenon that used to be abnormal, but later became normal practice due to changes in time, technology, demography, supply and demand.

experience attending pre- and post-natal care. Most of these respondents were midwives at public hospitals and continue to serve as midwives after their retirement. The narratives from these interviews were transcribed and a thematic analysis was developed to identify the patterns of processes, ingredients, reasons, and technique. Although these midwives do not know each other due to spatial distances, it is interesting that most of them shared similar perspectives in caring for mothers during, pre- and post-delivery.

### **Food for pre-natal**

Most of the respondents shared relatively similar ideas of pre-natal and pregnancy foods. The overall perspective on pre-natal foods is that a woman must prepare herself physically and mentally to be a mother. Foods rich in vitamins, minerals and nutrition are good for fertility as they help women to conceive better. Apart from nourishing the body, the food consumed also needs to enrich the soul i.e. through the practice of reciting prayers before eating which is believed to be beneficial in spiritually reviving and rejuvenating the internal body's system. Thus, the physical act of consuming nutritious foods is reinforced with the spiritual act of reciting prayers before eating, leading to the nourishment and rejuvenation of both the body and soul.

The traditional approach to foods is divided into two categories i.e. foods that can and cannot be eaten. The first category remains wide and open, but none of the midwives mentioned on the need for a balanced diet. Additionally, the midwives do not categorize foods based on the colonial knowledge of a balanced diet such as the consumption limits of carbohydrate, protein, vegetables and fruits, sweets, etc.

On the contrary, they believe that a pregnant woman can eat almost anything that she desires. Based on their experience, most women struggle very hard in their first trimester due to changing hormones while some have better tolerance to their new condition. It is difficult for most pregnant women to keep up with a good balanced diet as some tend to develop awkward eating habits leading to the notion of '*mengidam*' or cravings. This belief dictates that a pregnant woman who is craving for certain foods must be allowed to fulfill that craving or else her baby will be born with the disposition of drooling excessively.

The second category consists of everything defined as cold food which must be avoided during pregnancy because these foods are believed to cause a bloated stomach, sore muscles and joints, and possible occurrence of jaundice to the mother or baby once born. Although these beliefs can be challenged on a scientific basis, the idea of avoiding certain foods is based on their life-long experience as midwives. Nowadays, women with modern lifestyles are unlikely to adhere to such food restrictions because the requirement is too rigid and devoid of scientific reasoning. However, there are still those who find merit in adhering to traditional methods. Furthermore, these midwives are also concerned with the modern trend of eating fast foods or canned food loaded with artificial colorings or preservatives that are easily available on the market. They believe that this could be the reason why most newborns these days are more likely to develop jaundice.

Another interesting fact is that these midwives believe that foods with high contents of chemical substances can cause a ripple effect on women in the long run especially when they

reach pre-menopause or during their golden years. The underlined perspective is that a mother who eats healthy food and avoids 'cold food' would be in a better physical condition to give birth to a healthy baby that is free of jaundice or other food allergies as well as being able to recover faster during the confinement period.

Post-natal care		
Bath	Diet	Massage
<p>Boil water with <i>ziziphus spina-christi</i>, citronella grass or lemon grass, <i>pandanus amaryllifolius</i>, turmeric leaves, henna or <i>lawsonia inermis</i>. Bathe the mother with this water for three consecutive days for fast healing and for keeping the body warm.</p>	<p><b>Avoid</b> butternut squash, gourd, pumpkin, cabbage, long bean, or any stale fish and veggies.</p> <p><b>Must</b> eat a lot of honey (pure), eggs, grilled mackerel, Talang Queenfish or Leatherskin mandarin fish, red snapper, and poultry. For the fish, the cooking method is grilled or baked with olive oil or no oil at all. The types of veggies that can be eaten are beansprouts, fenugreek, leafy mustards, black pepper and rice.</p> <p>Other herbs like noni juice, turmeric juice, <i>labisia pumila</i> and <i>quercus infectoria</i> are served to heal and strengthen the vagina muscle after delivery.</p>	<p><i>Bertungku</i> refers to the practice of heating a stone (river stone or metal heater) and wrapping it with <i>morinda citrifolia</i> and layers of cloths. The midwife will place the stone on the right and left rear sides of the abdomen while avoiding the center part of the abdomen or vaginal area.</p> <p>The whole body massage is mandatory for three consecutive days in the second week after delivery.</p>
<p>Boil water with lemon grass, garlic, henna, <i>Pandanus amaryllifolius</i> and bathe with these</p>	<p>After giving birth, a woman is encouraged to eat a lot of half boiled eggs with honey, added with one</p>	<p><i>Bertungku</i> with stone is mandatory and the river stone or metal stone will be heated for hours</p>

<p>herbs for forty four days during the confinement period.</p> <p>Women are encouraged to boil <i>quercus infectoria</i>, betel and salt, leave it warm and use it as an intimate wash.</p>	<p>clove of garlic (crushed).</p> <p>Post-partum women are only allowed to eat a few types of veggies such as <i>Amaranthus gangeticus</i> or the 'blood amaranth', <i>allium tuberosum</i>, parsley, carrot (steamed), rice spread with black pepper.</p> <p>Whether the fish is grilled or steamed, these ingredients are mandatory namely fresh onion, ginger, galangal, and turmeric.</p> <p>Post-natal women can drink coffee of which beans must be fresh, cooked, blended, and filtered.</p> <p>The 'maajun' or herbal remedy is prepared using lemon grass, <i>Centella asiatica</i>, betel leaf, ginger, galangal, turmeric, <i>kaempferia galangal</i>. It has to be consumed twice a day i.e. early morning and before going off to bed.</p>	<p>and wrapped with <i>Morinda elliptica</i> or <i>Morinda citrifolia</i></p> <p>The whole body massage is carried out for the first three days. For women who underwent caesarean section, the massage is performed in the third week after delivery in order to allow the stitches to heal. The body massage will not cover the whole body but rather only certain body parts particularly the head and shoulders.</p>
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<p>The three main ingredients for bathing are henna, lemon grass and <i>pandanus amaryllifolius</i>. The mixture is boiled for a week and the mother must bathe with warm water.</p>	<p>The veggies that can be eaten during the confinement period include <i>allium tuberosum</i>, vegetable mustard, fresh ginger and turmeric.</p> <p>The list of fish that post-natal women can eat includes striped snapper, tablespoon fish, croaker, Indian mackerel, giant leather skin fish, and scad fish. For women who underwent caesarean section, the consumption of black fish essence is strongly encouraged.</p> <p>However, they must avoid eating catfish, albacore tuna, and stingray because these fishes can cause itchiness or trigger secondary post-partum hemorrhage and delay the healing process.</p>	<p>The whole body massage is carried out for three consecutive days after giving birth with a range from 1 to 2 hours per session. The first three days after giving birth (provided it is a normal delivery) are vital in helping mothers to feel rejuvenated. For those who underwent caesarean section, the whole body massage can be carried out later during the confinement period.</p> <p>The same method applies for <i>bertungku</i>, where the river stone or metal stone is heated for hours with <i>morinda elliptica</i> or <i>morinda citrifolia</i>.</p>
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<p>The three types of leaves used are lemon grass, galangal leaves, and <i>pandanus amaryllifolius</i> for a week. The water is changed whilst the leaves are retained for re-boiling.</p>	<p>Fresh radish is grated &amp; pressed to collect its fluid in half a glass. The essence is beneficial for increasing breast milk and preventing breast cancer.</p> <p>Radish is also advised to be eaten during confinement especially in the form of soup added with fish balls and black pepper.</p> <p>For those who underwent caesarean surgery, chicken soup, prawn, eggs, and mackerel must be avoided.</p> <p>Another restriction is in the intake of fluids (drinks) because drinking a lot of water will prolong the healing process and in some cases, the stitches could become swollen and purulent.</p> <p>The herbal drink to be taken during confinement is called</p>	<p>The whole body massage is mandatory for post-natal care. The first body part to be massaged is the thorax (breast) and goes up to the head. The massage then goes down to the arms, elbows, forearms and hands, and then to the abdomen, thighs, legs and feet. The massage must begin with certain surahs from the Al-Quran, and the mother will be given a drink that has been recited with surah Yassin.</p> <p>The <i>bertungku</i> method is similar to the aforementioned practices, but rather than using <i>morinda elliptica</i> or <i>morinda citrifolia</i>, galangal leaves are added to be wrapped up with the heated stone. The <i>bertungku</i> is carried out for a</p>
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	<p><i>misai kucing</i> or <i>Orthosiphon stamineus</i>. This herb is widely grown in tropical areas. It is also known as <i>Orthosiphon aristatus</i>. The plant can be identified by its white or purple colored flowers that resemble cat whiskers.</p> <p>For this context, the white whiskers are boiled and taken as a common drink during confinement. Those who suffer from thyroid disease can drink this white whiskers juice for natural healing.</p>	<p>week and if the mother would like to enjoy the heat from the stone to warm her body, she can continue the practice for the next forty four days or even after the confinement period.</p> <p>Hemorrhoids commonly occur among women after delivery, and the condition can be remedied using the noni fruit or <i>Morinda citrifolia</i>. The application is accompanied with certain recitals of prayers (<i>doa</i>). The midwife believes that the noni fruit is the curse for hemorrhoid.</p>
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**Table 1** Postnatal care: bath, diet and body massage  
(Source: Interviews with the midwives, 2017)

Based on Table 1, the midwives have their own ways of preparing the bath, planning the diet and carrying out the terms of massage, but they share many similar local herbs for post-natal care. Most of them have been midwives for over twenty years and practice similar patterns of restrictions especially with regards to the consumption of cold foods and intake of liquid. The findings share the same perspectives discussed by Anthropologist Carol Laderman in her book *Wives and Midwives: Childbirth and Nutrition in Rural Malaysia* back in 1983. Laderman conducted her study in Terengganu. The details of her research include the conduct of postpartum care including the massage with roasting bed and the *bertungku* stone, the ritual of shaving the baby's hair, purifying bath, and the clitorodotomy process. In terms of foods, although Laderman was quite detailed on the aspects of food restrictions including the distinction between hot and cold foods (pg. 183-184), she did not touch upon the aspect of herbal remedies used in post-natal care.

Laderman published her book in 1983 and based on the current fieldwork, the traditional practice is still ongoing. In fact, these midwives are now in their seventies and had served the community since the 1970s or early 1980s. The explanation for the continuity of the practice based on the interviews is apparent in four ways. Firstly, three of the midwives (from Penang, Kedah and Perlis) became midwives due to their familial inheritance assumed as a divine assignment by God. The inheritance is applied to their daughters, daughters of other siblings, daughters of close relatives and so on. As long as the bloodline of midwives runs in the family, anyone from the same family tree will have the chance to be selected as a midwife. The

appointment as a midwife can be declared through a dream or any paranormal activities encountered by the 'chosen one' that later builds her persona and ability to deal with factual and mystical phenomena. Laderman (1983) proved that the food taboos during postpartum period had been handed down from one generation to another and these taboos were religiously followed. Therefore, I believe that as long as the teachings of Islam are embedded and the layers of traditional Malay customs are practiced, the traditional post-natal care will survive for years to come.

Secondly, a midwife in Rinching, Selangor shared that she became a midwife through modern and traditional trainings. She began her official training as a nurse in the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital, and added to her forte the understanding of traditional approach to post-natal care at a place in Kepong back in 1979. She learnt this traditional method along with several other ladies (five to six people) who she considered as her comrades trained to be the healer of sprained ankles and bloated stomachs, specializing in post-natal massages whilst memorizing various surahs from the Al-Quran as a mandatory requirement for the healing process.

Thirdly, the tradition of using herbal remedies, the list of do's and don'ts and the method of *bertungku* are passed from one generation to another and later incorporated in health institutions, be it private or public hospitals. For example, Hospital Islam Az-Zahrah and An-Nur Specialist Hospital both provide the service of women health and spa with traditional methods for healing purposes. Public hospitals like Hospital Besar Kuala Lumpur, Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Hospital Universiti

Malaya also provide information on post-natal care and do not prohibit the use of traditional approaches. Additionally, traditional herbs are considered to be beneficial health-wise and are not regulated as drugs. Although the dichotomy between herbs and drugs is debatable and herbs maybe harmful to consumers (Novella, 2013), the list of herbs mentioned in this study have been proven to be non-toxic as most of them are used in daily cooking such as lemon grass, galangal, turmeric, garlic, ginger, etc.

Fourthly, modern consumption has made it easier for consumers to use these herbs i.e. in the form of pills, liquid, juice drinks, paste, rub-it-on oil or creams. Mass produced herbs are now made available market-wide by brands such as *Syamlati*, *Nona Roguy*, *Mustika Ratu*, *D'Herbs*, *Sendayu Tinggi*, *Anugerah*, *Nyonya Meneer*, etc. Thus, the innovation of traditional herbs for modern consumption will further sustain the traditional beliefs and practices for generations to come. The health-wise advantages of these herbs are trusted by millions of women in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei where the Malay traditional influence is profound.

Furthermore, Laderman (1983:190-201) provided a detailed explanation in rejecting the assumption that the Malay postpartum tradition of restricting food was the major cause of maternal ill health. She conducted a blood and serum nutrient analysis of nine postpartum respondents (40 days, 20 days and 14 days) and of those who had restricted their diets to those who had never restricted their diets. The findings showed that the malnutrition was due to poverty rather than ideological restrictions. Those who can afford to buy meat and poultry will have a variety of menus on their

diet. In tandem with this previous finding, all midwives agree that postpartum diet restriction is meant to heal the female reproductive asset back to its prime health as this is vital for women as wives, mothers and community builders.

## **Conclusion**

The study of food and post-natal care invites interesting discussions on the manner in which traditional health care is carried out in a society especially the utilization of herbal remedies. The Malays have their own ways of preserving the health of a mother after delivery. The traditional terms are different from the pathogenic of colonial medicine that requires evidence from empirical scientific data. However, the traditional methods accept and acknowledge modern day medicine as necessary for women's vitality. Both approaches and practices complement one another and will continue to benefit women psychologically and physically.

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## Appendix 1

The list of herbs/vegetables used in post-natal care.

1. *Misai Kucing* - *Orthosiphon stamineus* is an herb that is widely grown in tropical areas. It is also known as *Orthosiphon aristatus*. The plant can be identified by its white or purple colored flowers that resemble cat whiskers.
2. *Mengkudu besar* - *Morinda citrifolia*
3. *Mengkudu kecil* - *Morinda elliptica*
4. *Buah mengkudu* – Noni (*cheese fruit morinda citrifolia*)
5. *Daun inai* - Henna or *Lawsonia Inermis*
6. *Daun Pandan* - *Pandanus amaryllifolius*; a tropical plant in the *Pandanus* (screw pine) genus, which is commonly known as *pandan* leaves (*'pændən,livz/*), and is used widely in South Asian and Southeast Asian cooking as flavoring
7. *Serai wangi* or lemon grass- *Cymbopogon nardus*, commonly known as citronella grass, is a perennial of the Poaceae grass family, originating in tropical Asia. It is the source of an essential oil known as "citronella oil".
8. *Lengkuas* - *Alpinia galanga*, (also *Languas galanga*), a plant in the ginger family
9. *Daun lengkuas* – *Alpinia galangal* leaf
10. *Daun Seringan atau Meringan* - *Ziziphus spina-christi*
11. *Manjakani* - *Quercus Infectoria*
12. *Pegaga* - *Hydrocotyle asiatica* (*Centella asiatica*);  
Characteristic: A creeper and herbaceous plant
13. *Kacip Fatimah* – *Labisia pumila*
14. *Biji kopi* – *robusta* or *c. arabica*
15. *Halia* – ginger (*zingiber officinale*)
16. *Kunyit* – turmeric (*curcuma longa*)
17. *Lengkuas* – galangal (*Alpinia galanga*)

18. *Ikan haruan* – black fish (*channa striata*/snakehead murrel)
  19. *Ikan duri* - *Arius sumatranus*.
  20. *Lada hitam* – black pepper (*piper nigrum*)
  21. *Bawang merah* – red onion (*allium cepa*)
  22. *Bawang putih*- garlic (*allium sativum*)
  23. *Cekur* – *Kaempferia galanga*. *Kaempferia galanga*, commonly known as kencur, aromatic ginger is a monocotyledonous plant in the ginger family
  24. *Ikan merah* – Red snappers (*lutjanus campechanus*)
  25. *Bayam merah* - *Amaranthus gangeticus* or the 'blood amaranth'
  26. *Kucaai* – *Allium tuberosum* or *allium odorum*
  27. *Daun sup* – parsley (*petroselinum crispum*)  
*Sireh* – betel leaf (*piper betel*)
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### **Author's biography**

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# THE IMPACT OF UNESCO HERITAGE STATUS ON JAPANESE FOOD DISCOURSE IN JAPAN

Isami Omori

## Introduction

‘*Washoku*, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year’ was added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2013. *Washoku* is defined as ‘a social practice based on a set of skills, knowledge, practice and traditions related to the production, processing, preparation and consumption of food’ on UNESCO’s list. This achievement made the headlines in Japanese newspapers which serve as an information medium with a very high household penetration rate. Therefore, there is a significant association between the content of newspaper articles and social consciousness trends in Japan (Higuchi, 2011).

Several studies have addressed the subject of the ambiguity of the definition of Japanese food names and the changes in terminology over time. Some examples of this include *nihonsyoku*, *nihonryori* and *washoku* i.e. common words in the daily life of the Japanese that refer to Japanese cuisine. Kôjien dictionary describes *nihonryori* as ‘traditional Japanese dishes, which have been developed in Japan’. The concept of *washoku* is vague (Harada, 2005) and the term is generally used as an antonym to western-style food as well as to refer to Japanese cuisine after the Meiji era (1868-1912). The Kôjien dictionary explains that *washoku* is

‘Japanese style food, namely *Nihonryori*’. *Nihonshoku* encapsulates a broader concept, referring collectively to *nihonryori* and *washoku*. However, the terms *nihonshoku*, *nihonryori* and *washoku* are used synonymously and interchangeably, and the differences in their meanings are nebulous (Kasiwagi, 2012).

The theme of ‘heritage’ has also designated food as a concept of national community and destined cuisine to become a political matter (Tornatore, 2012). Hence, the above definition of *washoku* is a new political concept created for submission to UNESCO. Indeed, the definition of Japanese food in the application draft was radically revised during the last stages of governmental deliberations. It was changed based on the official definition of ‘Gastronomic meal of the French’ (Cang, 2015, Omori, 2017). However, although the political influence on the new concept of *washoku* was demonstrated, little attention was paid to the shifts in the public discourse of Japanese food because of UNESCO’s recognition.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the nomination of Japanese food for inscription on UNESCO’s list of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the changes evident in Japanese newspaper articles. Our study is based on the hypothesis that nominating *washoku* for UNESCO’s list had influenced the description of Japanese food in newspaper articles. We reasoned that the description of Japanese food would vary with time. In addition, nominating Japanese food for UNESCO’s list was considered a unique topic, as it was not totally a domestic project. We examined the changes evident in articles that were published in three Japanese nationwide newspapers

from 2000 to 2016 and contained the three terms for Japanese food. In addition, we evaluated the ratings of 50 related words in these articles. Our assumption was that the influence of the UNESCO recognition would appear in the bias of vocabulary that describes food in Japanese newspaper articles, simultaneously indicating the trends in discourses on Japanese food.

## **Methodology**

The Yomiuri Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun and Mainichi Shimbun newspapers had a combined household penetration of more than 32% in 2016. Using paid search engines, the contents of these three newspapers dating from January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2016 were examined. Our investigation of keyword frequency trends involved a comparison of the UNESCO registration to a prior political process related to food – the Basic Law on *Shokuiku* in 2005, which had institutionalized food and nutrition education.

Our search found 34,435 articles that included the terms *nihonsyoku*, *nihonryori* or *washoku*. We employed 50 keywords garnered from the nomination file for the UNESCO list, explanations offered by the Japanese government, results of several polls ran by Yomiuri Shimbun or Mainichi Shimbun pertaining to food (2004, 2005, 2013), previous studies on Japanese food (Harada, 2005; Kumakura, 2002) and public service announcements related to Japanese cuisine during this period. The keywords were classified into eight categories for use in the analysis, with some overlapping keywords within the categories (Table 1).

The changes in the number of appearances and relative frequency of each keyword in all the 34,435 articles were compared before and after the UNESCO recognition.

Descriptive statistics for all the variables in the study were calculated and examined thoroughly before further analyses. The appearance frequency of each keyword was analysed using cluster analysis. Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted on the eight categories in order to compare the mean of the keywords' appearance frequency during the pre-UNESCO period (2000-2012) and the post-UNESCO period (2013-2016). Spearman's rho test was used to examine the correlation between the degree of food processing and the appearance frequency percentage of keywords in newspaper articles.

See **Table 1** here below.

from political announcements	from definition of previous studies	related places
anime	natural features	abroad
certification	rice	hometown
chisan-chisyo (local production for local consumption)	yoshoku (western foods)	local
cool Japan		regional
economy		world
export	community	
self-sufficiency	Japanese people	
sokuiku	home town	related times
tourism	local	continuity
	nation states	heritage
	region	history
from UNESCO list (government explanation)		tradition
annual events	food names	
bonds (social cohesion)	dashi (bouillon)	abstract concepts
cooking technique	fish	bonds
daily life	kaiseki	culture
eating habits	(traditional Japanese multiple course meal)	heart
family	miso	hospitality
four seasons	nikujaga	pride
health	osechi	taste
ichiju-sansai (one soup and three dishes)	ramen	tradition
Japanese people	rice	
nature	sashimi	
region	soy sauce	
social practice	sushi	
tradition		
umami		

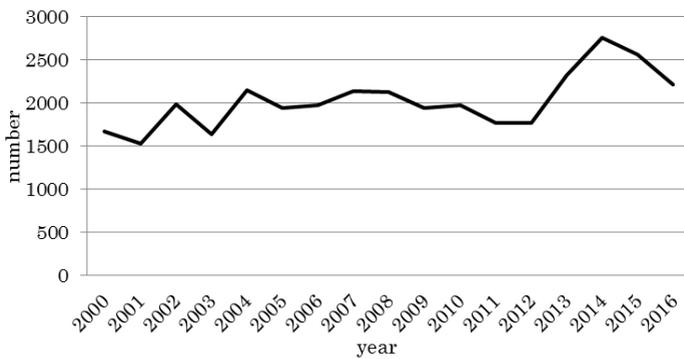
\*Some keyword are listed in more than one category

## Results

### *The number of articles about Japanese food*

We first examined whether the UNESCO recognition had an augmenting effect on the interest in Japanese food by scrutinizing the number of newspaper articles about Japanese cuisine on a yearly basis (Figure 1).

Table 2 shows an increase of 32.9% in the number of articles on the topic of Japanese cuisine throughout 2000 to 2016. It was in 2013, the year UNESCO inscribed *washoku*, that the number of articles related to Japanese food showed the highest growth rate on a year-on-year basis (31.6%). In the years 2013 and 2014, the number of articles grew rapidly, reaching record high levels. The second highest growth rate of articles on a year-on-year basis (31.4%) was seen in 2004, corresponding to the food mislabelling scandal. On the other hand, in 2003 following the strong fears of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), the number of the articles plummeted by 17.5% as compared to the previous year. Our analyses reveal that the number of articles had fluctuated sharply, representing an annual average growth rate of 0.8% during the period of the study (2000 – 2016). Compared to this, the UNESCO recognition resulted in an increased average growth of 24.9% from 2012 to 2014. In contrast, the legislation of the *Shokuiku* law (from 2004 to 2006), which saw a decline in articles by 4.2%, had little effect on newspaper articles. This result suggests that the UNESCO recognition had exerted a direct effect on the interest in Japanese cuisine as never seen before.



**Fig.1 Number of articles on Japanese food**

**Table2** Number of times keywords regarding Japanese food appeared in newspaper articles from January 1, 2000 to December 21, 2016\*

Year	Number of Articles	The Year-on-Year Growth Rate	The Annual Average Growth Rate
2000	1666	-	
2001	1523	-0.086	
2002	1984	0.303	
2003	1636	-0.175	
2004	2149	0.314	
2005	1936	-0.099	-0.042
2006	1974	0.020	(in 2004-2006)
2007	2139	0.084	
2008	2130	-0.004	
2009	1938	-0.090	
2010	1977	0.020	
2011	1762	-0.109	
2012	1766	0.002	
2013	2324	0.316	0.249
2014	2754	0.185	(in 2013-2014)
2015	2563	-0.069	
2016	2214	-0.136	
		1.329	
2000-2016	34435	(comparison of 2000 and 2016)	0.008

\* Sources: Asahi Shimbun, Yomiuri Shimbun, and Mainichi Shimbun newspapers

### ***Change in appearance frequency of keywords before and after the UNESCO registration***

Next, we examined the change in appearance frequencies of keywords in the newspaper articles. The appearance frequency of each keyword was analysed using a cluster analysis. Additionally, the appearance ratio for the total number of Japanese food articles from 2000 to 2016 was analysed. The keywords that showed the highest ratios in order of magnitude were ‘taste’ (42.6%), ‘heart’ (37.6%), and ‘rice’ (23.3%). To examine whether the UNESCO recognition had an influence on the appearance of each keyword, a comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate the data before and after the UNESCO recognition (Table 3).

Figure 2 shows that during the period from 2000 to 2016, the clusters were first divided into two groups with the line drawn between the pre-UNESCO period (2000-2012) and the post-UNESCO period (2013-2016).

Across the total number of Japanese food articles, the percentage frequency of 41 keywords in the total number of Japanese food articles increased after the UNESCO recognition period (2013-2016). Among them, the percentage frequencies of six keywords surged by 5 percent or more namely ‘culture’, ‘heritage’, ‘world’, ‘abroad’, ‘local’ and ‘tourism’. The frequency percentages of eight keywords rose by 2.3 percentage points on average. These were ‘tradition’, ‘export’, ‘rice’, ‘taste’, ‘local’, ‘dashi’, ‘history’ and ‘economy’ (Table 3). On the other hand, the keywords that were used in the nomination file for the UNESCO listing showed lower growth than the overall

growth from 2013 to 2016. An independent *t*-test indicated that there was a significant difference in the differential points of appearance rates for keywords related to ‘place’ (M=5.12, SD=4.22) or not (M=1.90, SD=3.39) applying conditions  $t(48)= 2.118, p<0.05$ , keywords related to ‘time’ (M=6.00, SD=5.53) or not (M=1.97, SD=3.29) with conditions  $t(48)= 2.23, p<0.05$ . No significant difference was found in keywords such as ‘from political announcement’, ‘from previous study’, ‘from UNESCO list’, ‘community’ and ‘food name’ (Table 4). The results confirmed that the UNESCO registration had linked the words that are related to time and place with regards to Japanese cuisine.

See **Figure 2** here below.

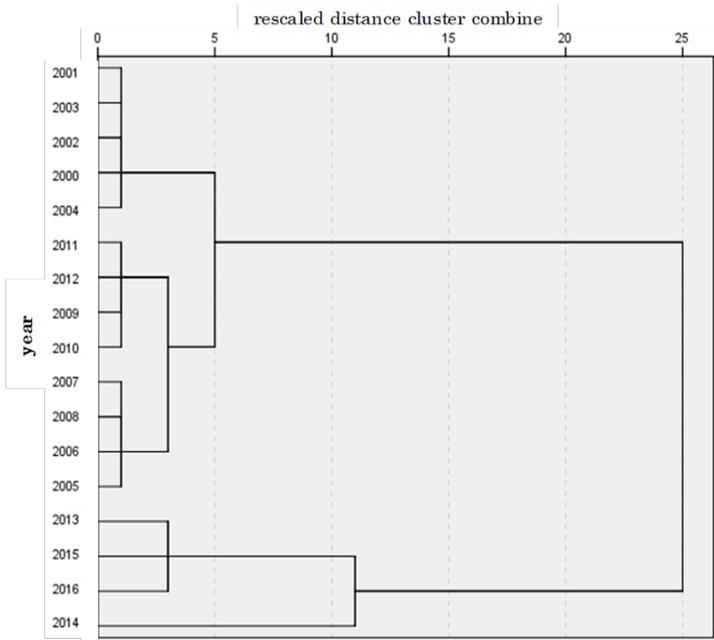


Fig.2 Dendrogram of year from 2000 to 2016 by 50 appearance frequency of keywords and the average linkage between groups

See **Table 3** here after.

**Table3** Percentage frequency of each keyword in the articles<sup>a</sup> about Japanese food

Keyword	Time Period			[Change]
	2000-2016 (n=34,435)	2000-2012: pre-UNESCO (n=24,580)	2013-2016: post-UNESCO (n=9,855)	
abroad	11.3	8.8	17.6	8.7
anime	1.3	0.9	2.2	1.2
annual events	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.4
bons	0.5	0.3	0.9	0.6
certification	0.9	0.6	1.6	1
chisan·chisyo	1.5	1.5	1.7	0.2
continuity	1.4	0.9	2.7	1.8
cooking technique	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.3
cool Japan	0.4	0.1	1.2	1.2
culture	20.0	15.3	31.9	16.6
dairy life	17.1	17.2	16.9	-0.3
dashi	6.4	5.4	8.8	3.5
eating habits	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.1
economy	8.4	7.5	10.5	3
export	5.7	4.4	9	4.6
family	16.1	15.9	16.6	0.7
fish	16.2	16.1	16.4	0.3
four seasons	2.6	2.5	2.7	0.2
health	10.0	10.2	9.4	-0.8
heart	37.6	37.2	38.5	1.3
heritage	5.2	1.2	15.3	14.1
history	7.4	6.4	9.9	3.4
home town	3.2	3.3	2.9	-0.4
hospitality	2.9	2.2	4.7	2.5
ichijyu·sansai	0.6	0.3	1.2	0.9
Japanese people	10.6	10	12	1.9
kaiseki	4.9	5.4	3.8	-1.6
local	15.1	14.1	17.7	3.6
miso	9.1	8.8	9.9	1.1
nation states	1.7	1.5	2.2	0.7
natural features	1.1	1	1.5	0.5
nature	7.9	7.8	8.2	0.4
nikujaga	0.6	0.6	0.5	0
osechi	1.1	1	1.4	0.4
pride	4.2	3.6	5.6	1.9
ramen	3.3	3.1	3.9	0.9
region	13.4	11.5	18	6.5
rice	23.3	22.1	26.3	4.1
sashimi	5.0	5.1	4.7	-0.4
self-sufficiency	0.7	0.7	0.5	-0.2
shokuiku	2.3	2	3	1
social practice	0.4	0.2	0.9	0.7
soy source	7.0	6.6	8.2	1.6
sushi	9.1	9.1	9.1	0
taste	42.6	41.5	45.3	3.9
tourism	11.3	9.7	15.2	5.6
tradition	10.0	8.7	13.4	4.7
umami	4.7	4.1	6.2	2.2
world	18.3	15.2	26	10.7
yoshoku	7.7	8	7.1	-0.9

<sup>a</sup> Sources: Asahi Shimbun, Yomiuri Shimbun, and Mainichi Shimbun newspapers

**Table 4** Associations between keyword categories and percentage-point change in appearance frequency from pre-UNESCO (2000-2012) to post-UNESCO (2013-2016)

Category	Percentage-point/from pre to post UNESCO (n=50)		t-value	p (2-tailed)
	Yes	No		
	(Mean±SD)	(Mean±SD)		
political announcement	1.96±2.00	2.36±3.89	-0.30	ns
UNESCO list	1.23±1.95	2.74±4.06	-1.37	ns
previous studies	1.23±2.58	2.56±3.68	-0.52	ns
community	2.46±2.70	2.26±3.71	-1.11	ns
food name	0.90±1.66	2.68±3.91	-1.46	ns
place	5.12±4.22	1.90±3.39	2.12	0.04*
time	6.00±5.52	1.97±3.29	2.23	0.03*
abstract concept	4.50±5.52	1.93±3.14	1.79	ns

SD indicates standard deviation

\*  $p < .05$  Asterisks refer to significance of differences between sample means based on independent sample *t*-test

### ***Appearance frequency percentage of food names by degree of processing***

To further examine the representation of Japanese food conveyed by news stories, we examined the appearance of words signifying the names of actual foods and dishes, classified by the degree to which they had been processed. We used two main criteria to classify the levels of processing. First, whether the food can be eaten as it is or used as an ingredient to prepare dishes; second, whether it is composed of one ingredient or several ingredients. We then divided the processing degree into 5 ranks of numerically increasing order (Table 5).

Figure 3 illustrates that the appearance ratio increases as the meaning of the word indicates partially processed food. Ingredients and seasonings such as ‘rice’, ‘fish’ and ‘miso’ had a higher appearance ratio than menu or course style food names such as ‘*sashimi*’, ‘*nikujaga*’ and ‘*osechi*’. According to polls conducted by Yomiuri Shimbun (2005, 2013), ‘sashimi’, ‘ramen’ and ‘nikujaga’ are popular dishes among the Japanese people. ‘*Osechi*’ is a meal ‘for the

celebration of New Year'. We analysed the data using Spearman's rho to discover if there was a correlation between the rank order of processed food and the appearance frequency percentage in the keywords that appeared from 2000 to 2016. Based on the results, less-processed foods tend to have a higher appearance frequency percentage in newspaper articles ( $rs = -0.81, p = 0.04 < 0.01$ ). In addition, a significant correlation was observed between the rank order of processed food and the differential points of appearance rates before the UNESCO recognition and after ( $rs = -0.65, p = 0.03 < 0.01$ ).

**Table 5** Classification according to degree of processing

Rank	Category	Food
1	agricultural or marine products	rice, fish
2	seasoning	soy source, miso
3	bouillon	dashi
4	single dish	nikujaga, ramen, sashimi, sushi
5	meal comprising a plurality of dishes	osechi, kaiseki

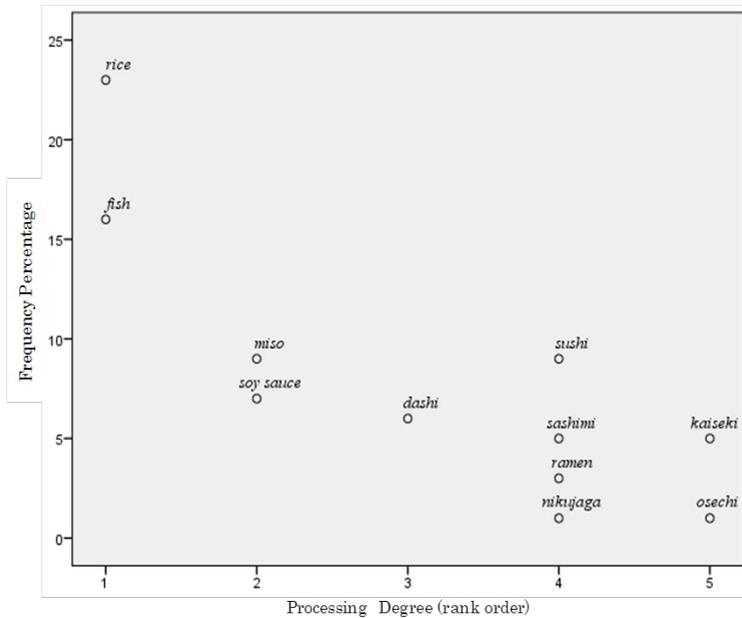


Fig.3 Correlation diagram between processing degree of food and appearance frequency percentage of keywords

## Discussion

These results contribute significantly to our understanding of the relationship between UNESCO's inclusion of Japanese cuisine and food culture into its Intangible Cultural Heritage list and the Japanese newspaper discourses on food.

Firstly, the number of newspaper articles on the topic of Japanese food rapidly increased after the UNESCO registration in 2013. A similar phenomenon was not witnessed when *Shokuiku* law, another political initiative, was executed in 2005.

Secondly, the most frequently occurring words were ‘taste’, ‘heart’ and ‘rice’. It has been proposed that rice is not only a staple food in Japanese cuisine, but it is also closely associated with the Japanese identity and the concept of Japan as a community i.e. the symbol of continuity of the Japanese spirit (Ohnuki, 1995). Our study revealed that the most frequently used words in newspaper articles were those that reminded readers of the community cultural identity of the Japanese people.

Thirdly, the trend of appearance frequencies for the keywords changed from the pre-UNESCO period (2000-2012) to the post-UNESCO period (2013-2016). Furthermore, the difference in the changes among the keywords was associated with strong connotations of time and place. Specific examples include the words ‘world’ and ‘abroad’, which showed rapid growth.

Finally, we also demonstrated that there was no significant difference in the appearance frequencies of specific food names directly related to the UNESCO recognition. During the whole period (2000-2016), minimally processed foods had a greater frequency of appearance in newspaper articles.

These results suggest that the unique characteristics of Japanese food were enhanced through a contrast with ‘world’ cuisines, emphasized by the registration to the UNESCO list. In the characterization of Japanese food after the UNESCO registration, time and place were critical elements rather than specific foods. This indicates that abstract words which were capable of evoking nostalgia such as ‘taste’, ‘tradition’ or ‘local’ were used more often than heuristic words such as ‘cooking techniques’ or

‘*nikujaga*’, which is the most common home-cooked Japanese dish according to several polls. Based on the results, we discovered that the newspaper discourses had created and shared a representation of Japanese food that could be proudly presented to the ‘world’.

Several previous studies had investigated the attachment of taste to place as one of the tautologies of food and identity (Sutton, 2006, 2010). On the other hand, with the spread of globalization, national boundaries are blurring even with regards to food, and the intersections of practices and information regarding food are becoming de-territorialized and multi-referential. The framework of the nation-state is becoming increasingly relative (Nonini, 2013).

The Japanese food (*washoku*) nominated for inscription on UNESCO’s list of Intangible Cultural Heritage is considered to be an attempt to create a new construct of national food in response to globalization. The results of our study demonstrate that after the UNESCO recognition, keywords related to time and place were frequently used in newspaper articles to evoke nostalgia. Furthermore, there was an increased frequency of appearance in keywords related to less-processed foods that typified shared experiences among many people.

In conclusion, the present study has demonstrated that the UNESCO recognition had triggered a rapid increase in the number of newspaper articles on the topic of Japanese food. In other words, the UNESCO recognition drew the Japanese people’s attention to Japanese cuisine like never before. The primary focus of the articles published after the UNESCO recognition was on the continuity and endemism of Japanese

food. This political process reinforced the authority of Japanese newspaper discourses on Japanese food. The trends revealed by the appearance frequencies of keywords in the emphases on and propagations of Japanese food as the memories of Japan as a country are striking. However, these trends do not accurately reflect the characteristics of Japanese cuisine.

Further studies are warranted in order to specify the period of the effect of UNESCO's recognition and the subsequent changes. We expect that further characterization of the changing descriptions of Japanese food will yield critical insights that will help facilitate discussions about the relationship between politics and food culture.

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper received funding from JSPS Grants-in-Aid 2633039

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# RECLAIMING JAPANESE FOOD AND IDENTITY

Voltaire Cang

## Introduction

Japanese food is in the throes of a worldwide boom, with sushi and ramen leading the charge and gaining access into widely diverse dining cultures from North and South America, to Southeast Asia, the Middle East, most of Europe and into the African continent and beyond. This boom has been eagerly welcomed by Japanese food and drink industries and producers for the obvious economic benefits, as by the Japanese public and the national government who revel in the popularity of their food around the world. At the same time, however, there is an underlying concern among the Japanese towards the transformations wrought through and by the Japanese food craze, especially in the way Japanese food is seen to be radically altered outside Japan mainly by non-Japanese, into forms and styles considered inimical to “Japanese tradition” (e.g. Sakamoto and Allen, 2011; see also Ichijo and Ranta, 2016). Ironically, the surging popularity of Japanese food outside of Japan has also diverted control over its creation and recreation, from Japanese hands onto more and more innovators outside traditional Japanese cultural contexts; as Japanese food’s prominence grows, the Japanese’s hold on its food, or at least over the ideas that govern the tradition, appears further weakened.

The recent inscription of *washoku*, literally meaning “Japanese food”, as Intangible Heritage under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has nonetheless given Japanese food’s proponents, particularly the national government, some leverage in regaining control if not reclaiming authority over the idea of “Japanese food”. In the period leading to and following the formal inscription of Japanese food as cultural heritage, the national government launched several initiatives not only to promote *washoku*, but also to assert and reclaim Japan’s supposed authority over what is called “Japanese food” in the world. The following section considers some of the more prominent initiatives and discusses their implications.

### **Japanese Food as *Washoku***

The term *washoku* directly translates into “Japanese food” with *wa* meaning “Japan” and *shoku* meaning “food”. It is a relatively new word in the Japanese language, with its first appearance in written literature in 1929 from a play, *Ushiyama Hotel*, by the writer Kunio Kishida (Nihon kokugo daijiten, 2002). In its early usage, *washoku* was used “only in response to the proliferation of the term *yōshoku*, which represented the food of the most powerful ‘other’” (Cwierka, 2006: 21). *Yōshoku*, literally meaning “Western food”, is the earlier term traced from 1872 when it appeared in an article in the *Yokohama Maishu Shimibun* (“Yokohama Weekly Newspaper”). 1872 marked the fifth year in Japan’s Meiji Period (1868-1912), when the nation intensively appropriated technologies, political and social systems, material cultures, knowledge, customs, and ideas, among others, from the “advanced” countries of the West in a rush

toward “modernisation”. Such customs and ideas inevitably included those concerning food. Today, the term *washoku* is still used mainly to contrast local food i.e. “Japanese” food from food of foreign origins, though not only “Western” but also a host of other food traditions that have entered the Japanese palate mainly during Japan’s postwar economic boom in the latter half of the twentieth century.

*Washoku* is thus a general term that could be and is usually used to mean any and all food that is Japanese in origin and historically consumed in Japan by the Japanese before the introduction and spread of other food and food cultures. Though very broad in meaning and still ill-defined today, *washoku* became the *mot d’ordre* utilised to represent Japanese cuisine and food culture—the latter two categories are difficult to define as well—that was formally designated as heritage by UNESCO in 2013. As acknowledged by the committee that drafted Japanese food’s nomination dossier for UNESCO:

*Washoku* could be used to refer to all kinds of Japanese cuisine...from [the formal meal of] *kaiseki* to fusion cuisine...to regular home cooking in Japan. The whole image of Japan’s food culture is describable under the umbrella term of *washoku*...It is also acceptable to say that all Japanese people eat *washoku* on a daily basis (MAFF, 2011).

This committee, formally named as the Exploratory Committee Meeting for the Registration of Japanese Food Culture as World Intangible Cultural Heritage, was the government panel in charge of *washoku*’s nomination as

UNESCO Intangible Heritage from the proposal stages in the beginning to the final designation. The process leading to the successful inscription has already been outlined and analysed in previous research (Cang, 2015; see also Ichijo and Ranta, 2016) and will not be discussed here. It must be noted, however, that this panel was convened by Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), which represented a departure from practice, as it had previously been the Cultural Affairs Agency (or Bunkacho, under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) that handled cultural heritage nominations for UNESCO.

MAFF's inexperience in heritage nomination procedures is reflected in the formal name of the panel: while there is the "World Heritage" system for built and natural heritage sites and a separate list for "Intangible Heritage" in UNESCO, the category "World Intangible Cultural Heritage" which is incorporated in the above Committee's name does not exist. After *washoku*, cultural heritage nominations have since been reverted to Bunkacho, but the responsibility for overseeing the proper transmission and safeguarding of Japanese food as cultural heritage largely remains with MAFF, being the original proponent. It is MAFF, therefore, that has created and sanctioned several initiatives for the promotion as well as preservation of *washoku* in the years even preceding the formal UNESCO inscription and especially in the period immediately after.

### ***Washoku* Programs and Schemes**

Among the earlier and rapidly growing initiatives are the international culinary competitions for Japanese cuisine,

notably one for *washoku* named the Washoku World Challenge, and another for sushi called the World Sushi Cup. Both held their inaugural competitions in 2013—the year of *washoku*'s inscription—and are backed financially and administratively by MAFF. In outlining their purpose, the competitions consistently emphasise Japan's proprietary right over its food. In the inaugural contest for the Washoku World Challenge, for example, the Executive Committee took note that “[t]here is a limit to the extent of how much Japanese cuisine can be popularized abroad by Japanese people alone,” implying this perceived inherent right. Because of the shortage of Japanese food promoters among the Japanese, the Washoku World Challenge was organised as a means “[t]o truly convey just how remarkable Japanese cuisine is to people around the world” by also recognising “cooks from the different countries who understand the tastes of the local [i.e. the Japanese] people” (Washoku World Challenge, 2013).

For their part, the organisers of the World Sushi Cup acknowledge that “the traditional Japanese food sushi has now become a household name, and fusions with sushi and local culinary cultures in countries all over the world have exploded in popularity” (World Sushi Skills Institute, 2017). At the same time, they maintain that Japan is “the birthplace of sushi” so that it is bound to fulfill the “need” to promote sushi correctly through the proper training of chefs, especially those from abroad. Sushi preparation techniques are particularly indicated as insufficient among sushi chefs not trained in Japan or by Japanese, so that through seminars and competitions, Japan fulfills its mission to “vigorously communicate general techniques for sanitary cooking focusing on food safety and knowledge of quality local

ingredients in order to better contribute to the further development of sushi as one of the world's most popular foods” (World Sushi Cup, 2014).

Both competitions invite non-Japanese chefs in Japanese cuisine, whether based abroad or in Japan, to compete with one another in Japan. For the Washoku World Challenge, the finalists would have already won in qualifying rounds (currently held in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok, London, Los Angeles, and New York) that involve testing cooking techniques and knife skills aside from actual food preparation. The finals in Tokyo revolve around a theme in which the contestants prepare a food course on which they are judged on everything from technique to hygienic standards, to the appearance and taste of their food by a panel of Japanese food experts. Winners receive trophies, cash and other prizes.

The World Sushi Cup similarly involves non-Japanese contestants who have worked as sushi chefs for five years as well as taken any of the seminars or examinations conducted by the World Sushi Skills Institute, the MAFF-funded training organization that administers the World Sushi Cup. After the qualifying round that involves *Edomae* (Edo-style) basic sushi preparation with emphasis on hygiene, around ten finalists are chosen for the ultimate round where they prepare sushi under two categories, *Edomae* and “creative” sushi. Prizes are similar to those in the Washoku World Challenge.

From this year (2017), the winners of these two competitions are being recommended to participate in another MAFF-sponsored initiative i.e. the Certification of

Cooking Skills for Japanese Cuisine in Foreign Countries, a program that was launched in 2016. This program ostensibly aims to rectify “cases wherein chefs without appropriate knowledge and skills regarding Japanese cuisine engage in preparing meals” especially in “Japanese restaurants located overseas” (MAFF “Guidelines for Certification,” 2016: 1). There are three stipulated skill levels namely bronze, silver, and gold; a quick perusal of the guidelines for each level reveals rather detailed qualifications, with the lowest status, bronze, requiring high-level “appropriate” skills from cutting and peeling of ingredients, heat and hygiene management as well as clothing, to knowledge about Japanese dietary culture, hospitality, service, and etiquette.

This latest certification program is very similar to a 2006 scheme previously created by MAFF that focused on the authentication and certification of Japanese restaurants. The earlier program had been rescinded after it was criticised for its methods, which mostly involved sudden and unannounced inspections of Japanese restaurants in foreign countries, leading it to be dubbed the “sushi police” by foreign media (see Faiola, 2006). Although the new program targets chefs and not the restaurants of Japanese cuisine, it is essentially an authentication program for *washoku*: the chefs so recognised receive an official seal with the words “Authentic Japanese Cuisine” surrounding “Taste of Japan” in the center (MAFF “Guidelines for Certification,” 2016). Although MAFF does not actually use the term *washoku* in their guidelines for this particular certification program, they have described it as a scheme directed at *washoku* chefs to local and foreign media (see Leschin-Hoar, 2016), and is now integrated with the Japanese culinary (i.e. *washoku*) competitions mentioned herein.

In 2015, MAFF also created the “Special Goodwill Ambassador to Spread Japanese Food Culture” program, which formally appointed a celebrity who “will enchant the world with ‘washoku’ through a variety of media and events” in 2016 (MAFF “Appointments,” 2016). Along with the special goodwill ambassador are other Japanese food experts and professionals appointed as “Goodwill Ambassadors to Spread Japanese Food Culture” who assist in providing “sincere advice to those involved in Japanese food culture outside the nation, as well as effective and appropriate advice on how to make ‘washoku’ more well-known”. The non-Special Goodwill Ambassadors are composed of both Japanese and non-Japanese experts in Japanese cuisine, mostly restaurant owners and chefs who were also appointed in 2016, with new appointees added in 2017. At this stage, the activities of the Goodwill Ambassadors have been limited to speaking engagements and demonstrations on Japanese cuisine; their actual roles and tasks bear further observation for future reference.

## **Discussion**

In a concise but insightful essay on food and nationalism, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson points to international culinary competitions as arenas where national identity is negotiated and practiced (2010). She emphasised that in such contests, national identity as it is tied to claims of national singularity “must contend with the permeability or boundaries between countries, regions, places, and products” (2010: 106) as it also takes into account individual creativity vis-à-vis time-honored conventions that complicate assertions of national identity.

Japan is a prominent “culinary country” where the cuisine is strongly linked to notions of the Japanese nation and national identity, just as France was described by Ferguson (2010). More than a few authors have already pointed out, for example, the discourse on white rice in Japan and its role in establishing “Japanese-ness” (e.g. Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993; Takeda, 2008). National identity, however, is hardly ever on solid, immutable ground; neither is “national” cuisine especially in this day and age when people, information, and things interminably traverse economic, social, and cultural borders.

The vague and generic definition of Japanese food as *washoku* is perhaps a natural consequence of the situation that “national” cuisines are in today: borders are mostly indefinable and constantly transformed, not necessarily always by the people of the nation themselves. Such is highlighted in the Japanese culinary competitions mentioned above, particularly evident in the case of sushi and the World Sushi Cup.

Sushi is the most representative of Japanese foods, perhaps the most well-known outside of Japan and considered by the majority of Japanese today as the most significant and identifiable of all *washoku* (Takara Shuzo, 2015). In the past three decades, sushi has transformed from a strange and exotic food into a desirable delicacy in North America at first and soon in other countries, and now into a healthy and still desirable snack food in many other places in the world. Its worldwide popularity inevitably brought about transfigurations to its form and style, indeed its “culinary codes” (Ferguson, 2010). Sushi, in other words, has been undergoing its own identity crises throughout its world

travels. Japan—in reference to both the general public and the national government—has been fully aware of these changes and is observing them with concern, sometimes with amusement and incredulity (Sakamoto and Allen, 2011).

As a measure if not a crucial peg of Japanese food tradition and national identity, however, sushi is now being reclaimed by Japan through the programs mentioned herein, together with other foods perceived to fall under the category of *washoku*. In the World Sushi Cup, while the category of “creative” sushi is perhaps a concession to innovation in culinary practice and tradition, the emphasis on Japan as the “birthplace” of sushi as well as the claims to inherent knowledge of sushi—as well as all kinds of *washoku*—as a prerogative of the Japanese, signals to the world that Japan is not as yet willing to surrender its cuisine and the identity that it represents outside the Japanese nation, no matter how vague these may still be.

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**PART 3:**  
**FOOD AND EDUCATION**

# **FROM FOOD NUTRITION EDUCATION TO FOOD EDUCATION: FINNISH EXPERIENCES**

Eila Kauppinen  
Päivi Palojoki

## **Introduction**

The use of the term ‘food education’ has increased in research publications since the late 1990s. For a long time, food education has been fathomed to be a part of nutrition education (e.g., Contento, 2011). In this millennium, the concept of food education has a wider content and its contextual nature is better understood. In Finland, food education has also attracted growing media interest, and the social debate upon its applications has been many-sided (e.g. Board of Education, 2014; Ojansivu, Sandell, Lagström & Lyytikäinen, 2014; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2017). Various actors, such as the municipal youth work, healthcare organizations and NGOs have often had very different starting points for what is important in food education and what its goal should be. Due to societal changes, our food preparation and eating habits have become more varied (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2017). Also, in recent studies, food education is often unclearly defined or narrowly understood as teaching themes that relate only to cooking or nutrition (Janhonen, Mäkelä & Palojoki, 2015). With the above-described development, there is now a need to define the aims, contents, and methods of food education more accurately.

## **Food education and different themes**

In Finland, the concept of ‘food education’ has been itemized into at least four themes: food education as part of health education, sustainability education and early childhood education and as related to food-based concepts (Janhonen, Mäkelä & Palojoki, 2015). Since the phenomena related to food and eating are multi-dimensional, it is important to view food-related learning and education from various disciplines. However, it is also necessary to understand the differences and similarities of the concepts used in these disciplines.

The concept of ‘health literacy’ has been developed as a result of health research. Health literacy builds on the abilities and motivation needed to acquire, understand and use knowledge, to make decisions that promote and sustain health (Nutbeam, 1998; 2008). However, ‘health sense’ is a concept based on cultural and social science research and it takes into account the cultural and social dimensions of health and the importance given to health in life (Hoikkala et al., 2005).

In the field of sustainability education, the objectives of food education have been defined mainly through concepts related to sustainable development. Food education has a holistic and contextual nature associated with human life and it aims to make people work on a more sustainable food culture (Risku-Norja & Mikkola, 2010; see also Ehrenfeld, 2008). This standpoint makes the connections between food education and sustainability education very natural.

In Finland, applications of the SAPERE method have been commonly used as a tool for food education in the field of early childhood education. This method emphasizes the perspective of exploratory learning and cultivating food choices that teach children to be less neophobic (Ojansivu et al., 2014). With these experiences, food education can be seen as an activity where a child is introduced to the world of food in a broader sense as compared to the restrictive nutrition-focused education (Janhonen, Mäkelä & Palojoki, 2015).

Food education as a concept can also be seen as being related to a number of food-based concepts commonly used in food research. ‘Food skills’ consist of the four aspects of individual food preparation skills: personal knowledge and skills, available resources and information (Fordyce-Voorham, 2011). ‘Food-related citizenship’ and ‘food citizen’ combine active, food-related behavior with the formation and maintenance of sustainable food systems (Wilkins, 2005). ‘Food literacy’ is parallel to health literacy and is based on UNESCO’s (2004) determination of literacy (Pendergast & Dewhurst, 2012). According to Lintukangas (2014), sustainable values of food and mealtimes emphasize good habits, social skills, respect for food and responsible choices (*‘ruokasivistys’*). These values are reflected in the rational use and economy of food i.e. minimizing food loss and in the responsible and intermediary activity in relation to oneself, to others and to the environment.

### **Food sense – a new, wider approach**

As a result of the Finnish research on food education, a new concept emerges: ‘food sense’ (*ruokataju*). It is derived

from the theories of education (learning), food sociology, food culture research and home economics science. The concept combines the desire to understand the youngsters' own experiences and arguments about diet choices and their desire to develop ways to support diverse eating habits as part of their everyday lives.

It has been said that food sense focuses on the personal understanding of food choices and the ability to perceive the social, cultural and everyday meanings of eating (Janhonen, Mäkelä & Palojoki, 2015). Food sense emphasizes the social and cultural aspects of food as well as the active agency and personality. This concept reflects how everyday understanding of food choices is combined with the consciousness of the whole food system. Therefore, the concept of 'food sense' concretizes the way personally significant knowledge and skills are linked to the surrounding world as well as to the wider global and political phenomena (Janhonen, Mäkelä & Palojoki, 2015; Kauppinen, 2018).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Food sense</b> (Janhonen, Mäkelä &amp; Palojoki, 2015)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Being conscious and aware of different factors that influence own food choices.</li><li>2. Ability to process food related information in a critical way.</li><li>3. Understanding cultural, social and everyday meanings that relate to food.</li><li>4. Understanding phenomena on the level of the food system.</li><li>5. Desire and courage to take the knowledge actively as a part of own food choices.</li></ol>
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**Figure 1** Food sense (Janhonen, Mäkelä & Palojoki, 2015)

### **Food education starts at home and continues in schools**

Children and young people learn about food and eating at home. There is a link between family meals and children's

health and diet (Utter, Denny, Lucassen & Dyson, 2015; Kyttälä et al., 2008) – although the importance of family meals may vary from one family to another (Quarmby & Dagkas, 2015). Parents not only influence their children’s eating habits through their own food choices, schedules and dining practices, but also by sharing information and by example. It is often thought that children eat what parents offer. Another perspective is that parents offer what children agree to eat (Williams, 2011).

The everyday environments of children and young people expand with age. In Finland, schools have traditionally played a strong role in food education. In the formal education system, food education starts as part of early childhood education and continues until the end of comprehensive school (OPH, 2014; Ojansivu et al., 2014). Along with school meals, food education is carried out in home economics and other school subjects, and through integrative approach put into practice in Finnish schools (OPH, 2014).

The importance of school meals is recognized globally (Lintukangas & Palojoki, 2015), but there are far fewer studies that had explored the learning opportunities presented by school meals (Janhonen, Mäkelä, & Palojoki, 2015). Based simply on the amount of hours it takes up in a week, the school meal has major teaching, pedagogy and learning potentials (Palojoki, 2007). The possibility of further developing school meals as a learning arena depends on the meanings and understandings associated with them and the way in which food and meals are dealt with in the schools (Lintukangas & Palojoki, 2012; Benn & Carlsson, 2014). One suggestion is to involve all members of the

school community at a very early stage of the planning of school time eating. The role of school meals needs to be stated clearly in the curriculum, as well as cooperation between the various actors in the school community. Only with the close cooperation of all the actors that it is possible to commit to the goals, which help to increase the quality of school-time eating (Lintukangas & Palojoki, 2015).

In Finland, many school subjects in basic education, such as home economics, health education and environmental and natural science lessons, cover food-related topics. However, from the pupils' point of view, the whole is often fragmented. When aiming to achieve the objectives of food education, it is important for all adults working in schools to be aware of what and how children and young people should learn about food-related themes during the school day (Janhonen, Mäkelä & Palojoki, 2015). Therefore, one current theme is the strengthening of young people's participation and genuine agency in food education (Janhonen, 2016; Kauppinen, 2018). A school can successfully operate as an educational community when the entire staff shares the same educational values and sense of belonging (Lintukangas & Palojoki, 2015).

### **The possibilities of food education during leisure time**

Young people learn skills on food and food preparation outside school as well, and their knowledge is increased by both formal and informal learning (Janhonen, 2016; Arnseth & Silseth, 2013). Surprisingly, there has only been a few studies on the importance of leisure time in young people's eating habits. Previous studies show how cooking courses for children and young people give them the possibilities of learning new skills and developing the feelings of pride,

success and joy. Such courses can also encourage children and young people to participate in home cooking and teach new things to their parents. (Bowen & Devine, 2011; Dougherty & Silver, 2007.)

In many Finnish cities, food education is organized as a part of youth work, although it is not always underlined and recognized as food education. In many hobby-related endeavors, children and young people cook and/or eat together and these activities are supported and guided by adults (Kauppinen, 2008). In recent years, youth centers have begun to offer young people the opportunity to cook together regularly. For example, in Helsinki some youth centers carry out “*Nutakeittiö*” activities, which aim to support healthy eating and sustainable consumption as well as strengthen the food preparation skills of young people (Kauppinen, 2018). Social interaction plays an important role in leisure activities and the most important stakeholders are the peers. Food can interact as a mediator in social interaction (Holm et al., 2012) and common practices guide eating together (Kahma, Mäkelä, Niva & Lund, 2014; Higgs, 2015). In our view, food education is a good tool for youth work. When it comes to food education, cooking and eating are not just the preconditions for other activities, but rather opportunities for learning new things and skills, experiencing success and joy and meeting peers (Kauppinen, 2018).

As noted above, there are many actors interested in food education, but the starting point for the activities, the objectives and the definitions of food education vary based on the paradigmatic presumptions of the research field. Youth participation, common working practices and active

co-operation between different actors are vital in getting as many children and young people as possible inspired in learning. Along with this, a more systematic and multidisciplinary research is needed to evaluate the existing and new practices and to make their impact more visible. Progress in this area can only be made by having more cooperation and discussions aimed at establishing a shared understanding of what is food education.

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# **CULTURAL EMBEDDEDNESS AND INFORMAL HOSPITALITY AS STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE NATIONAL CUISINE: LESSONS FROM GEORGIA**

Eric Olmedo

## **Introduction**

The “Workforce Development and Capacity Building for Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Imereti region, Georgia” project is an initiative co-funded by the Municipal Development Fund of Georgia and the World Bank. The time frame of eleven months starts in November 2015 and ends in October 2016. The task awarded to our team of consultants was straightforward: “skilled workforce development and capacity building”. The Terms of Reference state that this component shall provide “demand-driven capacity building training activities in order to establish a targeted, integrated workforce development program in tourism-related businesses in the Imereti region”. This will promote tourism-related businesses and activities (meaning hotels, restaurants, tour-guides and guesthouses essentially), while developing entrepreneurship.



**Figure 1** Location map of Georgia

Source: Wikipedia Commons

With a population of 703,300, Imereti is the second most populated region in Georgia after the capital city of Tbilisi (Georgia National Tourism Administration, 2014). Imereti is known to be a transient region both for international and domestic tourism with length of stays not exceeding three days, and visitors' expenses that remain very low. Guesthouses and family houses outnumber hotels, with the latter being of small capacity (Georgia National Tourism Administration, "Georgia Tourism in Figures: Structure & Industry Data", *Annual Report*, 2014).

Despite fairly promising prospects, several challenges are yet to be addressed in the labour market of the Imereti region. These challenges relate to a double-digit rate of unemployment as well as gender discrimination testified by a sizeable salary gap. Having all this in mind, we designed our itinerary in order to ensure maximum representativity.

Fieldwork lasted about three weeks, starting from 24 November and ending on 10 December 2015. Interviews were conducted face-to-face mostly in Georgian and instantly translated into English by our tourism expert-cum-interpreter. The period between 11 December 2015 and 9 January 2016 was used for data analysis, interpretation of findings, report writing, and backstopping.



**Figure 2** Location of the Imereti region within Georgia

Source: Wikipedia Commons

### **Identifying the skills' fault-line: a 360° method**

The methodology applied by our team to identify the training needs in the Imereti region - or more precisely the “skills fault-line” - can be termed as a 360° tool box, where we combined external evaluation and self-evaluation while taking into account macro and micro surveys performed by other organizations (see References for bibliography).



**Figure 3** Bagrati's Orthodox Cathedral in Kutaisi, the main city in the Imereti region.

Source: GNTA, 2016

### **External evaluation: a longitudinal survey**

Longitudinal survey means that we went back in time and factored-in previous survey outcomes (within 5 years from the date of our work) obtained by independent consulting firms as well as reports issued by the Georgian Tourism National Administration. We then conducted our own investigation by posing as mystery guests throughout the rural areas of Imereti: our conclusions led to the classification of the Imereti workforce in the hospitality and tourism industry as “low-skilled”, while emphasizing on positive factors such as “hospitable attitude”. This distinction is important: it allows for the highlighting of the dichotomy between “informal hospitality” (natural dispositions such as empathy, generosity and social grace)

and “formal hospitality” (the result of effective training leading to professionalism and enabling the fulfillment of customers’ expectations - if not beyond). This distinction informs and conditions two main traits:

- Lack of formal hospitality engenders low service skills.
- Abundant supply of informal hospitality engenders “hospitable attitude”.



**Figure 4** Informal Hospitality in a Family House

Source: Author, 2015

A striking example of the latter is the figure of the “Tamada”. A Tamada is a toastmaster and an important part of the Georgian lifestyle. It is an old custom that dates back to the ancient Kingdom of Colchis (today Western Georgia, where the Imereti region is located). Most famously, Colchis

was known in Greco-Roman mythology as the land that harbored the kingdom of Medea and the Golden Fleece, destination of the Argonauts. Rooted in such epic traditions, Georgian toastmasters cannot help but be eloquent and poetic when they preside over a supra (feast), or even a small party. The Tamada can elaborate toasts through themes as varied as “to victory”, “to the land”, “to freedom”, “to the dead”, “to the family” and so on and so forth. The crafting of the themes, tones and contents is the Tamada’s prerogative: that is why these great toastmasters are chosen by diners for their eloquence, erudition, humor, poetry and wit, among other qualities. Even with the flow of modernity, the figure of the Tamada is still highly respected today in Georgia. Such a tradition must be cherished and preserved as well as integrated into the sequence of service, as it contributes to the reinforcement of the “identity element” for inbound tourism. Leveraging on the iconic feature of the Tamada, I wish to propose the concept of “cultural embeddedness” i.e. key cultural features to be embedded into our training so as to preserve the Georgian cultural identity, as per the wish of the Georgian government.

### **Self-evaluation of skills-gap: how can social science help**

Having wrapped up the external evaluation of training needs, it was about time to ask industry players what kind of training they *thought* they needed the most. We then interviewed seventy-two informants consisting of hotel managers, guesthouse owners, restaurant managers, waiters, waitresses, housekeepers, receptionists, tour guides, and trekking guides. If the consultant remains faithful to the precepts of qualitative research i.e. being concerned with

meaning and not making generalized hypothesis statements, data analysis should abide by the “principle of saturation” (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Marshall et al, 2013; Mason, 2010) the moment when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation.

The most striking discovery from our data analysis was the “*Communication*” idiom. The necessity for training on “communication skills” came out as a recurrent request in all categories of market players. We were immediately defiant of the term and decided not to stop at a generic definition that would mislead us into unwanted training contents.



**Figure 5** Conducting interviews in greater-size hotels in Kutaisi

Source: Author, 2015

One of the benefits of the qualitative method is the questioning of consensus or what could be taken for granted. In our case, a common mistake would be to assume the non-polysemy of the idiom “communication”. After the first data analysis, which was partly inconclusive, we investigated further through complementary interviews and were able to decipher five major acceptances of the term “*communication*” as made by the respondents:

- Acceptance 1: Communication as social grace
- Acceptance 2: Communication as Customer Relations
- Acceptance 3: Communication as Customer Care
- Acceptance 4: Communication as proficiency in a foreign language
- Acceptance 5: Communication as Product Development and Commercialization

These five levels of decoding the same idiom were ultimately reflected in three training programs (language proficiency was discarded as it is not a part of our mandate) in order of priority i.e. quality perception and management, customer relations and care, and service productization. More holistic interviews revealed one major preoccupation that cuts across all occupations, gender and generations, namely, access to market.

## **Conclusion**

International tourists venturing into the ASEAN region claim to seek cultural authenticity and genuine hospitality. These two qualities are perceived to be more easily found in modest hotels, guesthouses, B&B, and the likes rather than in international luxury hotels which emphasize on high

quality standards. Too often, training contents are designed as a hasty compromise between what the training provider thinks the client needs and the client's more-or-less acute self-awareness, tempered by his budget limitations.

Our methods that are rooted in social science cannot replace market knowledge and experience, but they can help in one thing: making sense of identified skill gaps while positioning culture back in its rightful place i.e. not as a commodity, but as the travellers' main quest – a quest with economic value, which deserves to be safeguarded.

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# **A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PRODUCT APPEALS IN ONLINE TV FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS TARGETING CHILDREN**

Belinda Fong Chong Lynn

## **Introduction**

The increasing number of obese and overweight children has doubled within the past two decades and represents a major public health problem in many countries (WHO, 2014). WHO reported that 42 million children under the age of 5 are severely overweight or obese, and this number will increase to 70 million by 2025 (WHO, 2014).

While the interaction of many sociological, environmental and genetic influences is likely to contribute to childhood obesity, the issue of food marketing to children has been gaining momentum as one of the major causes of obesity. The integration of commercial messages into all aspects of children's environments normalises promoted foods to children, thus making them think that whatever advertised is healthy and nutritious (Hoek & Gendall, 2006). Furthermore, the commercials of today are often one element of a larger marketing design, as in integrated marketing, that includes such features as attractive product packaging, strategic placement on store shelves, in-store displays, cross-promotions, television programme and movie product placement and Internet-marketing (Centre for Science in the Public Interest, 2003). As the most frequently marketed food groups are pre-sugared breakfast cereals,

savoury snacks, fast-food restaurant meals, confectionery and soft drinks (Hastings, Stead, McDermott, Alasdair, MacKintosh, Rayner, Godfrey, Caraher & Angus, 2003), the normalisation of these foods would be conflicting with what paediatricians and nutritionists have advised.

### **Research Problem**

Today's children are growing up in the hub of an exploding digital media culture. Passionately accepting an ever increasing array of interactive Internet TV, websites and digital devices, they are quickly becoming the main consumers and decision makers of the household using this medium (Ekstrom, Tansuhaj, & Foxman, 1987). De Cruz, Philips, Visch, & Saunders (2006) reported that 86% of 8-18 year olds in Malaysia have a personal computer in their home, with the average amount of time spent on computer activities amounting to 5 hours a day. Because of this, marketers and advertisers have begun to target children with a variety of new online interactive advertising and marketing techniques (Montgomery, 2001). Almost all of the major companies that advertise and market to children have created their own websites, designed as 'branded environments' for children, offering entertaining, animated and interactive areas (Montgomery, 2001) as persuasive appeals. Thus, it is imperative to investigate the persuasive elements that food marketing employs to engage the attention of children, and possibly find ways to monitor the impact and effects of those messages and elements on children's food consumption in order to curb the problem of weight gain and obesity faced by the children.

## **Research Questions**

RQ 1: What are the emotional product appeals that are used in advertising messages online that can influence children behaviour towards consuming the product?

RQ2: What are the rational product appeals that are used in advertising messages online that can influence children behaviour towards consuming the product?

## **Research Objectives**

RO1: To explore the types of food products that are frequently advertised online.

RO2: To investigate the type of emotional appeals that are frequently employed online.

RO3: To analyse the type of rational product appeals that are frequently employed online

## **Food Marketing to Children Online**

Advertisers and marketers have begun to target the rapidly growing number of children using the Internet with a variety of new interactive techniques that can seamlessly integrate advertising and website content (Montgomery, 2001). New technologies and software can collect data about the viewing habits and specific interests of children without the knowledge or consent of either the children or their parents (Brown, Halpern, & L'Engle, 2006). For example, interactive websites ask children about their interests, habits and preferences through surveys or quizzes embedded in the

games or activities featured on the sites. Marketers can then use this information to tailor their marketing messages and to encourage impulse buying of products featured in programming or advertising (Giammattei, Blix, Marshak, Wollitzer & Pettitt, 2003).

The trend of advertising food and beverages to children online has profound implications for several reasons. First, the digital medium offers marketers new opportunities to reach children. For example, children's television in the US is now required by the Federal Communications Commission to limit commercials to no more than 12 minutes per hour (Federal Trade Commission, 2012), and in Malaysia, there is a ban on fast food advertisements during children's prime time (Karupaiah, et al., 2008). However, there are no limits to children's advertising exposure online (Moore, 2006). Due to this void in the regulations, children are going online in greater numbers and for longer periods of time.

Advertising online also affords marketers the chance to accrue information about children in ways that are impossible through television marketing. For example, marketers collect data using cookies, or electronic files placed on users' computers that track their online behaviour (Adroll, 2010). Children's information is also collected through registration forms in which children offer their email addresses, preferences and/or other personal information (Hallerman, 2008). Viral marketing techniques, such as encouraging children to email their friends an invitation to the site, extend such data gathering to include the child's social networks as well (Botha & Fentonmiller, 2012). Because the techniques are integrated throughout the

website, when compared with traditional measured media, online food and beverage marketing presents a “greater challenge to children up to and including the age of 12 years to perceive the presence and intent of commercial messages” (Brady, Farrell, Wong & Mendelson, 2008: p.6). The branded messages embedded in advergames blur the boundary between content and marketing while encouraging the consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages (Moore, 2006). In addition to that, online games will establish a positive brand association with the children and increase purchase intention. Thus, because of this, it is important to monitor and understand what messages the advertisers and marketers are putting across to the children, having them accept that whatever is advertised in the games and websites to be nutritious and good for them.

### **Impact of Food Marketing on Children**

Having understand the impact of food marketing, it is imperative to note that the aggressive advertising and marketing of high caloric food products to children is now being seen as a causal effect in the childhood obesity epidemic (World Health Organization, 2006). The food advertised on television programming in the UK, USA and many other countries is inconsistent with healthy eating recommendations for children (International Association of Consumer Food Organizations, 2003). Commercials nowadays actively and overwhelmingly promote food products that are high in sugar, fat and sodium (HFSS) while neglecting healthy foods high in fiber, vitamins and minerals such as fruits or vegetables (Harrison & Marske, 2005).

The causes of childhood obesity may prove to be very important because obesity at an early age is directly linked to chronic health problems that follow obese children into adulthood (Debby, 2005; Food Insight, 2005; Pereira, Kavtashhov, Ebling, Van Horn, Slattery & Jacobs Jr., 2005). This has raised an issue about the direct influence of food advertising on children. Recent calls for investigations on food marketing's influence on children's diets have intensified a debate on the issue. Academic studies and media reports have pointed to the growing exposure of children to television food advertising as one of the most influential factors affecting children's eating habits and causing children to become obese (Brennan, Czarnecka, Dahl, Eagle, & Mourouti, 2008; Burros, 2005; Henderson & Kelly, 2005; Boynton-Jarrett, Thomas, Peterson, Wiecha, Sobol & Gortmaker, 2003; Lvovich, 2003; Young B. , 2003). In addition to this, the issue has received quite a huge amount of attention in the light of growing concerns in the developed world about rising obesity rates and the presumption that there is a link with the advertising of foods high in fat, sugar and salt (Danner & Molony, 2002; Sibbald, 2002).

Likewise, the use of persuasive techniques in television food advertising has been shown to also affect an emotional response from the children, thus directly affecting their food consumption (Andrews, Burton, & Netemeyer, 2000). This supports the assertion that the link between TV viewing and obesity is not due to TV viewing being a sedentary activity, but rather due to the persuasive appeals used in advertising on television (Boyland & Halford, 2012).

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Social Learning Theory by Bandura is engaged as the foundational theoretical model for this study as the messages will encompass attention and retention of the message in an advertisement, even though the children may not be paying close attention to them. In a study involving children and food, Bandura (1962) found that candy consumption increased exponentially although children consume candy on a moderate basis, some not as often, especially after Saturday morning candy commercials. During these commercials, models were portrayed happily eating a variety of candies, often with the additional reinforcement of tacit adult approval. Thus, extensive exposure to these modelling stimuli may suggest to the child that excessive candy eating is acceptable behaviour, even though there are explicit interpersonal messages from their parents or guardians, and intrapersonal judgement to refrain from candy intake. Therefore, Bandura believed that commercials may cause a reduced level of personal guilt or fear of social disapproval for excessive consumption of candy; thus, this effect is reflected in the greater amounts of candy bars eaten by the child, regardless of the brand and the frequency of advertisements on screen advertising. This theory will be used as the foundation of this study to understand the appeals, both emotional and rational, and how they are used to create positive feelings and increase motivation when associated with a product or brand.

## **The Concept of Food Marketing Appeals**

The use of persuasive appeals in television food advertising is associated with greater attention and a greater probability

of gaining an emotional response from child viewers; therefore, the nature of food advertisements is a vital element of their effectiveness (Lewis & Hill, 1998). As such, the World Health Organization (2010) states that the content, design and execution of an advert are the key contributors to the power of the marketing message.

Advertising is often studied within a framework that identifies advertising appeals as either rational or emotional (Solomon, 2004). Rational advertising stems from traditional information processing models that emphasize the ability of a consumer to make logical and rational decisions about products, primarily through the display of product benefits such as product quality, value or performance (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Advertisements praising the characteristics of a food product such as its taste/flavour e.g. chocolate, fruity, sweet, or textures like crunchy or crisp, are examples of rational appeals. These appeals are also referred to as informational, utilitarian or product quality appeals. In addition to these, most products also push health and nutritional claims in their commercials that would entice the young consumers to lessen their guilt in consuming the products.

Meanwhile, emotional appeals are those appearing to generate either positive or negative feelings so as to create positive emotional association with a product (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Emotional appeals may generate a likeable or friendly brand in the mind of a consumer. The product appeals used in advertising food to children on television are often emotional appeals that associate foods with happiness and fun, rather than any mention of actual product qualities or nutritional benefit (Connor, 2006; Folta,

Goldberg, Economos, Bell, & Meltzer, 2006; Institute of Medicine, 2006; Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2002). Stereotypically, child actors or animated characters portrayed in food and beverage commercials are depicted as having fun with their peers and showing happy feelings when consuming the advertised food product (Centre for Science in the Public Interest, 2003). Other emotional appeals which have been observed in televised advertisements are feelings of being a grown-up, power, peer popularity, humor, sports and action-adventure (Institute of Medicine, 2006; Kunkel & Gantz, 1992).

## **Methodology**

This study will take on a quantitative approach in the content analysis process in order to identify and analyse the rational and emotional appeals used by food marketers in their advertisements targeting children. In this case, content analysis is the best method to study the substance of the advertisements, and understand how they impact the children's food choices and emotions.

A literature review was conducted to identify the product appeals used in advertising food to children and to generate a list of product appeals that was expanded and refined through the process of observing several food advertisements, based on literatures by de Droog et al. (2012), Barr-Anderson et al. (2009), and Buijzen & Valkenburg (2002). This process then resulted in the identification of 21 emotional and 15 rational appeals, as listed below:

**Table 1** Emotional & Rational Appeals Found in Online Food Advertisements

<p>Emotional Appeals</p>	<p>Fun/happiness, Play, Fantasy/Imagination, Adventure, Sports/Physical performance, Energy, Hunger/Thirst satisfaction, Independence/Grown up, In control/Personal freedom, Self-esteem enhancement, Achievement/Accomplishment, Social enhancement/ Peer acceptance, Novelty/Trendy, Physical attractiveness/Beauty, Romance, Sexuality, Coolness/Hipness, Superiority, Uniqueness/Individuality, Triumph/Hero, Parental pleasing</p>
<p>Rational Appeals</p>	<p>Taste/Flavour, Healthy/Nutritious, Fruit appeal/Association, Value for money, Novelty/New claims, Convenience, Product superiority, Food product shown or displayed, Packaging shown or displayed, Logo shown or displayed, Other physical characteristics, Candy appeal, ‘super-charged’, Comparative claims, Food as a toy</p>

(Source:Weber, Story, & Harnack, 2006)

## Conclusion

This research is an extended study based on the studies by Noor Hasmini & Osman (2004) and Karupaiah et al. (2008), among others, as these studies mainly concentrated on the attitude of children in terms of purchasing intention, and the

health contents in the advertisements. There are no specific evidences available on the rational and emotional appeals found in the contents of advertisements in Malaysia.

The coding categories were investigated through the scales which have been utilised and validated by several previous studies on children's advertising (Blass, Anderson, Kirkorian, Pempek, Price & Koleini, 2006; Noor Hasmini & Ghani, 2004; Byrd-Bredbenner et al., 2003; Coon & Tucker, 2002; Lewis & Hill, 1998). Each advertisement will be coded based on length in seconds, food product category and story format.

The sampling units for this study are 132 distinct food commercials (n=132) appearing in 112 hours of Internet TV streaming via children's channels found on Malaysian satellite TV (subscribed by Malaysians, Singaporeans, Indonesians and Bruneians) such as Nickelodeon, Disney Junior, Disney Channel and Cartoon Network within the duration of two weeks.

Since this is an exploratory study, and due to time constraints, the sample size of 132 advertisements from the 4 channels was considered adequate to provide some basic information regarding the rational and emotional appeals of the advertisements in food marketing targeting children.

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# **FOOD AND ITS ROLE IN CREATING BOUNDARIES: THE CASE OF IRAN**

Emilia Nercissians

## **Introduction**

Astrology and the belief in four essential elements i.e. water, fire, wind, and earth have a long history especially in the life philosophy of Asian people. These four elements have been considered as the pillars of life. They have high and low energies that reflect human needs in balancing his/her food choice and consumption. Iranians like any other nations have their own norms and regulations in taking and preparing food on the basis of religious prohibitions as well as regional advantages and disadvantages. This paper tries to show that despite all existing ethnic differences due to ethnic and regional diversities, Iranians follow an unwritten common convention entailing three essential elements namely health, cosmos, and nature.

## **Food**

Food is any substance consumed to provide nutritional support for an organism. It is usually of plant or animal origin and contains essential nutrients such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, or minerals. The substance is ingested by an organism and assimilated by the organism's cells to provide energy, maintain life, or stimulate growth. Codes and contracts form the core of each cultural experience, allowing us to understand our social

status and to find our place in our culture. Only through shared codes that we can express our membership in our culture. One of those codes is food and its allocated resources. Allocative resources are the food sources or substances that are essential for survival in the group and for keeping the bond with community members. However, historically, humans secured food through many methods such as foraging, hunting and gathering, agriculture and pastoralism.

### **Foraging**

Foraging (Kottak, 1991) used to be the predominant mode of survival for humans. Foraging was the most common mode of production for over 90% of the time that humans have existed. However, it has become nearly extinct today, equaling approximately 1% in terms of modes of production. Foragers are also known as hunter-gatherers. Although hunting may be an inconsistent resource for a community or family to rely on, if coupled with gathering, it can be significantly more dependable.

### **Cultivation**

Cultivation is the process of growing plants on arable land and usually refers to large-scale farming. Requirements for cultivation are land, water, and seed for growing. Cultivation involves the sowing of the seeds in the appropriate season. In the process of cultivation, a farmer is often required to also initially till the land, carry out weed control, and ultimately harvest the crops (Kottak, 171).

## **Horticulture**

This mode of production has to do with the process of plant cultivation. The process follows basic foraging systems in history where people began growing specific crops, instead of only hunting and gathering in the surrounding lands. The main concept of horticulture is the growing of crops and useful trees in forest areas (Kottak, 171-173).

## **Pastoralism**

Pastoralism is defined as the herding of domesticated or partially domesticated animals by nomads. Nomads do not have a distinct home; their home is where their animals go. They must keep their animals alive to keep themselves alive because Pastoralists rely on the animals they herd for food and clothing (Kottak, 175).

## **Religion and Food**

French sociologist Émile Durkheim claims that religion attempts to offer a singular answer to life, and thus allows for the social cohesion of a society through its shared beliefs (Durkheim & Swain, 2008). So in a sense, religion serves to unite a society under a system of belief (religion), which leads to the group's ability to successfully interact within itself and allows for social control. Religion can also potentially divide people. Religion serves to define groups of people who identify intimately with the beliefs encompassed by their religion, which leads to a shared worldview. Clifford James Geertz echoes that religion attempts to offer a structure of meaning to life. Geertz believes that religion serves as a model for how life should

exist. Therefore, religion demonstrates how individuals should conduct themselves in everyday life (Geertz, 1984).

Overall, it is important to note from an anthropological point of view, that religion does not serve a singular purpose, but in fact, serves many purposes in society. One of those purposes is about food consumption. What to eat, how to eat, when to eat and with who to eat, may function and draw the lines of cultural identity. Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception, and is related to nationality, ethnicity, social class, generation, locality, religion, food or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the individual and also of the culturally identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity.

Each ethnic group has a series of obligatory rules dictated by authorities, experts, or in the documented forms such as holy books. In other words, each religion has its own set of dietary rules for its followers. These rules may be confusing for outsiders, but they bond the community members together as a cohesive group with a unique identity, while at the same time differentiate them from others.

### **Prohibited food in the every-day life of Zoroastrians**

Fundamental to Zarathustra's philosophy is the tender loving care, friendship and stewardship of gentle/graceful animals, pets and livestock; (The third rhymed verse line, second stanza Yasna 28.1; Yasna, the second rhymed verse line 28; The second stanza Yasna 31.10; The second rhymed verse

line 29; The second stanza Yasna 33.3; The fifth rhymed verse line Yasna 46.4; Yasna, the first rhymed verse line 32; The first stanza Yasna 29.1; The first stanza Yasna 29.5; Yasna, the first rhymed verse line 30; The first stanza Yasna 29.9; Yasna 39.1). Zarathustra teaches that animals have a soul and consciousness (Yasna, 28.1; Yasna, the first rhymed verse line 32; The first stanza Yasna 29.1; The first stanza Yasna 29.5; The first rhymed verse line 30; The first stanza Yasna 29.9; Yasna 39.1).

Furthermore, ravenous meat-eating is strictly prohibited (The second rhymed verse line of Yasna 29.7). The flesh of cow, ox, bull, steer, cattle and wild cattle or “Gáüşh” are not permissible for consumption (Avestan Sages, per the second, rhymed verse line of Yasna 32.8). This prohibition is against the consumption of all forms of wild cattle (Bahram Yasht, 22-23). Yet, dairy products of cattle such as milk, yogurt, cheese, butter, and ghee are not only allowed but are highly recommended, provided that the cattle ranged freely, are treated very well, that their milk goes to their young first, and that they are fed a strictly wholesome vegetarian diet. The eating of male sheep meat is reluctantly allowed in the Zoroastrian tradition, while the slaughter of the female sheep is strictly prohibited. A sheep cannot be milked and killed at the same time. If a sheep is used for wool, it no longer can be consumed as food, but milking a sheep and using her wool at the same time is permissible. Furthermore, the consumption of meat must be occasional and not a regular, everyday event. Avestian sages inspired by Bahram (Bahram Yasht, 24-25) have concluded that goat is not permissible for consumption, only the goat’s butter, milk, cheese, and wool are allowed for use (Bahram Yasht, 14-15). Pigs are considered as loving pets with spiritual

significance in the Zoroastrian culture. Prohibitions against eating meat do not include fish. For example, meat is forbidden during the whole 11<sup>th</sup> month and 4 days in each month of the Zoroastrian calendar, but fish are permitted. However, only small to medium sized bony fish are proper for consumption e.g. sardines, trout, salmon, halibut. Sea mammals such as whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions and sea otters are Sacred (Mehr Yasht, 127; Yasna, 42.4; Vendidad, Chpt. 14). If the eggs of a chicken are used, that chicken can no longer be killed for her flesh. Furthermore, the eggs or flesh of chicken can be used only if the chicken ranges freely, is treated kindly and is fed a strictly wholesome vegetarian diet. Furthermore, pet chickens cannot be killed for food. The same rules apply to geese and duck. All game birds, water birds, wild birds, and birds of prey are not permissible for consumption including swans, pigeons, and doves.

### **Prohibited food in the every-day life of Jews**

From the Biblical Books of Moses, Torah includes:

The blood of animals or birds; fat, specifically the fat of an ox, a sheep or a goat.

Animals that do not have cloven hooves or do not chew their cud, including the swine which have cloven hooves, but do not chew their cud.

Flying insects that creep on all four except for those (including the locust and grasshopper) that have legs for hopping.

Animals that go on their paws among those who go on all fours; animals that go on their bellies, go on all fours or have many feet; creeping animals including the weasel, the mouse, the lizard (or tortoise), the gecko and the chameleon – animals from water that do not have fins and scales.

### **Certain birds.**

Rabbinic law prohibits cooking or eating milk with meat. The Torah forbids the eating of anything that died by itself and also meat torn by animals in the field. Under rabbinic law, any bird or animal of a type that is permitted for eating but which has not been killed in accordance with the rules of ritual slaughter is considered to have died by itself. There are also restrictions on the planting, harvesting, and eating of grains and fruits at particular times as well as a prohibition against the planting of mixed varieties of crops in the same field. Under rabbinic law, a wine that has been touched by a heathen is generally forbidden. The fat from an animal that died by itself or was torn by other animals is forbidden for eating, but may be used for any other purpose (Torah).

### **Prohibited food in the every-day life of Christians** *Old Testament*

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them “every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit” as food, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 1:29, 2:16-17). Although they had dominion over the animals, God did not give them the animals to eat. After the Original Sin, further sins

multiplied on earth to the point that God saw the need to destroy all men by sending a great flood. Only Noah, his household and the animals on the ark survived (Gen. 6-9). When the flood subsided, Noah offered a sacrifice to God. He “took of every clean animal and every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen. 8:20). The sacrifice pleased God and He promised to never destroy the earth by flood again (Gen. 8:21-22). It was at that time that God placed fear of man in every animal and gave the animals to Noah as food (Gen. 9:2-3). The only restriction God gave Noah regarding the eating of animals is that he was not to eat their blood, for the life of the animal is in the blood (Gen. 9:4).

### *New Law, New Discipline*

Because of the New Law, the blood of an animal has no significance, for life is in the Blood of Christ. In Mark (Mark 7:18-23; Mathews 15:17-20), Jesus declares that all foods, including animal blood, are “clean” and that to eat them is not a sin. This was emphasized to St. Peter in a dream, in which all “unclean” foods are declared “clean to eat” by God Himself (In Acts 23:13-36; In Acts 15:28-29; Bible in Romans 14:13-15).

### **Prohibited food in the every-day life of Moslems**

In the Qur'an, the following foods and drinks are strictly prohibited by God and known as "haram":

Dead meat (i.e. the carcass of an already dead animal – one that was not slaughtered by appropriate means).

Blood.

The flesh of swine (pork).

Intoxicating drinks. For observant Muslims, this even includes sauces or food-preparation liquids that might include alcohol such as soy sauce.

The meat of an animal that has been sacrificed to idols.

The meat of an animal that died from electrocution, strangulation or blunt force.

Meat from which wild animals have already eaten (The Holy Quran 2:173, 5:3, 5:90-91, 6:145, 16:115).

#### **Four basic elements**

According to the ancient belief system, the entire world is composed of four basic elements -fire, air, water, and earth. Metaphysical cosmology has also been described as the placing of man in the universe in relationship to all other entities. While the classification of the material world by the ancient Indians and Greeks into Air, Earth, Fire, and Water was more philosophical during the Islamic Golden Age, medieval middle eastern scientists used practical, experimental observation to classify materials (The Holy Quran 2:173, 5:3, 5:90-91, 6:145, 16:115); (Ball, 2004). According to this classification, the Greek physician Hippocrates (460–370 BC) had developed a medical theory. He believed that certain human moods, emotions, and behaviors were caused by an excess or lack of body fluids (called "humor"): blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm.

## **The Elements of Cosmology**

Avicenna's thesis on the elements of the cosmos is described by Gruner as "the foundation of the whole Canon" (Encyclopedia Iranica). Avicenna insists here that a physician must assume the four elements that are described by natural philosophy (Encyclopedia Iranica, Avicenna, 34). Although Avicenna makes it clear that he distinguishes between the "simple" element i.e. not mixed with anything else, and what we actually experience as water or air such as the sea or the atmosphere. The elements we experience are mixed with small amounts of other elements and are therefore not pure elemental substances (Encyclopedia Iranica, Avicenna, 202). The "light" elements are fire and air, while the "heavy" ones are earth and water:

The Earth (Soda): Avicenna upholds Aristotelian philosophy by describing Earth as an element that is geocentric. The Earth is at rest, and other things tend to move towards it because of its intrinsic weight. It is cold and dry (Encyclopedia Iranica, Avicenna, 35).

The Water (phlegmatic): Water is described as being exterior to the sphere of the Earth and interior to the sphere of the Air because of its relative density. It is cold and moist. "Being moist, shapes can be readily fashioned (with it), and as easily lost (and resolved)" (Encyclopedia Iranica, Avicenna, 35).

The Air (blood): The position of Air above Water and beneath Fire is "due to its relative lightness". It is "hot and moist", and its effect is to "rarify" and make things "softer" (Encyclopedia Iranica, Avicenna, 36).

The (sphere of the Fire) (bile): Fire is higher than the other elements "for it reaches to the world of the heavens". It is hot and dry; "it traverses the substance of the air and subdues the coldness of the two heavy elements"; by this power, it brings the elementary properties into harmony (Encyclopedia Iranica, Avicenna, 37).

The summary is given in Table 1.

<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Temperament</b>	<b>Cosmological Element</b>
Soda	Cold and Dry	Earth
Phlegmatic	Cold and Wet	Water
Blood	Hot and Wet	Air
Bile	Hot and Dry	Fire

TABLE 1: The Temperaments (General description)

The temperaments are reported to be the interaction between the four different elements' qualities i.e. the conflict between dryness, wetness, cold, and hot. Avicenna suggests that these qualities battle among each other until an equilibrium state is reached and this state is known as the temperaments (Encyclopedia Iranica, Avicenna, 57-65).

### **Conclusion**

Iran is a multi-ethnic country with different types of lifestyles in the urban and some nomadic and rural areas. In spite of the official state religion of the country which is the

Shia branch of Islam, there are other citizens with different religions and belief systems. This paper emphasizes not only on the food habits of the majority, but also on the food consumption of the Non-Moslem citizens of Iran including the Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. It is obvious that the life of human societies is manifold in different historical and human dimensions. Of course in the process of identity formation, one should not forget the different layers of identity that represent the person's sense of belongingness either in the micro or macro levels, in the domains of ethnicity or nationality. The identity stems from various aspects such as physical features, language, geographical area, generation, gender, celebrations and of course food. So it is no wonder that the phenomena of food consumption among different groups with different rituals or belief systems are not hidden from the eyes of anthropologists. Interestingly, in spite of all the differences, Iranians in general along with their food prohibitions due to religious faith, consciously or unconsciously still follow the recommendations of the Greek physician Hippocrates and more familiar prescriptions of Avicenna in their daily food consumption habits. Holding the sense of harmony in nature is one of their obligations in preparing food and nutrition that does not let them neglect the relation of human beings with Mother Nature.

## Endnotes

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# ASSESSING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY-LED RESPONSES TO JAPAN'S FOOD POVERTY CRISIS

Hart Feuer & Ayaka Nomura

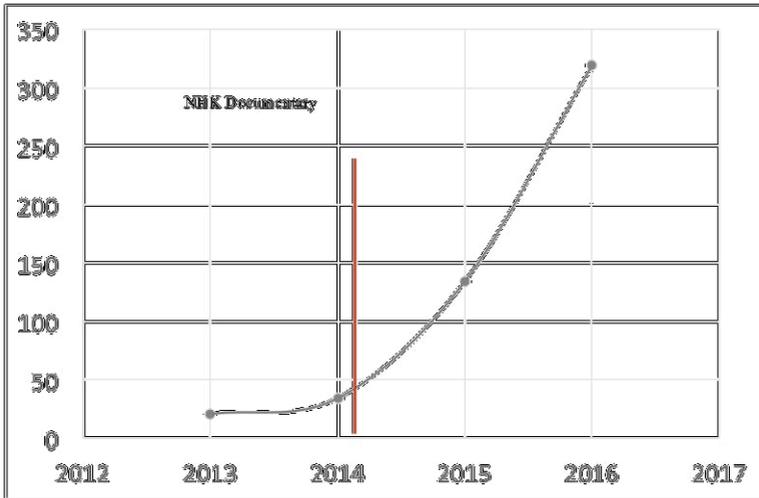
## Introduction

In post-Fordist food contexts such as Japan, particularly where a veneer of egalitarian ethos presides over a nutritionally well-versed public, fundamental crises such as child or elderly food poverty are encountered with a sense of cognitive dissonance. While agricultural and farmer-household crises have been simmering in Japan since the economic boom period of the 1970s, a complacent assumption persisted that the most vulnerable were at least achieving nutritional benchmarks. This general sense of appeasement largely continued in the realm of food security until 2009, when the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare first published poverty statistics gathered (but unpublished) throughout the previous decade. The high rate of poverty, comparable with that of the USA, sparked a panicked national debate out of which emerged familiar entities such as food banks as well as new social movements such as the *kodomo shokudou* (children's canteen) initiative. The latter trend has grown rapidly since 2014 alongside a spirit of self-organized voluntary activism that had been hitherto moribund in Japan, and has remained an optimistic corollary to the floundering efforts of an otherwise statist government response to the crisis. The simplicity of the idea of a community-based kitchen for serving children (and

increasingly elderly as well) who either lack sufficient food or companionship has created an easily accessible and inspirational frame for engagement. The hyper-local approach to food poverty has proved useful in managing the social sensibilities in each community, but has also led to a fragmented and unruly set of models. Already, signs are becoming visible of the movement's vulnerability to co-optation, waning enthusiasm, and deficiency of practical benefit. This paper explains both the rise of the *kodomo shokudou* movement, as well as its outlook in the future using a political process approach to the emergence of social movements.

### **Tracking the fascination with community-led children's cafeterias**

In 2014, a documentary aired at prime time on national television in Japan (NHK) depicting the innovative community-led approach of the nascent *kodomo shokudou* movement in dealing with child poverty, kicking off a fascination with not only the concept of child food poverty, but also with this new self-driven form of voluntary engagement. The newly galvanized awareness was, by any account, a justified response; here was a photogenic, deceptively elegant solution to child food poverty. The basic composition of the cafeterias – making home-made food in a social setting – also attracted support from nativist elements in the society that understood this as a resurgence of a collectivist Japanese identity. Since the release of the documentary, the establishment of new *kodomo shokudou* has increased exponentially (see Figure 1), a virtual network has been formed, and at least one handbook for setting up new cafeterias has been published.



**Figure 1** The growth of Kodomo Shokudou following the release of the NHK documentary (Nakatsuka, Kawai, & Yoda, 2016)

Even as the excitement for *kodomo shokudou* has grown palpable, judging by the extent of positive news coverage and interest from the government, analysts have started to back away and take stock of the movement’s trajectory, relevance, and efficacy. An interactive Google Map of the known *kodomo shokudou* has been established to understand geographic spread, basic statistics have been gathered to determine the relative impact, and a trend in typologizing the different cafeteria-types has begun to make sense of the institutional diversity. While overtly critical voices about this movement are largely absent, there is a general concern emerging about the sustainability of this movement. This paper’s focus is on outlining the nature of these concerns and evaluating their significance by unpacking the reality

behind many of the ‘growing pains’ that are invisible from macro-level assessments of the movement.

The evaluation of *kodomo shokudou* below arises from the work of various project members in a 2016-2017 project funded by the Toyota Foundation. The primary research approach is participant observation through volunteering, with additional data provided from intensive case studies and open-ended interviews with stakeholders in the movement (owners, volunteers, parents, and the children themselves).

### **Growing pains of community-led cafeteria**

The shock and broad national outcry about the extent of poverty in Japan certainly created space and motivation for new actors. For their part, the government, which had hitherto kept its head in the sand, moved quickly to demonstrate its response with the 2014 ‘Act on the Promotion of Policy on Poverty among Children’. And among the general population, what might have previously been considered as socially clumsy attempts to feed children in strangers’ private homes were now embraced with gracious relief by a distressed public. In this sense, however, many of the headwinds faced by the *kodomo shokudou* movement in its first years were not unique to institutions of this nature, but rather more general problems related to chronic poverty, volunteering, financial management, and regulatory compliance. This article, however, focuses less on these generic problems and more on the ‘growing pains’ of the core idea of the movement.

## Diversity or Fragmentation?

Since there is no playbook or discrete mechanism for proliferating a movement, the landscape of different local chapters can simultaneously be understood in its positive light (diverse, locally suited) or negative light (fragmented, nationally inharmonious). Following this, many of the first impressions about *kodomo shokudou* in newspapers, blogs, and social media have either misguidedly represented the movement as a singular, consistent type of institution or have expressed some degree of bewilderment about the apparent differences between the different local chapters. A more comprehensive attempt to come to terms with the discrepancies between local movements published in Yahoo! News by Makoto Yuasa of Hosei University suggests that the positive diversity (or “richness”) of *kodomo shokudou* must eventually consolidate to prevent public confusion and misunderstanding about the movement (Yuasa, 2016).

In typologizing the movement, Yuasa (2016) suggests that most current *kodomo shokudou* chapters align around two basic axes, one representing the range of *subjects* (target audience) and the other representing the range of *purpose* (children’s nutrition or general community development). Within this field, *kodomo shokudou* can encompass spaces that feed local elderly people and spaces that primarily serve as an after-school daycare, in addition to the model that fits the translation more precisely i.e. cafeterias serving low-cost meals to children. Observers of the growing phenomenon would not be misplaced in asking why all such activities must be lumped together under the banner of ‘children’s

cafeteria’; why not disaggregate into elderly support, babysitting, play spaces, and food education?

Based on our research, the answer to this question is twofold: to begin with, the ‘awareness bump’ about poverty since 2009 – and more recently in 2014 – has helped spark a general understanding that the central dilemma of poverty has social and material components which span across different sectors of society. Finally, however, the feeling of shock and helplessness that accompany such recognition can only be channeled into remedial action through manageable and inspiring narratives. In this sense, the narrative that children in a supposedly egalitarian developed country are going without meals was a clarion call to “do something” (Yuasa, 2016). As long as child poverty remains high on the agenda and visible in public discourse (Hanaoka, 2017), this inspiration will continue to provide impetus for *kodomo shokudou*-inspired groups.

### **Inspired by or relying on artificially elevated level of national interest?**

The inspiration for *kodomo shokudou* has indeed relied on national level shock, but our case studies have also shown that they are rooted in and finally driven by local needs and conditions. A positive outlook on this is that local chapters are ‘adapted’ to each area; a more critical view would be that local chapters arose primarily as a product of the personal considerations of the founders and their ability to mobilize resources. Since it is unlikely that individuals capture the whole, or even essential spirit of the local community, a blend of these perspectives would suggest that the founders set the pace of a new *kodomo shokudou* while

the community imposes certain structural and cultural constraints. This explanation is aligned with the findings from local chapters that we have worked with in this study. The charisma, perspective, financial resources, and organizational capacity of the founders (*jiko jitsugen*, or self-expression) are the main originators of variation in local chapters, after which local community characteristics enable or complicate the original ideals. This is also to suggest that the founders are often driven by more general problems – i.e. those at the national level and in the public spotlight (*ittaikan* or societal commitment) – than the specific (and possibly unknowable) needs of the local community. In this sense, continued national focus on child poverty, child nutrition, and the *kodomo shokudou* movement falls in line with the previous model of civic engagement (*hōshi*) (Georgeou, 2006, p. 13), in that volunteering oneself to the broader national cause supersedes particularized interest in local problems, although it ultimately does not exclude them.

As Avenell (2010) has argued, the Japanese state has made consistent attempts to re-fashion the more impulsive, news-driven forms of volunteering into a self-driven individual commitment to voluntary activities of one's interest. While spikes of civic engagement around natural disasters (such as the Kobe earthquake in 1995) can be useful tools for reigniting the voluntary spirit and/or drawing in young people, many of the demographic, environmental, and social challenges facing Japan now require more sustained commitment. In our case studies of various *kodomo shokudou* from the main island of Honshu, we found that the government is increasingly attempting to play a facilitating role in the maintenance of *kodomo shokudou*, and major

financing bodies such as the Nippon Foundation have also begun to institutionalize support for *kodomo shokudou* (Hanaoka, 2017). While the participation of the government, typically through local municipalities, can be understood as a potential source of funding and regulatory relief, it is also the first steps toward more formal institutionalization and conventionalization of the movement. Whether this will compromise the unique grassroots mobility of *kodomo shokudou* in the long-term is a question we take up on a separate research, but in the meantime, it does point to a more coherent, consolidated and financially viable future for some local chapters.

### **Adapting or accommodating the grassroots mission?**

In the academic literature on development aid agencies non-governmental organizations (NGOs), an enduring concern is over the unmistakable drift in purpose, or ‘mission creep’, that draws institutional focus away from beneficiaries and instead towards alignment with funders, governments and conventional ideology (Kamat, 2004). In the context of *kodomo shokudou*, these shifts occur in response to, among others, new sources of food (e.g. food banks), financing (e.g. government, foundations) and other resources (e.g. volunteers, infrastructure). In the context of this paper, it is important to point out that mission creep does not refer to the diversity in origin and style of various *kodomo shokudou*, nor does it refer to institutional changes meant to serve beneficiaries better; rather, mission creep here refers narrowly to shifts that occur within well-established local chapters as a result of divergent structural incentives.

Our field sites in the main island of Honshu and Okinawa suggest that, while the main impetus for ‘tinkering’ with the model comes from beneficiaries, more significant change arises when external conditions or incentives shift. For example, if food banks become involved in donations, they may have to re-negotiate the payment system, inclusiveness for certain groups, and planning process for cooking. In another case, the *kodomo shokudou* has become almost exclusively dependent on the regular food donations from a nearby restaurant, which leaves its mission to the mercy of a third party. However, the most significant future change is most likely to be related to regulation. *Kodomo shokudou* operators express regular, although not urgent, concern about the way in which the food provision, hygiene, and regulatory burden will be modified. The most dramatic changes will likely come on the heels of food safety or child abuse scandals. In one episode from 2016, a *kodomo shokudou* operator personally went to each household to apologize after the food had sickened some guests. With the number of local chapters steadily rising, the potential for national food or social scandals increases, which may prompt fundamental regulation.

## **Conclusion**

City wards and hamlets in Japan have long developed a proactive response of ‘care’ based on the historical ideal of collective responsibility (*hōshi*). Well-established trends have been cultivated to establish regular neighborhood cleaning and tidying, social visits to elderly homes, evacuation drills, and fire prevention measures. *Kodomo shokudou*, a loose categorization of community events centering on food and sociability, arose in a parallel strand

of civic engagement that emphasized independent initiative with a hyper-local approach (based on the foreign-adopted word *borantia*). The *kodomo shokudou* movement arose during a period of dramatic public awareness about the relatively high level of poverty in Japan, in which child poverty in particular, had engendered a wave of new civic engagement that often followed natural disasters in Japan. The exuberance with which new chapters of *kodomo shokudou* have been established has captivated the public imagination – conjuring up nostalgic images of collective self-help at the community level and a ‘cultural’ solution to the challenges of child poverty. And yet, after five years, it is becoming apparent that the viability and sustainability of many local chapters of *kodomo shokudou* – and perhaps even the ideology itself – are on questionable footing. This brief paper has tracked some of these growing pains, drawing on empirical data from participant observation, case studies, and creative informant-level surveying.

Our assessment, based on examples from across Japan’s islands, indicates that the original grassroots framework of *kodomo shokudou* is less resilient than what recent media reports had suggested, and that many local chapters are under increasing pressure to formally institutionalize and systematize. While the diversity of the movement has been hailed as one of its assets based on the assumption that each chapter is adapted to its local needs, we find that most chapters are in fact primarily driven by the ideology and logistical talents of their founders. Furthermore, many chapters are dependent on structural conditions (donations, volunteer willingness, an available space, etc.) that are not necessarily related to serving the specific needs of local beneficiaries. The result is therefore not a patchwork of

culturally-appropriate *kodomo shokudou* over Japan, but rather a set of geographically-indifferent institutions inspired by the national discourse about poverty and driven by the unique capacities of their operators. The difficulty faced by academics in typologizing the range of current chapters suggests that the concept is very loosely bounded. This does not suggest, however, that *kodomo shokudou* are ineffective, but merely that they are not part of a movement with a generalized orientation that the public can support or criticize. The sustainability of *kodomo shokudou* as a movement, therefore, will continue to rely on elevated public interest, understanding about the need for a multi-pronged approach to poverty, and incremental rationalization of voluntary engagement to survive the long and difficult campaign.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://netatyou.jp/2016/01/10/child-welfare/> [accessed 13 September 2017]

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# WHERE FOOD, TOURISM, AND STATE AGENCIES MEET: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE FROM IRELAND

John D Mulcahy

## Introduction

Since 2000, I have worked with the Irish tourism development agency on food tourism and education policy, strategy and implementation. Having experienced economic boom, bust, and recovery, and observed the reaction from State, business and society, I have reflected on how traditional tensions, rather than collaboration, between public organisations, enterprise, and civil society remain in place, whatever the economic state of affairs. As Hall has highlighted (OECD, 2012: 51), the critical question becomes: how does food and tourism fit into the bigger picture and overall economic development strategies of a country? This is a brief, autoethnographic account of my experience in tourism, food and education in Ireland from 2007–2017 that attempts to answer that question.

## Auto Ethnographic methodology and its recent use in tourism

Autoethnography has been described as an approach to research and writing that “seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011: 1). Hayler’s description resonated

most with me when he points out that “Autoethnography has increasingly become the term of choice for a range of methods of research, analysis and writing that employ personal experience as a way of investigating and understanding the sub-cultures and the wider cultures of the societies we live and work within” (Hayler, 2012: 19). Often, autoethnographic research investigates the relationship between researchers, their fields of inquiry and their informants, particularly in tourism (Noy, 2007). This appears to be borne out with some success in tourism and gastronomy, and thus it appears appropriate here (For examples, see: Jennings, Kachel, Kensbock, & Smith, 2009; Komppula & Gartner, 2013; Szanto, 2015).

I have therefore explored my experience as a participant in Irish tourism utilising an autoethnographic methodology, and connected it to how elements played out, particularly at the nexus of food, education and tourism. I have recognised that I am part of what I’m studying, separate and integral, central and liminal, all at once. This is both useful and a challenge, as I have detailed knowledge of the subject matter as well as close familiarity with the culture of the wider tourism community in Ireland. The challenge, of course, is that perspectives are often defined by tensions, contradictions and hesitations. These must remain front of mind, and acknowledged, as they often are in autoethnographic studies, as key aspects of the research. There is no attempt to ‘iron out’ the confusions or contradictions which stand, as they do within this approach, as key elements of my experience (Hayler, 2012).

## **Boom to recession - Changes in the operating environment**

In the aftermath of the 2008 recession, Ireland was in economic survival mode. In tourism, overseas visitors in 2009 fell by 12% and revenue fell by 19% (Fáilte Ireland, 2010: 9). Given such reduction, the Irish State could not continue to fund sectors such as tourism and education unless those sectors could be shown to be either a net contributor to national finances or, at minimum, cost neutral.

In the midst of this, I had been leading the Food Tourism, Hospitality Education and Tourist Accommodation Standards division in Fáilte Ireland (FI), Irelands National Tourism Development Authority. FI was established in 2003 following a merger of the Council for Education & Recruitment in Tourism and Bórd Fáilte (Ireland's Tourism Marketing Authority). My roles in these bodies placed me at the intersection where tourism development meets tourism education provision, and food is a key component of each. A symbiotic relationship exists, where tourism development relies on food as a key element for tourists, and education relies on the demand for the skills required in tourism. In FI, that intersection required the design, delivery and funding of hospitality skills training programmes, delivered through 10 Institutes of Technology and 65 FI training centres to 5,700 students p.a.

The recessionary impact on resources is highlighted by the difference in FI funding between 2007 and 2015. There was a reduction of 21% in staffing (392 to 309), a 26% funding drop from €162 million to €120 million, and a 78% fall in

education funding from €17.5 million to €3.8 million (Fáilte Ireland, 2008, 2016). During this period, seven regional tourism authorities were merged with FI. The combined effect of funding reductions, the mergers, and the loss of corporate memory and skills sets, is arguably a negative influence on an organisation's capacity to be an effective and positive contributor to the State's objectives.

This was evidence that new thinking was needed to reignite tourism to Ireland, leading to a fundamental review and redefinition of strategic priorities, target markets and segments (Mulcahy, 2015, 2016, 2017b). It was also influenced by the government's Tourism Policy Statement (*Department of Transport Tourism and Sport, 2015*). The review established that the old model was needs-based, whereas the new model is motivation-based i.e. food is a driver of satisfaction, and not a motivator to travel (Fáilte Ireland, 2014: 26).

Tourism was not the only sector experiencing significant change. Ireland's education system has been the subject of significant change as well, especially since 2011, with consequent implications for tourism.

### **Evolving education structures**

In 2011, the Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) was replaced by SOLAS, which now funds all Further Education, including national apprenticeships. The training function of FÁS was absorbed into 16 new Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in 2013, replacing the Vocational Education Committees. The government also published the 'National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' (known as

the Hunt Report), which signalled a rapid reorientation of higher education to serve economic objectives.

In 2012, legislation established Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) as the statutory agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training. Effectively, QQI was created from a merger of five organisations, including the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). I had been a board member of FETAC since 2009, serving on the Audit Committee and as Chair of the Policies Committee until the merger. QQI then invited me to join the Programmes & Awards Oversight Committee, and to chair the Standards Review Group (Tour Guides). As QQI is one of the few overarching bodies in Irish education, this allowed me to understand how the significant tensions created by significant change affected not only the merged organisations, but also tourism stakeholders.

Elements of the Hunt Report became government policy when the Technological Universities Bill (2014) was published. The Bill provides for the creation of a technological university out of a merger of three Institutes of Technology in Dublin. Dublin Institute of Technology, with over 20,000 students, is the largest of the three institutes involved in the proposed merger and I am a member of the Governing Body. This, and my seat on a joint subcommittee of Governing Bodies and Executive working group for TU4Dublin, gives me a unique insight into the issues facing education providers, all of whom are active in the hospitality and tourism sector.

A review of apprenticeship training in Ireland resulted in the establishment of the Apprenticeship Council in 2014. The Council was tasked with the expansion of apprenticeship into new sectors and a call for proposals for apprenticeships in new occupations was issued in 2015. I initiated a culinary apprenticeship consortium in response as I believed the consortium would bring hospitality employers and education providers together to address a common issue – an annual shortage of 3,000 chefs, identified by an expert group on hospitality skills needs. I was a member of the steering group which produced that study (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2015). An outcome was the establishment of a Hospitality Skills Oversight Group in 2016, and I was a member. The objective was to facilitate effective collaboration between numerous stakeholders, in what is a horizontally and vertically diverse and fragmented sector.

### **Growing Recognition of Ireland’s food culture by tourists**

Globally, Ireland is traditionally seen as a primary source of ingredients. High quality foods, or the products derived from them, are major exports (e.g. milk powder, beef, lamb, pork, Kerrygold butter, Bailey’s Irish Cream, Jameson whiskey, cheese). This shapes Ireland’s image internationally, creating high visitor expectations of their Irish food experience. Conceivably, there are reciprocal effects between a country’s food and drink industry and its tourism industry. When indigenous products do well overseas, it has a positive effect on tourism, and when visitors enjoy indigenous products, this creates a market for those products in the markets of the visitor’s social network.

At 34% of overall tourist receipts, food and beverage spending by visitors to Ireland is significant, worth over €2 billion, if total tourism spend is €6 billion (Fáilte Ireland, 2016). But tourists to Ireland must easily access authentic Irish food, grown by, purchased from, prepared and served by Irish people (Mulcahy, 2014). Food inherently reflects the history, geography, culture, landscape and other components that combine to create a sense of place, thereby providing compelling reasons to engage, visit, and do business. As a local product, it also facilitates growth multipliers and economic retention across local communities. In the United States, more than one dozen studies over the past decade show locally-owned independent restaurants re-spend twice as much per unit of revenue in the local economy than chain restaurants (American Independent Business Alliance, 2012).

So Ireland's food has a significant role *in* tourism, and through that, as a curator of Irish culture, geography, economic growth and as a promoter to the world, through our visitors, of a contemporary vision of the Ireland of today (Mulcahy, 2017a). Achieving this, from both a domestic market and an industry practitioner perspective, is an ongoing process. Furthermore, achieving the scale that is necessary to deliver satisfaction to a significant majority of the seven million visitors a year remains challenging.

## **Conclusions**

That point where food, tourism and state agencies meet is well placed to garner public policy support – strictly on the basis of a significant return on investment, given the revenue generated by tourism, the cost to the state of

education, and the multiplier effect of local food. On this basis, it appears that high levels of collaboration between government, business and civil society is advisable, even necessary, but there has been little, if any, evidence of it. Given the level of change in education and tourism outlined earlier, and the increased interest in food, it is not surprising that all stakeholders might be somewhat confused about who should do what, and when. In this scenario, my observation is that rather than take a risk, each operates within their own competence, largely independently, without considering the larger benefits of collaboration. I believe this is because of the following characteristics in each group of stakeholders, specific to Ireland, based on my observations.

Despite the recession, or perhaps because of it, State departments and agencies appear to look to big projects, brands/propositions, or strategies, all with a civil or public service mindset. This mindset is determined by different, and sometimes competing, priorities – cultural, organisational and political, influenced by power structures. Government, for example, has two goals: deliver more jobs, raise more tax revenue. Departments might be more concerned about status quo and continuity.

Education providers appear to be incentivised not only to retain traditional models of delivery which adhere to full time education over an academic year, but also to encourage graduates to stay in full time education to attain higher qualifications and/or conduct research. This restricts the application of new knowledge in industry. Programme development models which seek to reflect industry needs to take time – from inception to graduation usually takes at

least five years at degree level. The speed of change in the service industry is a fraction of that.

Food and Tourism operators are typically entrepreneurs, small in scale, and usually have a single product or service. These operators are not usually purely tourism orientated – they are more likely to be in the transport, hospitality, accommodation or catering sectors, where indigenous business or horizontal integration is the mainstay of their business. Tourism is a subset, or provides the much needed additional revenue/turnover at peak times of the year.

Further, food producers see themselves as being producers – they make a product and pass it on to someone else, an intermediary, to sell to the consumer, or to be an element of something that is sold to a consumer. State agencies may have some responsibility for maintaining this mindset as they want to develop exporters of scale, rather than deal with multiple supply chains and sources.

Notwithstanding the observations above, opportunities have emerged. Apprenticeships and their consortia are a good, current example of how diverse stakeholders can work together to achieve individual goals to the benefit of all involved – the student, the state, and tourism. So the question is no longer about how food and tourism fit into the overall economic development strategies of a country. It is clear that they do – it is more about ensuring that the ‘fit’ is recognised as economically sustainable and beneficial by those whose familiarity with the intersection of food, tourism and education is minimal. That can only be achieved by sustained collaboration producing exemplars of

success, economically, socially and sustainably, and promoted as such.

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### **Author's biography**

John D. Mulcahy has global hospitality industry experience, including roles as an educator and as a senior manager with the Irish National Tourism Development Authority. Holding Masters Degrees in Hospitality Management and Gastronomy, he is now an independent advisor and researcher on food tourism and the role of food in tourism.

**ETHNICITY AND PERANAKAN CUISINE  
PURCHASE INTENTION: A COMPARISON  
BETWEEN MALAY, CHINESE AND INDIAN  
SOCIAL GROUPS  
IN MALAYSIA**

Tan Ai Ling  
Soon Pau Voon  
Lee Han Ying  
Anisha Chai Mee Fong

**Introduction**

The *Peranakan* Chinese refers to the sub-ethnic Chinese i.e. descendants of the early Chinese immigrants in Malaysia who had gone through a long period of acculturation and had developed a localized identity (Tan, 1988). The word *Peranakan* is derived from the root word of ‘anak’, which means child. The men are known as *Baba* while the women are called *Nyonya* (Tan, 1993). The food of the *Peranakan* Chinese i.e. the *Peranakan* cuisine is known as *Nyonya* food, as the women are the active agents in the production of the food.

The *Peranakan* Chinese are often misunderstood as Chinese communities marrying Malays, thus the food they produced and consumed are assumed as Malay food (Tan, 2007). In fact, *Peranakan* cuisine reflects the adaptation of the Chinese food in a local environment (Tan, 1993). For

example, *Peranakan* cuisine in Penang reveals a mixture of Malay, Indian, British, Siamese and Burmese influences while in Melaka, the cuisine are of Malay, Indian and Portuguese influences (Tan, 2001).

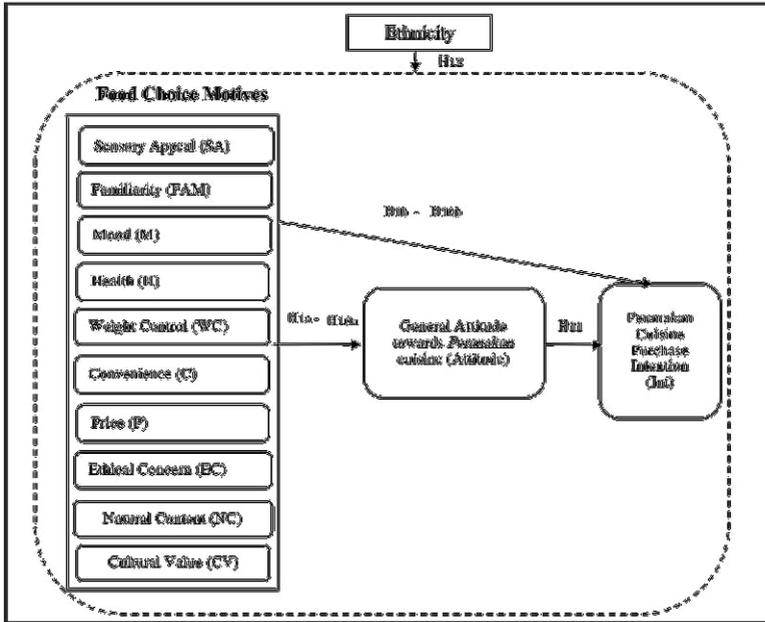
According to the European Union (cited in Md. Sharif *et al.*, 2012: 365), traditional foods are referred to as ‘foods, particularly well known, originating in an area with respect to the district or sub-district, region or country and practiced from generation to generation’. Thus, *Peranakan* cuisine could be categorized as part of the traditional food in Malaysia as it reflects inter-cultural interactions, innovations, adaptations of the local ingredients and cooking methods (Tan, 1993). However, among the younger generation, there is a potential loss of knowledge of Malaysian traditional foods (Md. Sharif *et al.*, *ibid.*). This could be attributed to the growth and development of western-style restaurants in Malaysia due to globalization, which had influenced the food consumption trend among Malaysians (Tan, 2001). This paper aims to investigate the factors that influence the food choices of Generation Y in the Klang Valley of Malaysia, and to discover their attitude and purchase intention particularly towards *Peranakan* Cuisine. To achieve these objectives, this study will:

- examine the relationship between food choice motives and the general attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine among Generation Y;
- investigate the association of the general attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine and the purchase intention among Generation Y in Malaysia; and
- compare the association between the food choice motives, general attitude and purchase intention of

*Peranakan* cuisine among young Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia.

## **Methodology**

A quantitative descriptive study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey to test the proposed conceptual framework (refer to Figure 1). The framework of the study was adapted from Pieniak *et al* (2009), Steptoe *et al* (1995) and Hassan (2011) with the addition of ethnicity as the new moderator to compare its influence on the association between the food choice motives and the attitude and purchase intention of *Peranakan* Cuisine. A self-administered questionnaire, which consisted of 42 items, was distributed to university students in the Selangor area. A total sample of 900 university students were recruited using the judgmental sampling approach. The criteria used in the selection were: (1) the sample must have been born between 1980 to 2004, and (2) the sample must be either Malay, Chinese or Indian. The data was collected in July 2017 and the results of the study were analyzed using Smart PLS version 3.0.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework Adapted from "Association between Traditional Food Consumption and Motives for Food Choice in Six European Countries" by Pieniak *et al*, 2009, *Appetite*, 53, p. 102. Copyright 2009 by Elsevier Ltd.

## Respondents' Demographic Profiles

Out of the 900 respondents, 889 complete responses were returned which resulted in a 98.8% response rate. Data cleaning was conducted prior to data analysis to remove missing data, suspicious response patterns (straight lining issue), outliers and data distribution. This stage is critical for identifying and correcting the errors or at least minimizing their impacts on the results of the study (Van den Broeck, Cunningham, Eeckels & Herbst, 2005). According to Hair *et*

al (2014; 2017), this stage is essential for the application of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in any research. Out of the 889 complete responses, three were deleted due to extreme outliers with a multiplier of 3.0 as suggested by Boxplots, Hoaglin and Iglewicz (1987). Out of the 886 valid responses, 46.4% were from male respondents and 53.6% were from female respondents and a majority of them (76.9%) were undergraduates and above.

In terms of ethnicity of respondents, 42.6% were Chinese followed by 30.1% Malays and 27.3% Indians. Since the target group of this study is Generation-Y, most of them are students with budget constraints and this is evident as 57.6% of them spent RM 400 or less on food expenses monthly. The demographic breakdown of the respondents is presented in Appendix 1 below.

### **Measurement model**

The Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach was employed to test the twelve hypotheses developed in this study. To test the path model, the first step involves the evaluation of the measurement model that aims to test the validity and reliability of the relationship between the latent variables and their corresponding indicators. Meanwhile, the evaluation of the structural model is conducted according to the following steps to test the significance and relevance of the relationship between the latent variables (Hair *et.al.*, 2014; 2017). The findings are shown in Section 3.2.1 and Section 3.2.2. respectively.

## Step One: Evaluation of Measurement Model

The assessment of the reflective measurement model includes the examination of the internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. The first examined were the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, which aim to examine the internal consistency reliability of the measurement constructs. To prove the internal consistency reliability, the Cronbach's alpha value should be 0.7 and above (Nunally, 1978) which is the same as the composite reliability value (Genen *et al*, 2000). Next is the examination of the convergent validity to show the extent to which the indicators used to measure the same construct are much in common (Hair *et al*, 2014; 2017). The outer loading of all the indicators for the same construct should exceed 0.7 while indicators with outer loadings of 0.4 and below should be removed (Hulland, 1999). However, the removal of indicators with outer loadings of between 0.4 and 0.7 should be considered only if it leads to an increase in the composite reliability and AVE above the suggested threshold value, and most importantly, if it does not affect the content validity of the construct (Hulland, 1999). The size of the outer loadings (or referred to as the indicator reliability) which is calculated using the squared of standardized outer loadings, should exceed 0.5 to be acceptable (Hair *et al*, 2017). Another common measure to establish the convergent validity of a construct is by examining the average amount of variance (AVE) and the AVE for all the constructs should be 0.5 and above as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988).

The last evaluation for the measurement model entails the assessment of its discriminant validity. Discriminant validity

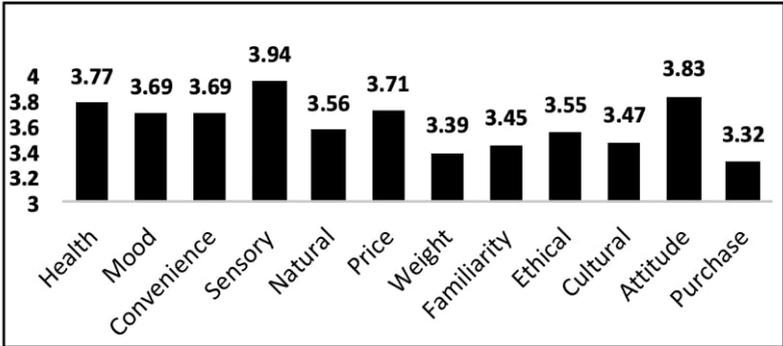
is the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). The first method for assessing discriminant validity is by examining the cross loadings of the indicators. According to Hair, Ringle and Starstedt (2011), the loadings of an indicator on its assigned latent variable should be higher than its loadings on all other variables. The second and more conservative approach for assessing discriminant validity is by using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. To prove discriminant validity, the AVE of each construct should be higher than the squared correlations with any other constructs (Chin, 2010). However, Henseler *et al* (2015) argued that both methods are not reliable in detecting discriminant validity issues when two constructs are highly correlated (for cross-loading method) or when the indicator loadings of the constructs differ only slightly (for Fornell-Larcker Criterion method). To overcome this, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) approach which estimates the true correlation between two constructs by assuming that the two constructs are perfectly measured seems to be a better approach in assessing discriminant validity effectively as compared to the previous approaches (Henseler *et al*, 2015). By using the HTMT approach, the HTMT ratio should be lower than 0.85 and the HTMT confidence interval should not include 1 to show that discriminant validity is established for the constructs under consideration (Henseler *et al*, 2015).

The results of the evaluation of the measurement model are summarized in Appendix 2. Overall, the internal consistency reliability of the measurement model was met as both the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability for all the constructs were 0.7 and above. Two indicators (M4 from mood and PI4 from purchase intention) were deleted as the

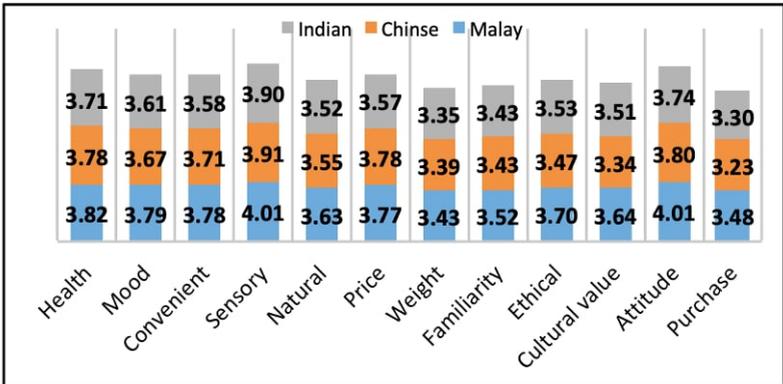
removal of both indicators increased the AVE and composite reliability value of the constructs. However, CV4 under cultural value was retained as it did not increase both AVE and composite reliability after being deleted. The discriminant validity of the measurement model was established with the fulfillment of all the criteria from the three tests.

## **Step Two: Evaluation of Structural Model**

constructs, it is worth looking into the mean value of each construct and the differences between the three ethnic groups. As shown in Figure 2a and Figure 2b, among the motives that influenced one's daily food choices, sensory appeal achieved the highest mean score ( $\bar{x}=3.94$ ) especially among Malays ( $\bar{x}=4.01$ ) as compared to Chinese ( $\bar{x}=3.91$ ) and Indians ( $\bar{x}=3.90$ ). The next motive that was important in influencing the Gen-Y food choice was health ( $\bar{x}=3.77$ ) followed by price ( $\bar{x}=3.71$ ). Both motives were important in influencing the young Malays (Health,  $\bar{x}=3.82$ ; Price,  $\bar{x}=3.77$ ) and Chinese's (Health,  $\bar{x}=3.78$ ; Price,  $\bar{x}=3.78$ ) daily food choices as compared to the Indian's (Health,  $\bar{x}=3.71$ ; Price,  $\bar{x}=3.57$ ). Additionally, it was interesting to discover an obvious discrepancy between the mean score for attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine ( $\bar{x}= 3.83$ ) and purchase intention ( $\bar{x}=3.32$ ). The result indicated that even though the respondents had a positive attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine, they might not have the intention to purchase it. This finding provides an interesting gap for future researchers in further studies.



**Figure 2a** Mean Value for Food Choice Motives, Attitude and Purchase Intention of Gen Y towards *Peranakan* cuisine



**Figure 2b** Comparison of the Mean Value for Food Choice Motives, Attitude and Purchase

## **Intention towards *Peranakan* cuisine among the Malays, Chinese and Indians**

In the second stage, the structural model of the research was examined. The PLS-SEM algorithm was used to estimate the outer loadings and the strength of the structural model. In order to test the significance of the causal relationship, bootstrapping approach with 5000 samples was run (Davison & Hinkley, 1997; Efron & Tibshirani, 1986; Hair *et al.*, 2014). T-values of 1.645, 2.327 and 3.092 were used to examine the significance level of the relationship at 0.05, 0.01 and 0.001 based on one tail distribution. Based on Appendix 3, sensory appeal showed the strongest relationship in the attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine ( $\beta=0.137$ ,  $t_{4999}=3.331$ ) followed by ethical concern ( $\beta=0.114$ ,  $t_{4999}=2.590$ ), health ( $\beta=0.101$ ,  $t_{4999}=2.418$ ) and convenience ( $\beta=0.109$ ,  $t_{4999}=2.505$ ). As expected, price was negatively related to attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine ( $\beta=-0.102$ ,  $t_{4999}=2.554$ ). All five relationships were significant at  $p<0.01$ . Thus,  $H_{1a}$ ,  $H_{4a}$ ,  $H_{6a}$ ,  $H_{7a}$  and  $H_{8a}$  were supported. These factors explain 10.6% of the variance in the overall attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine. The predictive power was considered weak as it is below 0.13 (Cohen, 1988). For purchase intention, those who are health conscious showed the strongest interest in purchasing *Peranakan* cuisine ( $\beta=0.082$ ,  $t_{4999}=2.125$ ) followed by ethical concerns ( $\beta=0.077$ ,  $t_{4999}=2.005$ ). Both relationships were significant at  $p<0.05$  and thus  $H_{4b}$  and  $H_{8b}$  were supported.

In assessing the impact of the overall attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine at the level of purchase intention, the path coefficient was positive with a value of 0.424 and the p-value was found to be very close to zero, which is

significant. Hence,  $H_{10}$  was supported. 25.8% of the variance in the purchase intention can be explained by the model and the predictive power is classified as moderate (Cohen, 1988).

Appendix 4 shows the results of the multi-group analysis between the young Malays, Chinese and Indians. Multi-group analysis was conducted to test the moderating effects of ethnicity, which has the potential to affect all relationships in the proposed framework (Hair *et al*, 2017). From the results shown, there was no significant difference between the Chinese and Malays for all tested relationships. In the comparison between the Malays and the Indians, only two significant differences can be found i.e. between natural content ( $p=0.092$ ) and attitude ( $p=0.020$ ) towards purchase intention. The effect of natural content ( $p=0.025$ ) on the overall attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine was significantly different between the young Chinese and Indians.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

As presented in Figure 2a, this study found five important motives i.e. sensory appeal, health, price, convenience and ethical concern that influence the Gen-Y attitudes toward *Peranakan* cuisine. The result of this study is similar to the study conducted by Kavitha *et al* (2011) in which health, sensory appeal and price appeared to be the most significant intrinsic factors influencing the Gen-Y food preference in Malaysia.

At the individual level, one's food choice is very much dependent on the taste or sensory appeal, likes or dislikes and sheer habit (Steptoe *et al*, 1995). This is especially true

for Generation Y who enjoys posting and sharing pictures of what they eat on social media. They evaluate the food before, during and after consumption. Hence, food that has attractive presentation and pleasing to their palate would be appealing to them. This explains the reason why respondents who are concerned about sensory appeal showed the strongest favorable attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine. *Peranakan* Chinese like to use ingredients such as pungent roots (*kunyit, galangal, lengkuas*), aromatic leaves (*daun limau purut, daun pudina*), fragrant plant stems (*serai*) and other common ingredients like chilies, curry powder, and Chinese salted soya bean paste (Tan, 2001) which are essential in making a complex yet aromatic flavor of *Peranakan* cuisine.

The study also shows that respondents who have high expectations in ethical concern tend to have a positive attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine. However, this finding contradicts the study conducted by Pieniak *et al* (2009) in which ethical concern was found to be insignificant in influencing consumers' attitude towards traditional food. The use of domestic animals and local plants instead of exotic animals could be the reason for the discrepancy in the findings of the two studies.

The factor of convenience was found significant in influencing the respondents' attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine. This shows that the Gen-Y have the perception that *Peranakan* cuisine is easy to plan and buy and take very little time to prepare as well as easy to cook. However, in reality, *Peranakan* cuisine does not relate to convenience. Therefore, it is interesting to explore this aspect further in future research to understand the gap highlighted.

As expected, price has an adverse relationship with attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine. This is understandable as the target sample comprised of students who have constraints on their monthly expenses. As shown in Appendix 1, the majority of the respondents spend RM 400 or less on food per month, which is not much. Hence, they are more price sensitive. As *Peranakan* cuisine is normally very costly due to its tedious preparations (Tan, *ibid.*), requirement of various ingredients and complicated cooking methods, it will not be appealing to them.

Respondents who are health conscious have higher intention to purchase *Peranakan* cuisine. According to Tan (2001: 136), '*Peranakan* food...[uses] a variety of local ingredients, including the use of natural colorings'. Therefore, *Peranakan* cuisine is more of a home-styled cooking. The results also show that Generation Y who are health-conscious and who understand the preparation of *Peranakan* cuisine have higher intention to purchase it. The assortments of plants added into the cuisine not only serve to enhance the flavor as mentioned by Tan (2001), but are also high in nutritional values.

In conclusion, the five most influential food choice motives i.e. sensory appeal, health, price, convenience and ethical concerns of the Malaysian Gen-Y are positively correlated to the general attitude towards *Peranakan* cuisine. These positive correlations may or may not have generated positive purchase intention due to the reasons discussed above. These findings present an interesting gap for further studies. As for the comparison of food choice motives, attitude and purchase intention of *Peranakan* cuisine among the various ethnic groups, there was no significant

difference between the Chinese and Malay Gen-Y. However, in the comparison between the Chinese and Indians, Malays and Indians, the variable i.e. natural content was found to be significant in influencing their attitude and purchase intention. There was also a significant difference in the overall attitude between the Chinese and Indian Gen-Yers. It would be interesting to find out the reason why there is no significant difference in future research.

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## Appendix 1: Demographic Breakdown of the Sample (n=886)

	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	411	46.4
Female	475	53.6
<i>Race</i>		
Malay	242	27.3
Chinese	377	42.6
Indian	267	30.1
<i>Education Level</i>		
Pre U/Foundation		
Diploma	122	13.8
Degree	83	9.4
Postgraduate	653	73.7
	28	3.2
<i>Monthly Expenses on Food</i>		
RM 200 or lower		
RM201-400		
RM401-600	201	22.7
RM601-800	309	34.9
RM801-1000	225	25.4
RM1000 and above	113	12.8
	26	2.9
	12	1.4

## Appendix 2: Assessment of Measurement Model

Latent Variable	Indicators	Convergent Validity			Internal Consistency Reliability	Discriminant Validity
		Outer Loadings	Indicator Reliability	AVE		
<i>Sensory Appeal (SA)</i>	Smells nice (SA1)	0.843	0.711	0.646	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
	Looks nice (SA2)	0.782	0.612			
	Has a pleasant texture (SA3)	0.807	0.651			
	Tastes good (SA4)	0.782	0.612			
		>0.70	>0.50	>0.50	0.60-0.90	0.60-0.90
					0.879	0.819
						HTMT Confidence Interval does not include 1 Yes

<i>Familiarity (FAM)</i>	Is what I usually eat (FAM1)	0.773	0.598	0.634	0.838	0.711	Yes
	Is familiar (FAM2)	0.862	0.743				
	Is like the food I ate when I was a child (FAM3)	0.748	0.560				
<i>Mood (M)</i>	Helps me cope with stress (M1)	0.752	0.566	0.544	0.856	0.791	Yes
	Helps me cope with life (M2)	0.735	0.540				
	Helps me relax (M3)	0.727	0.529				
	Cheers me up (M5)	0.754	0.569				
	Makes me feel good (M6)	0.718	0.516				
	Contains a lot of vitamins and minerals (H1)	0.794	0.630	0.738	0.894	0.826	
<i>Health (H)</i>	Keeps me healthy (H2)	0.900	0.810				Yes
	Is nutritious(H3)	0.881	0.776				

## Appendix 2: Assessment of Measurement Model (Continued)

Latent Variable	Indicators	Convergent Validity			Internal Reliability	Consistency	Discriminant Validity
		Outer Loadings	Indicator Reliability	AVE			
		>0.70	>0.50	>0.50	0.60-0.90	0.60-0.90	HTMT Confidence Interval does not include 1
<i>Weight Control (WC)</i>	Is low in calories (WC1)	0.871	0.759	0.778	0.913	0.858	Yes
	Helps me control my weight (WC2)	0.898	0.806				
	Is low in fat (WC3)	0.877	0.769				

<i>Convenience (C)</i>	Is easy to plan, buy and prepare (C1)	0.886	0.785	0.726	0.888	0.815	Yes
	Takes very little time to prepare (C2)	0.862	0.743				
	Can be cooked easily (C3)	0.807	0.651				
<i>Price (P)</i>	Is not expensive (P1)	0.918	0.843	0.710	0.880	0.804	Yes
	Is cheap (P2)	0.779	0.607				
	Is good value for money (P3)	0.826	0.682				
<i>Ethical Concern (EC)</i>	Is produced using ethical production methods (e.g. sustainable, animal friendly, without child labour, etc) (EC1)	0.855	0.731	0.660	0.853	0.743	Yes

**Appendix 2: Assessment of Measurement Model (Continued')**

Latent Variable	Indicators	Convergent Validity			Internal Reliability	Consistency	Discriminant Validity
		Outer Loadings	Indicator Reliability	AVE			
		>0.70	>0.50	>0.50	0.60-0.90	0.60-0.90	HTMT Confidence Interval does not include 1
	Is produced/packaged in an environmentally-friendly way (EC2)	0.848	0.719				
	Supports the local economy (EC3)	0.727	0.529				

<i>Natural Content (NC)</i>	Contains no additives (NC1)	0.870	0.757	0.723	0.887	0.810	Yes
	Contains natural ingredients (NC2)	0.863	0.745				
	Contains no artificial ingredients (NC3)	0.818	0.669				
<i>Cultural Value (CV)</i>	My knowledge of traditional food gets passed from generation to generation (CV1)	0.819	0.671	0.655	0.850	0.749	Yes
	Ethnic cultural background determines my food preference (CV2)	0.757	0.573				
	Consuming food is a part of my ethnic culture (CV3)	0.827	0.684				
	My food belief is influenced by ethnic culture (CV4)	0.683	0.475				

**Appendix 2: Assessment of Measurement Model (Continued')**

Latent Variable	Indicators	Convergent Validity			Internal Reliability	Consistency	Discriminant Validity
		Outer Loadings	Indicator Reliability	AVE			
<i>General Attitude Peranakan Cuisine is (ATT)</i>	Unpleasant..... .....Pleasant (ATT1)	>0.70	>0.50	>0.50	Composite Reliability 0.60-0.90	Cronbach's Alpha 0.60-0.90	HTMT Confidence Interval does not include 1
	Unfavorable... .....Favorable (ATT2)	0.899	0.808	0.801	0.924	0.876	Yes
		0.896	0.803				

	Bad.....Go od (ATT3)	0.891	0.794				
<i>Purchase Intention (PI)</i>	I expect to consume <i>peranakan</i> cuisine(PI1)	0.858	0.736	0.706	0.868	0.791	Yes
	I would buy <i>peranakan</i> cuisine products (PI2)	0.832	0.692				
	I plan to consume <i>peranakan</i> cuisine (PI3)	0.830	0.689				

Note: i. M4= 0.546 was deleted as after deletion it increases the AVE (0.493 to 0.544) and both AVE and CR (0.852 to 0.856) values above the threshold. M4 = Keeps me awake/alert.

ii. PI4 =0.673 was deleted as after deletion it increases both AVE value (0.623 to 0.706) and CR value (0.868 to 0.878) above the threshold. PI4 = I intend to consume *peranakan* cuisine within the next fortnight.

## Appendix 3: Structural Model

Relationship	Standard Path Coefficient, $\beta$	T-Statistics	F Values	95% Confidence Interval	Supported
H1: Sensory Appeal $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.137***	3.331	0.001	[0.053,0.217]	YES
H1: Sensory Appeal $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.046**	1.138	0.255	[-0.035,0.128]	NO
H1: Familiarity $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.042**	1.121	0.262	[-0.031,0.116]	NO
H1: Familiarity $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.033**	0.864	0.388	[-0.041,0.103]	NO
H1: Mood $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.031**	0.776	0.438	[-0.049,0.119]	NO
H1: Mood $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.04**	0.995	0.32	[-0.039,0.180]	NO
H1: Health $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.101***	2.418	0.016	[0.020,0.180]	YES
H1: Health $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.082***	2.125	0.034	[0.008,0.156]	YES
H1: Weight Control $\rightarrow$ Attitude	-0.048**	1.303	0.193	[-0.120,0.024]	NO
H1: Weight Control $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.044**	1.198	0.231	[-0.029,0.116]	NO
H1: Convenience $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.109***	2.555	0.011	[0.022,0.192]	YES
H1: Convenience $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	-0.003**	0.079	0.937	[-0.078,0.069]	NO
H1: Price $\rightarrow$ Attitude	-0.102**	2.554	0.011	[-0.189,-0.030]	YES
H1: Price $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	-0.025**	0.648	0.517	[-0.104,0.048]	NO
H1: Ethical Concern $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.114***	2.59	0.01	[0.027,0.201]	YES
H1: Ethical Concern $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.077**	2.005	0.045	[0.003,0.153]	YES
H1: Natural Content $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.052**	1.262	0.207	[-0.031,0.128]	NO
H1: Natural Content $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	-0.025**	0.648	0.517	[-0.104,0.048]	NO
H1: Cultural Values $\rightarrow$ Attitude	0.037**	0.975	0.33	[-0.039,0.107]	NO
H1: Cultural Values $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.04**	0.984	0.325	[-0.034,0.118]	NO
H1: Attitude $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.424***	13.597	0.000	[0.360,0.483]	YES

Note: \*\*\* sig at 0.001, \*\* sig at 0.05, \* sig at 0.1 and ns mean not significant

## Appendix 4: MGA between Malay, Chinese and Indian

	Path Coefficient, $\rho$		Malay Vs Chinese		Malay vs Indian		Indian vs Chinese		
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Path coefficient diff	p-value	Path coefficient diff	p-value	Path coefficient diff	p-value
Convenient $\rightarrow$ Purchase intention	0.120	-0.046	-0.033	0.166	0.956	0.152	0.919	0.914	0.535
Convenient $\rightarrow$ attitude	0.207	0.083	0.890	0.124	0.891	0.177	0.945	0.053	0.291
Cultural value $\rightarrow$ Purchase intention	0.162	0.060	-0.840	0.102	0.817	0.210	0.991	0.109	0.181
Cultural value $\rightarrow$ attitude	0.117	0.043	0.866	0.073	0.727	0.052	0.695	0.023	0.547
Ethical concern $\rightarrow$ Purchase intention	0.201	0.015	0.871	0.186	0.977	0.150	0.914	0.085	0.728
Ethical concern $\rightarrow$ attitude	0.163	0.065	0.858	0.078	0.760	0.108	0.810	0.029	0.382
Familiarity $\rightarrow$ Purchase intention	0.012	0.067	0.877	0.085	0.514	0.065	0.252	0.978	0.771
Familiarity $\rightarrow$ attitude	0.054	-0.043	0.140	0.097	0.845	0.095	0.160	0.192	0.979
Health $\rightarrow$ Purchase intention	0.146	0.114	0.825	0.052	0.625	0.121	0.896	0.069	0.164
Health $\rightarrow$ attitude	0.079	0.081	0.298	0.081	0.499	0.129	0.136	0.128	0.900

Note: \*\*\* sig at 0.001, \*\* sig at 0.05, \* sig at 0.1

## Appendix 4: MGA between Malay, Chinese and Indian (Continued')

	Path Coefficient, p			Malay vs Chinese		Malay vs Indian		Chinese vs Indian	
	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Path coefficient diff	p-value	Path coefficient diff	p-value	Path coefficient diff	p-value
Mood → Purchase intention	0.041	0.045	-0.025	0.004	0.478	0.066	0.742	0.070	0.243
Mood → attitude	0.024	0.010	0.029	0.013	0.544	0.005	0.481	0.018	0.571
Natural content → Purchase intention	-0.108	-0.059	0.023	0.049	0.304	<b>0.131*</b>	<b>0.092</b>	0.082	0.813
Natural content → attitude	0.048	0.132	-0.059	0.084	0.193	0.107	0.846	<b>0.191*</b>	<b>0.025</b>
Price → Purchase intention	-0.164	0.106	-0.052	0.270	0.009	0.112	0.147	0.158	0.052
Price → attitude	-0.121	-0.117	-0.070	0.004	0.483	0.051	0.321	0.047	0.667
Sensory Appeal → Purchase intention	0.077	-0.035	0.095	0.112	0.871	0.018	0.435	0.130	0.898
Sensory Appeal → attitude	0.051	0.152	0.183	0.100	0.174	0.132	0.121	0.032	0.626
Weight control → Purchase intention	-0.021	0.115	0.048	0.136	0.058	0.069	0.242	0.067	0.232
Weight control → attitude	-0.062	0.033	-0.108	0.095	0.144	0.045	0.672	0.140	0.063
Attitude → Purchase intention	0.380	0.320	0.538	0.060	0.782	<b>0.158**</b>	<b>0.020</b>	0.218	0.998

*Note: \*\*\* sig at 0.001, \*\* sig at 0.05, \* sig at 0.1.*

# THE LOCAL WAY: INVESTIGATING SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF *ULAM* BY YOUNG STUDENTS IN A LOCAL COLLEGE

Tan Kean Buan

## Introduction

Cuisines associated with the Western part of the world would include dishes categorized as salads, where ingredients such as raw greens, fruits, cooked vegetables are tossed together and served as an appetizer, side dish or even as a main meal, occasionally garnished with animal-based proteins such as chicken, beef or fish.

Similar versions of the salad are also found in Eastern cultures. In Malaysia, the ethnic Malays label these as *ulam*. According to Dr. Hassan (Hassan, *Ulam - Salad Herbs of Malaysia*, 2010), “*Ulam* is a Malay word for any vegetable that is eaten raw, blanched or lightly boiled, and eaten with rice.” The ethnic Malays have enjoyed it (*ulam*) for generations. The word *ulam* also exists in Hebrew (Hitchcock, 2017) referring to names of people; while in Tagalog (Tagalog Lang, 2002), it refers to the main dish accompanying rice. The application of the word *ulam* for this paper will be according to the Malay idiom i.e. referring to “salad greens” consisting of shoots, fruits, stems, flowers, roots and leaves of naturalized or native plants incorporated as part of the Malays’ traditional diet.

While *ulam* is synonymous to the ethnic Malays, the social scenarios found in Malaysian society have resulted in inter-ethnic cuisine adaptations. *Peranakan* cuisine, born of inter-ethnic marriages, is one of such examples where Malay and Chinese cuisine characteristics merge, giving birth to one of Malaysia's unique heritage known as *Baba Nonya* culture (Ong, 2016). Its cuisine known as *Nonya* cuisine consists of tools, techniques, ingredients and service presentations representing both ethnic groups. Since Malaysia is a multi-ethnic nation with the majority being Malays followed by Chinese, Indians and other ethnic minorities, much of its ethnic cuisines have also evolved with insertions of inter-cultural ingredients. However, apart from the ethnic Malays and *Peranakan*, much of the other ethnic groups are mainly still using greens familiar to their original homeland.

### **Problem Statement**

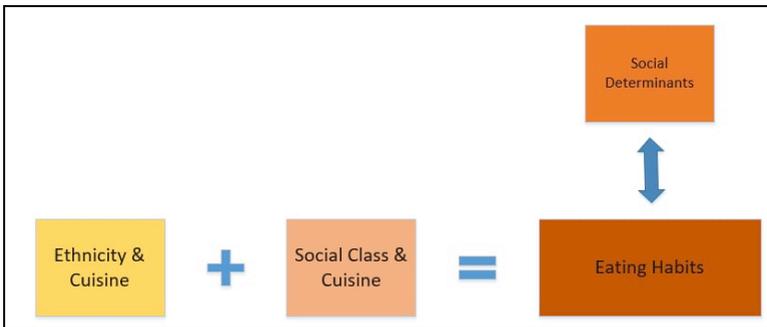
Current health science related researches seem to skew towards increasing plant foods in our daily diet to improve physical well-being (Campbell, 2015). In doing so, many are also suggesting reducing the consumption of animal-based foods and highly processed foods. An influx of Western-oriented way of eating has crept into the younger generation particularly in the urban landscapes, where fast food chains and steak houses are highly popular. Children, teenagers and young adults are seen to consume more of the imported varieties of vegetables such as broccoli, carrots and Western lettuces; partially popularized by the "superfoods trend" (Sygo, 2014). Much of the selections mentioned often come with higher price tags due to factors like land area requirements, transportation, chemical and fertilizers. On the contrary, naturalized or native *ulam*

greens often require less care and space, blending into urban landscapes in the form of trees and shrubs; even as potted plants around the house (Hassan, 2010).

It is imperative to study the behavioral changes in the eating habits of the younger generation to further understand the need for the reintroduction of native/naturalized plant food into the daily diet of the current and future generations. This may be an approach to offset the rising cost of food and adverse health issues.

### Conceptual Framework

As such, this research aims to study the diet aspects of young urban Malaysians (aged 18 to 22 years) particularly in the inclusion and acceptance of *ulam* greens as part of their eating habits.



**Figure 1**

Figure 1 illustrates that cuisines are highly influenced by ethnicity and therefore determines an individual's choice of diet or eating habits. However, this may only be true mainly

when the young's daily choice of food is determined by family meals, usually decided by their parents and/or extended family members. Their diet choices may change in a later stage of their life when they are "old enough" to make that choice such as when they enter college years. Their new environment and social network may re-determine or alter their eating habits. The extent of change is highly dependent on several factors such as if they live in (with family) or out (in dorms or other forms of boarding) and other lifestyle changes.

### **Ethnicity and Cuisine**

According to Steve Fenton, the word "race" does not accurately define an individual; rather, one's social belonging would be better represented via their ethnicity thus leading to "the demise of race"; our social identity is not determined by physical appearances, but rather by how an individual behaves in relation to his/her community or society (Fenton, 2010). Younger generations, while still possessing certain characteristics of their ethnic origin, also possess multi-ethnic qualities in terms of use of language ("Manglish" or Malaysian-English) or breakfast commonalities such as an ethnic Indian enjoying *nasi lemak* (coconut flavored rice) with his Chinese and Malay friends.

Malaysia's multi-ethnic population offers a highly diversified ethnic-based cuisine. While there are many modern concept restaurants popping up to entice young urbanites, it does not mean that ethnicity in the form of cuisines will become diluted and eventually fade away. In fact, the multi-ethnic food scenes available in urban scenarios tend to enforce the presence of ethnicity

transmitted through its cuisine as asserted by van de Berghe that “the consciousness of eating ethnic cuisine can only be developed in a context of inter-ethnic contact” (van den Berghe, 1984).

### **Social Class and Cuisine**

The method of cooking or the lack of it may impress upon its consumer a sense of class, where raw food as in the case of many *ulam* dishes are less elaborate therefore belonging to the less sophisticated (lower class) food (Strauss, 1966). However, cooking alone does not define who one is or provide him with a sense of belonging or even status. An individual may behave differently when eating at home where the cuisine may seem simpler as compared to when eating out “to be seen”, where a meat dominant cuisine may be translated as “high culinary culture” (Goody, 1982), rendering many steakhouses available in the Klang Valley shifting to higher meat consumption for the more affluent. Most individuals get over the fear of trying new foods (neophobia) and enter an eating preference stage (neophilia) where they seek and learn to enjoy foods that reflect novelty, simply put as “eating to show off” and to belong to “higher societal class” (Bee, 2015).

### **Eating Habits and Its Social Determinants**

We eat not only to live, but also to determine who we are, whether to ourselves or to others. As such, there are many determinants that drive us to eat the way we do: where we eat, how we eat, when we eat and with whom we eat. Apart from our ethnic food background, our social circle as well as past and current environments mold our eating habit. People

often go out of their convenience to obtain preferred food (for various reasons), and neglect food that are more easily available in their own surroundings simply because it excites their palates or stimulates their social standing in society rendering every meal as a message (Fox, 2014).

### **Research Question**

What are the behavioral changes in the eating habit of young Malaysian college students aged between 18 – 22 years?

### **Research Objectives**

#### RO1:

To investigate if the knowledge of *ulam* is thinning within this age group.

#### RO2:

To verify the awareness with regards to *ulam* amongst non-Malay ethnic groups.

#### RO3:

To explore the potential of *ulam* in becoming a “lifestyle” inclusive in the diets of young Malaysians.

### **Methodology**

In order to investigate the potential social representation of “*ulamization*” across the ethnic diet boundaries, a qualitative study with semi-structured interviews were carried out with a group of informants consisting of 15 college-going interviewees, aged between 18 to 23 years currently residing in the Klang Valley; the ethnic

distribution comprised two Malays, two Indians, eight Chinese and three of mix parentage. The methodology applied was individual face-to-face recorded interviews at a private room located at INTI International College Subang. The interview recordings were then transcribed by Angie (Research Assistant).

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Ulam* and social class**

Social class is assumed to influence knowledge and consumption of *ulam*. However, the sample interviews were not enough to support this assumption. In the concept of ethno-class, *ulam* may be a “lower” social class ingredient. The more “affluent” class seems to be more familiar with imported vegetables. The assumed middle-class respondents particularly Samy, whose father is the sole bread winner working as a general staff in a private company, has some knowledge of *ulam* but identifies it as a Malay dish. Raju, whose father is a factory supervisor and mother is a kindergarten teacher, is unfamiliar with *ulam* thinking that it is the name of a place. Ekram, an ethnic Malay from an upper middle class family admits that he would force himself to consume vegetables for health reasons but “not *ulam*” even though his own parents consume it; he associates it as his grandparent’s regular “*kampung*” (rural village) diet. Cin Cho who is an ethnic Chinese has no clue about *ulam*, but is familiar with *kangkung* (ironically associated with *ulam*).

## ***Ulam and ethnicity***

Ethnic background influences the likelihood of *ulam* knowledge and consumption. Muciano is more exposed to artichokes and radicchio (due to his Italian-Thai Chinese ethnicity) while Samy and Hooi Mei associate it with the Malays. Raju who is an ethnic Indian believed that he has heard of it, but was inaccurate in defining it:

“Is it a place, ah?” (*Raju, Male, 19 years old, Malaysian-Indian*)

Most of the ethnic Chinese interviewees have not heard about the term *ulam* except Hooi Mei who identified it as:

“It’s a kind of Malay food, right?” (*Hooi Mei, Female, 23 years old, Malaysian-Chinese*)

Kee Soon, who is a mix of Iban, Japanese and Chinese ethnicity, have some experience eating *ulam*. However, he was unable to specify it in detail.

## ***Ulam and neighbourhood***

Neighbourhood types (the surrounding community where their home is located) may be a determinant to the exposure to *ulam*. The inclination towards knowledge or consumption of *ulam* is highly motivated by the ethnic compositions of their neighbours. The Klang Valley housing estates comprise of ethnic skewedness. Samy who is familiar with *ulam* associated it as a Malay dish:

“My neighbor is a Malay; I have been to Malay shops.”  
(*Samy, Male, 19 years old, Malaysian-Indian*)

Kee Soon who grew up in a housing estate located next to an Iban village in Sarawak experienced eating *ulam* from her grandmother who learnt about it from their Iban neighbours.

“My family lives in Jalan TeowChew, Sarawak, near an Iban village.” (*Kee Soon, Male, 20 years old, Malaysian-Iban-Japanese- Chinese*)

### **Ethnicity and dining patterns**

The frequency of eating in or out is not ethnic dependent. In this survey, with the median being four out of seven days, more than five days is considered High, three to four days is considered Average and two days or less is considered Low. The determinants for the frequency of eating out or in would more likely be factors such availability of time, cooking skills, facilities and convenience.

“I eat at home on weekdays (when not at school).”

*Min Choo, Female, 19 years old, Malaysian-Chinese*

“I eat often at home...mom cooks ...everyday.”

*Cin Cho, Female, 18+ years old, Malaysian-Chinese*

“I eat out often...my mom doesn't cook.”

*Sassy, Female, 18+ years old, Malaysian-Chinese*

“I’m staying in a hostel (no cooking facilities).”

*Jason. Male, 20 years old, Malaysian-Chinese-Filipino*

### **Ethnicity and preferred eating outlets**

The preference of type of food outlets/dishes is associated with ethnicity. The effects of post-colonialism, globalization and media influence are clearly seen in young Malaysians where the ubiquity of Western or Western-influenced foods are part of their regular “to eat” lists. Ekram and Ahmad, both of Malay ethnicity, frequent Malay-themed outlets as well as outlets serving food of mixed cultures such as *mamaks* (Indian-Muslim cuisine) and Western-themed outlets. Similar patterns were observed with the ethnic Chinese (Min Choo, Heng Poh, Zee Xi) who often eat at sushi outlets (Japanese), *mamaks*, McDonalds and Pizza Hut apart from mainstream Chinese eateries. As for the ethnic Indians (Samy and Raju), their preferred choice of eateries were surprisingly non-Indian themed, naming dishes like Chinese chicken rice, *pan mee* (handmade Chinese noodles) and McDonalds.

### ***Ulam* and Inter-generational Cultural Transmission**

The influence of family in food choices and preferences is obvious. However, knowledge of *ulam* does not necessarily lead to consumption.

“My grandmother, she does eat (*ulam*), but for my mom, she will eat but won’t cook it for us, cos’ me and my sister don’t really like to eat it. ...sometimes she

(mother) will do it for herself to eat...I did ask (her mother) but then I forgot already. ...I don't like the taste...I am not interested with it."

*Zee Xi, Female, 19 years old, Malaysian-Chinese*

"My mother eats it everyday; mom can't eat rice without *ulam*; both my parents eat *ulam*."

*Ekram, Male, 23 years old, Malaysian-Malay*

Ahmad, however, did learn to enjoy *ulam* in his later years since his mother introduced it to him during his early childhood, but at the same time advised him that he wasn't ready to consume *ulam* then.

### ***Ulam and similar food consumptions***

Many in this age group dislike eating vegetables. However, those who appreciate *ulam* are even lesser; they are more willing to consume "widely recognized" vegetables instead such as carrots, tomatoes, broccoli and cauliflower.

"I am personally not a vegetarian type; I force myself to eat veggies but NOT *ulam*; *ulam* is just another veggie."

*Ekram, Male, 23 years old, Malaysian-Malay*

"I don't like vegetables; I eat very less broccoli."

*Min Choo, Female, 19 years old, Malaysian-Chinese*

"(prefers) soft and not crunchy."

*Heng Poh, Female, 19 years old, Malaysian-Chinese*

“Cucumber, lettuce, tomatoes.”

*Pei Ling, Female, 20 years old, Malaysian-Chinese*

## **Conclusion**

The dialogue from the respondents did not reveal that social class played a prominent role as determinants of *ulam* knowledge and acceptance. This may be due to ignorance of the existence and benefits of *ulam* rather than class. Looking at the promotion and diet inclusion of *ulam* among the different mix of ethnic groups sans class would be more applicable for the current young Malaysian population.

While ethnic-skewedness still exists amongst the neighbourhood communities in the Klang Valley, many workplaces and educational institutions reflect good harmony across different ethnicities; social networking serves to reintroduce the acceptance of selected varieties of *ulams* which could be adapted into traditional ethnic dishes.

Social media, post colonization and urbanization had caused inevitable adaptations and acceptance of non-traditional diets amongst the young. While many of the interviewees are not fond of eating vegetables, the initiation of “*ulamization*” will trigger their interest as they age and become more health-conscious.

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### **Author's biography**

**Tan Kean Buan** is a Chef Lecturer at Inti International College Subang. He is currently pursuing his Masters at the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) of the National University of Malaysia (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia). His research interests are in nutrition, local foodways, sociology and anthropology of food.

## CONCLUSION

It has been shown, through the papers, of the 'taste' section that taste is derived from the consumers' end, but also sometimes manipulated from the producers and sellers' side. For example, in *A Feast at the Peranakan Chinese Wedding: A Social Aspect of Commensality* and in *Labor Theory of Value: Perspective from Indian Cuisine*, the consumers set the expectations based on their considerations of status and worth. Meanwhile, the producers of food items, such as the farmers of *Factors Determining Vendor Attendance at Vic Park Farmers' Market, Perth, Western Australia*, and the vineyard operators of *Regional Wine Development in Brazil: The Case of Rio Grande Do Sul and the Sao Francisco Valley*, also have their considerations of important factors which determine success in the harvest and the sales of goods to customers. The middlemen's role is not left out either, such as in *An Organic Trap: Perceptions and Purchase Intention of Gen Y in Malaysia Towards Organic Junk Food*, where they are responsible for marketing junk food as healthy ones based on their co-option of the latest organic food fad among the younger generations.

Where taste denotes social standing, culture reveals one's origins. It is a marker of one's affiliation to social groups, whether it be ethnic, religious, political, or regional. Where the previous section focused on one's achieved status, this section traces the individual's ascribed social position. The articles featured in this section have illuminated the process of value creation and social construction of memory throughout all these dimensions. However, this does not

suggest that one's "origins" are a fixed matter nor is it something to be discarded in favour of the new. In fact, evolution is a process to be celebrated, such as in the case of *The Roads to the Fork: How the Human and Natural Environments Have Shaped Eating Utensils*, and *The Impact of UNESCO Heritage Status on Japanese Food Discourse in Japan*, where longstanding practices regarding foodways have become reinvigorated. Of course, some regional changes are taking place and thus there are new opportunities to be explored, such as in the case of *From "Everybody Used to Have a Cow Back Then, We Used to Make Cheese" to "We Have Three Geese on the Roof, Two Are Mine!"*: Challenges and Changes in Ahvazi Mandaean Food Norms; *Food Habitus: The Iranians' Food Choice in Malaysia*; and *In-Between Quanzhou and Klang: A Case Study of 'Niu Pai' and 'Bak Kut Teh'*. Regional specialties also abound due to the interplay of ethnicity and elements such as space, in *Mamak Stalls: Inclusive Food Space in Malaysia?* where this unique configuration acts as a uniting factor in Malaysian society. Similarly, the impact of specific patterns of migration on a particularly unique foodway is elaborated in *Penang Heritage Food and Comparisons with that from Melaka and Singapore*.

Changing eating and purchasing habits has been a steady purpose in food education but one cannot deny significant variations in the common assumptions about knowledge, people and society, and in the representation of the purpose of food education. We can only regret the lack of evidence to substantiate the claim that knowledge through food education may trigger behavioural change. Food education as a substrata of "health literacy" only been elaborated and taken seriously recently as advocated by Jennifer Summer

(Summer, 2013), concurrently the rise of food literacy and positing food literacy as a potent lever for adult learning and consequently social change in order to model desired sustainable alternatives. Let us not omit however that food literacy can only be effective if it remains non-dogmatic and is in principle subject to critical reviews by all stakeholders. For that matter, inspiration might be drawn from health education, referring especially to the work of Donald Nutbeam (Nutbeam, 2000) where he develops the concept of health literacy in a three-pointers frame as follows:

*“Level 1, ‘functional health literacy’ reflects the outcome of traditional health education based on the communication of factual information on health risks, and on how to use the health system. Such action has limited goals directed towards improved knowledge of health risks and health services, and compliance with prescribed actions.*

*Level 2, ‘interactive health literacy’ reflects the outcomes to the approach to health education which have evolved during the past 20 years. This is focused on the development of personal skills in a supportive environment. This approach to education is directed towards improving personal capacity to act independently on knowledge, specifically to improving motivation and self-confidence to act on advice received.*

*Level 3, ‘critical health literacy’ reflects the cognitive and skills development outcomes, which are oriented towards supporting effective social and political action, as well as individual action. Within*

*this paradigm, health education may involve the communication of information, and development of skills, which investigate the political feasibility and organizational possibilities of various forms of action to address social, economic and environmental determinants of health.”*

*(Source: Nutbeam, 2000, p. 265)*

The third level, namely “critical health literacy”, conceptualized as suitable knowledge baseline for political action reminds us vividly, when applied to food education, that education as such is, before anything else, a political object. That is why feasibility gaps between political stance and public policies when it comes to food education must come under scrutiny by concerned academics. One can only deplore the lack of educational anthropology precepts in self-proclaimed multi-cultural or multi-ethnic countries. Social work and scientific experiments show that culturally sensitive diets work and deliver tangible results (see Vasquez et al’s preventive nutrition intervention for underprivileged Caribbean and Hispanic population (Vasquez et al, 1998). Tan Kean Buan advocates for a similar principle of action contained in one powerful idiom, i.e “the local way”. That is the only viable route for a virtuous system of food education as long as such a system remains self-critical and bottom-up in lieu of a bi-paradigmatic framework. By contextually investigating – though in distinctive fashion – learning processes, both Eila Kauppinen and Tan Kean Buan lay the foundation of a genuine and sincere design of a true Anthropology of Food Education.

An anthropology of food education paradigm in all the most necessary in societies where social difference is translated into ethnicity, thus carrying the legacy of older colonial censuses.

In postcolonial studies, the concept of settler society epistemologically refutes the notion of indigeneity. This type of colonial situation is somehow antithetical to the “indirect rule” historically associated to British colonialism in Malaysia. In the fields of human geography, immigration studies, and postcolonial studies, the symmetrical concept of settler society bears a specific name: “host society”. Selling the host society idea is probably one of the biggest challenges for the Malaysian authorities as the concept lies on the traumatic foundations of the ethnic riots that took place in Kuala Lumpur 1969. To make sense to the population, the notion of society must be embedded in the broader project of Malaysian modernity.

The self-claimed positioning of Malaysia in an Islamic sphere of influence within the World-Economy indicates the foundation of a new type of liberalism, which is neither dogmatic nor exclusive. Indeed, the 10<sup>th</sup> Malaysia plan (2011-2015) makes it clear of the country’s intention of “leveraging on our diversity internationally” in order to penetrate the markets transnationally linked to ethnic diversity in Malaysia: India and China. Islam as the official religion would be instrumental in developing business relations with the Golfe countries. This ideology can be put in practice, but requires the consent and participation of all social actors in Malaysia. We have seen examples of reactive assertion of ethnic identities, whether it is children schooling in Mandarin medium schools or increased

religiosity of Hindu devotees (Gomes, in Lim, Gomes & Rahman, 2009: 192).

In social psychology, social identity is defined as the part of self-consciousness resulting from individuals' awareness to belong to a social group, as well as the value and the emotional significance they give to this sense of belonging. The choice of the identity paradigm to think and determine measurement indicators induces the status of ethnicity, both as component and resource of social identity. Ethnicity, in the case of an ascription by the Institution like in Malaysia, seems to refer the macro-level of the scale of social observation (Desjeux, 2006). However, ethnic boundaries being already institutionally set, their eventual fluidity can only be measured at the micro level of the individual agent. The following chapter interrogates the meaning and the implications of the "double bind" of ethnicity as social identity marker, between incorporation of "structure of representations" and plain resource for reflexive strategy.

Food, as a "powerful semiotic devise" (Appadurai, 1981), de facto mediatises the relationship between structure and agency. The region of Southeast Asia in general, and Malaysia in particular, illustrates perfectly how society pervades into the social practice of eating. The American-Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1981) argues that: "food avoidances, for different persons in different contexts, are developed to a remarkably high degree and can signal caste or sect affiliation, life-cycles stages, gender distinctions, and aspirations toward higher status" (Appadurai, 1981: 495). Appadurai obviously favours the prevalence of social structure, expressed in terms of exclusion, upon agency in the highly codified social

environment of South Asia. One cannot deny however the existence of an integrative or “common food social space<sup>i</sup>” (Tibère, 2009) at the structural level. In order to make sense of the dialectics between structure and agency, with food as semiotic medium, in a society structured along ethnic lines, it is compelling to identify at first the configuration of the diversity of food social spaces within Asia-Pacific region.

Evoking national cuisines in Asia Pacific, ones of a multicultural societies, implies that a common and integrative space does exist. This integrative space opposes itself to a “differentiation space”, and refers to the concept of food creolisation. This central zone that may be considered as the territory of Creole cuisine becomes the common space for identity formation. The Creolity paradigm does not however enable us to conceive the many Australasian and Polynesian social structures, with the exception of creole communities. Asia-Pacific region does harbour pockets of creole cuisines but they remain in the periphery of the main culinary system. Successive periods of colonialism and occupations may have contributed to polarise ethnic identities, and by doing so their cultures, and therefore consequently their cuisines. However, the awareness of the existence of an ethnic cuisine can only occur during interaction. As Van der Berghe points out, food is a privileged target of any ethnic revival movement, thanks to the relative ease with which food tastes can be transmitted, comparatively for instance to language and belief systems”. (Van der Berghe, 1984: 393).

Operations of food preparation, cooking and combination of various foodstuff depend often on rules of internal compatibility and adequation to spatial, temporal and social contexts. “One does not eat anything, anywhere, whenever,

or with anybody” (Mahias, in Bonte & Izard, 2010: 187). As Levi-straussien closed culinary systems do not longer sustain due to the permeability of cultural globalisation phenomenon, cuisines may henceforth be seen as “vessels for core values of a given society, but also as one of the foundations for identity and alterity, simultaneously asserted in modalities of opposition, repulsion, interaction or borrowing.” (ibid, p. 187).

The Asia-Pacific food social space, being ethnically configured, opposes but also superposes sub-spaces whose boundaries relate to the historical structuration of the social system. It is then the task of the anthropologist to identify these boundaries, as well as the common integrative spaces, within Asia-Pacific plurality.

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This book encapsulates the proceedings of the second Food and Society Conference that was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 2017. The theme ascribed to the conference was "Taste, Culture and Education".

Taste is a problematic concept in sociology and so is culture for anthropology. Using common sense, we tend to define aesthetical taste as a natural affinity towards the objects of our passion. Sociology has persisted in showing that this relationship is actually socially constructed through the categories employed, the authority of leaders, the imitation of intimates, institutions and frames of appreciation, as well as through the social game of identity making and differentiation. The debate therefore narrows down to the infamous structure/agency duality. Is our sense of taste socially determined? In other words, are our choices really our own? That is where culture with a big C comes into play; but again anthropologists have been struggling for more than one century to make operational sense of the concept of culture, as culture is not a given data but must be analysed or interpreted, depending on the school of thought you belong to. Education as a philosophical construct cannot be taken for granted either, as it may refer to the transmission of knowledge and enlightenment of the mind – the *skhole* of the ancient Greeks –. Education can also be understood as cultural capital waiting to be transmitted – or not – to the next generation; or it may even signify social control in certain contexts. This second Food and Society conference conveys the ambition of investigating the dialectics of these three highly volatile concepts, the former reflecting either culinary systems in-the-making, or social change at work. These dialectics may be seen as a circumscribed and specified manifestation of a broader phenomenon: the polar tension between cultural homogenization and ethnic revitalization. We trust that the reader will find some partial answers to those critical discussions in this engaging collection of essays about the food that makes us.

eISBN 978 - 967 - 0741 - 55 - 0



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