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Bodily Memory and Sensibility:

Culinary Preferences and National Consciousness in the Case of "Taiwanese Cuisine"*

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This paper employs "bodily memory" to theorize the concept culinary preference and examines how consumers conceive of the notion of a "Taiwanese cuisine" and the relationship between national consciousness and culinary preference. I will consider how a sense of nationality might link individuals to a particular set of dishes. The cases discussed reveal that "Taiwanese cuisine" is not meaningful to all consumers, and a preference for that cuisine cannot be interpreted as purely an expression of Taiwanese identity. Instead, such a preference is rooted in the lived experience and bodily memories of consumers.

This study shows that informants understand "Taiwanese cuisine" from diverse perspectives, in particular gender, locality, and ethnicity. Social positions, the social experiences of consumers, and their need for inclusion and exclusion are all influential in shaping these diverse perspectives. On the basis of their lived experiences and memories (of specific flavors and dining contexts, for instance), individuals develop their own sensibilities, which serve as the ground where culinary preference and national consciousness appear to be correlated. Thus, while food is often viewed as a boundary marker in anthropological research, this research identifies restrictions on the boundary-marker roles that food can play.

Keywords: bodily memory, sensibility, Taiwanese cuisine, culinary preference, national consciousness

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Taiwanese cuisine has become a key attraction for international tourists and has been deployed as a national symbol by political elites since the early 1990s. This can be seen in frequent local food festivals and the proliferation of cookbooks, guidebooks, and literature on Taiwanese cuisine.[1] The authors of these publications emphasize that this cuisine, while originating in Chinese foodways, has become a distinct tradition after years of adaptation and indigenization (Liang 1999; Lin 2004; Zhang & Yang 2004). In addition to such assertions in cookbooks and food guides, consumers seem to have embraced the symbolic importance of Taiwanese cuisine. For example, in an official vote open to the entire population in 2006, it was selected as one of the most representative "images of Taiwan."[2] Additionally, the official website of the Taipei City Government has referred to beef noodles as "national noodles" (*guomian* 國麵) since the 2005 Taipei Beef Noodle Festival, which generated business that year close to 100 million NT dollars.[3]

The notion of "Taiwanese cuisine" has undergone significant changes under different political regimes. During the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945), it was considered "elite food," comprised of a selection of Chinese-style dishes enjoyed by the gentry who could afford and appreciate it (Chen 2008). However, it became "a marginalized Chinese regional cuisine" under the rule of the Nationalist government, particularly during the post-war period (Chen 2009). With the launch of democratization and the indigenization policy, "Taiwanese cuisine" has, especially since the mid 1990s, come to represent the distinctive culinary culture of Taiwan. Historically then, "Taiwanese cuisine" is a culinary category whose changing definitions involve various social actors such as political elites, restaurant owners, chefs, cookbook writers, and exhibition designers. But if the term's changing meanings parallel developments in political regimes and dietary culture, can the popularity of Taiwanese cuisine among consumers be explained as a reflection of a rising "Taiwanese identity"? Since consumers' preferences are crucial to the proliferation of foods and cooking styles identified as Taiwanese, this

1 According to the Tourism Bureau, "Taiwanese cuisine" has been a top tourist attraction since 2000, superseding "historical sites" and "scenery."

2 In the vote sponsored by the Government Information Office, "Taiwanese cuisine" came in fourth, behind puppet theater, Mt. Jade, and the Taipei 101 Building. See: http://info.gio.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=28281&ctNode=4525&mp=1. (Accessed October 22, 2008).

3 The term "national noodles" is used on the official website of the Taipei City Government. See: http://www.taipei.gov.tw/cgi-bin/Message/MM_msg_control?mode=viewnews&ts=4848b34b:7350. The business volume it created in 2005 was announced by City Mayor Ma Ying-jiu. See: http://www.taipei.gov.tw/cgi-bin/Message/MM_msg_control?mode=viewnews&ts=4636349d:6ca2 (both accessed October 11, 2008).

paper focuses on consumers[4] rather than producers. How do consumers conceive of Taiwanese cuisine and what is the relationship between national consciousness and culinary preference?

National Cuisine and National Identity

Anthropological studies of national cuisine have demonstrated the positive relationship between culinary preferences and identities. Pilcher (1998) suggests that, in Mexico, consumption of native corn tortillas and Western wheat bread helped to define the ethnic boundaries there under Spanish rule. The region's newly forged national identity was marked by the formation of a unique Mexican national cuisine in the nineteenth century. In the process, cookbooks helped create not only a national repertoire of dishes but also a sense of community. Similarly, Helstosky examined the nationalistic rhetoric of an 1891 cookbook and a 1932 cookbook, arguing that although the two cookbooks differed from each other regarding their advocacy of Italian food habits, both of them attempted to strengthen Italian identity through everyday practices of preparing and consuming food. She has suggested that the two books reflected conscious efforts to "make" Italians (Helstosky 2003:114). In a case from East Asia, Cheng (2002) has argued that the development of herbal-tea shops since the late 1960s reflects the search for a Hong Kong identity. Furthermore, studies on migrants and diasporas place prominent stress on the positive relationship between identity and food consumption. For example, Naguib (2006) shows how recipes from the homeland can be an important way for exiles to remember and understand historical moments. Roy (2002) argues that gastrophilic histories are saturated with the idioms of national belonging and national purity. These studies demonstrate that food is often viewed as "an expression of identity" (Murcott 1996), or in the words of Palmer (1998:175), as "flags of identity," which not only symbolize national belonging, but also constitute a reference system within which people can experience the material world.[5]

Focusing on this association, Mintz has suggested that national cuisine is in certain important senses a political artifact and is on its way to becoming a touristic artifact:

4 "Consumers" in this research is defined in a broad sense, referring to those who have access to, and can afford to order food in stalls and shops, or to dine in restaurants.

5 Palmer drew the metaphor of "flag" from Billig (1995). The other two "flags of identity" suggested by Palmer in this article are landscape and body.

> …a national cuisine primarily possesses a textual reality; produced textually, it can help to achieve a desired touristic and political effect. But there is no doubt not only that particular foods or food habits may be chosen either for national self-definition or to stereotype others, but that they may emerge as strikingly convenient condensed symbols of identity conflict or division. [Mintz 2003: 32]

But the assertion that national cuisines are an artifact raises an important question that merits further exploration: who decides what foods will be symbols of identity conflict? How do members of a given nation, who are also consumers in the dining market, conceive of and participate in shaping this "national artifact?" Just how do they create the linkages between "articulated national cuisines" and national identities?

"Nation" is not simply an institutional or discursive regime but also a space that has a corporeal grounding (Linke 2006). The grounding has its visual and sensuous dimensions, and individuals can experience the "nation" through their sensual experiences. The examination of social experience and practices is thus an important way to explore the national consciousness of individuals. Craib (1998:1) poses the concept of "experiencing identity" to explain that identity is not only "one element or process within a self" but also the way people experience the world. Brown (2004) further highlights how social experience and perception influence each other and constitute the grounds whereby individuals understand the living world and make decisions in social interactions. Since social experience consists not only of events, conversations, and narratives but also of bodily practices, research attempting to explore national consciousness through social experience should also account for bodily practice.

Viewing "national cuisine" as a way individuals can experience the concept of nation makes eating and sharing a national cuisine, and even thinking about it, an experiential space where nationhood is embodied. In the case of "Taiwanese cuisine," what is its range meaning as defined by consumers with different culinary preferences across Taiwanese and Chinese foodways? Below, I will try to clarify how individuals have become aware of the meanings of "Taiwanese cuisine." Because preference for a specific food or cuisine can be congenital or can be learned through eating experiences, I begin by using the notion "bodily memory"[6] to theorize matters of "culinary preference."

6 Both Connerton (1989) and Lee (2000) have used the term "bodily memory" in their writings. I am inspired by their conceptualization of bodily memory but expand its meanings here.

Bodily Memory Related to Culinary Preference and Personal Identification

The body is often viewed as a site of cultural codes. For example, Douglas (2003 [1970]:65-81) argues that the body is an important symbolic system that can reveal the cultural structure of a society. Bourdieu's (1984:190) theory of "habitus" also highlights the body as a bearer of value and marker of social positions, positing that body is "the most indisputable materialization of class taste." Butler (1993) suggests that repeated practice is a crucial way of embedding cultural and social norms in the body. She argues that, through repeated physical practices and performances in daily life, the body memorizes the proper way to act in specific social and cultural contexts; and conversely, these ways of acting can be generated by specific social cues. In this sense, daily practice and performance are shaped and conditioned by historical and social contexts, and bodily behavior is thus culturally appropriated and socially constructed. As Connerton (1989:72) states in his influential book, bodily practices enact the past and thus embody cultural memory.

However, the body also engages its social context. Researchers who focus on the body and society particularly underline the body's subjectivity. Shilling (1993: 114) argues that the body is an unfinished entity that shapes social life and that is imprinted by it reversely. The body not only reflects culturally and socially informed memories but is also the sensual grounds of meaning, which it delivers to people's consciousness. The subjective aspect of the body is especially evident in studies on traumatic experiences and memory (cf. Becker, et al. 2000; Kleinman & Kleinman 1994). The experiences of victims of violence and refugees can evolve into embodied memories, and the traumatic experiences of "sociosomatics" can manifest themselves in physical responses such as sleeplessness, fatigue, and dizziness (Lee 2000:207; Kleinman & Kleinman 1994:713-717). In sum, the interactions between body and memory are better understood as a bi-directional process. The body is a bearer of social values and communal experiences, and practices imprint these experiences on the body over time. The body can also generate meanings.

Drawing on this bi-directional process, the term "bodily memory" may encompass these two meanings of body. On one hand, bodily memory is the sense or memory inscribed in bodies. Specific social contexts can evoke a sense or a memory. The memory, as well as the process of inscription, is affected by one's social position and cultural disposition. On the other hand, bodily memory is the sensory experience by which

individuals consider and make sense of objects or events, conferring cultural significance on them. Such "bodily memory" has the three following crucial characteristics.

1. Individual memory and particularity

Bodily memory is created or accumulated through physical experiences, which become meaningful only within one's life history. Bodily memory is thus individual and not collective. It is particularly significant when an event is related to physical labor or a physical sense. As emotions, feelings, and senses vary by individual, so memories of events differ. In other words, bodily memory reveals the particularity of individuals.

However, this is not to say that bodily memory cannot be transformed into social memory. Connerton (1989) reminds us that bodily social memory is an important way that societies understand the past and present.[7] Although bodily memory is grounded in individual experiences, it is also the basis by which individuals situate themselves and connect with others. Lee (2000) also notes that bodily memory and social memory are intertwined experiences. She suggests that bodily memory is often a response "to changing social contexts," and that response is closely related to the social position and network of the individual. In other words, bodily memory is an important "source of social memory" (Lee 2000:219).

In this sense, although bodily memory is an individual's memory, it links the individual to shared collective memories. When a public event occurs, it is through individuals' emotions and feelings toward the event that the event is remembered. While allowing individuals to participate in collective memory, bodily memory can also serve as an analytical tool for examining how human bodies conceive of and react to collective social memories. An examination of bodily memory can shed light on the process of personal engagement with social memory.

2. Emotional bonds

Memory is highly selective, so not all events or behaviors are remembered. What becomes memory is related to certain forms of emotion: suffering, pleasure, pride, or pain, and these emotions are often the subjects of research on bodily memory. For

7 Connerton points out three ways by which a society remember, in addition to the "body," the other two ways include inscriptions onto cultural texts such as myths and monuments, and commemorative rituals that engage people in participatory rationality and social action.

example, Becker, Beyene, and Ken (2000) explore the distress of Cambodian refugees, pointing out that fear and mistrust resulting from physical and emotional pain can evolve into embodied memories and can distort refugees' relationships with others and with the world. In this sense, emotion is better understood as a relational process that informs social interaction and is thus socially efficacious (Lee 2000:207). Emotional bonds are another medium by which individuals and the collective are linked.

3. The unconscious

Memories encoded in bodies are derived from sensory experiences, even though people are not necessarily conscious of this derivation. As Bourdieu's (1977) concept "habitus" underlines, bodily memory works on the unconscious. Lee (2000:205) explains, "Although bodily acts are … products of conscious learning over time, these behaviors settle into the unconsciousness, becoming 'obscure in the eyes of their own producers.'" Through "habit memory" sedimented in the body, certain habits and behaviors become naturalized (Connerton, 1989:34-35). Unconsciousness is particularly significant in food habits. Sutton (2001:4) argues that the power of food lies in its ability to mask class issues under the guise of "taste and personal preference." The taken-for-granted-ness of eating habits and culinary preferences prevents a deeper consideration of how social class, ethnicity, and national consciousness may influence culinary preferences.

On the basis of these characteristics, "bodily memory" allows us to theorize culinary preference. Individual preferences for specific foods and the sense of taste are subjective feelings that vary from individual to individual, which is why there are no hard and fast standards for tastes, only highly subjective and variable categories such as deliciousness, sweetness, sourness, etc. Still, responses to flavors and food preferences are not entirely arbitrary. Preferences are cultivated in daily life over a long time and are closely associated with one's memory of food. The feeling of something being "delicious" is a bodily response, a response generated by the individual's criteria of taste.

According to this conceptualization, culinary preference is a sort of bodily memory in two senses. First, the bodily response to food is shaped by social values and communal experiences over time. For example, shark fin is haute cuisine in China, and the impression of "deliciousness" when one eats shark fin dishes can derive from their high monetary and social value. Second, the subjective bodily response to food can produce new meanings and change the values of food. Again using the example of shark's fin, when consumers find the hunting of sharks to be distasteful, they may start to dislike the dish and stop eating it.

Furthermore, in my references to culinary preference as a form of "bodily memory," the three aforementioned characteristics of bodily memory (particularity, the emotional bond, and the unconscious) are also features of culinary preferences. First, culinary preference is apparently individual, but it can be transformed to a collective. Research on the formation of "food taste" have shown that groups whose members are of the same ethnicity, generation, class, or region exhibit some commonalities in their culinary preferences.[8] Second, food preference is often an emotional choice and not necessarily rational. One's preference for a specific flavor is often influenced by repeated exposure to a given food and by experiences shared in families or in other social contexts. Thus, food can remind us of childhood, family, friends, or festivals. However, while people are able to recognize their preferences for a specific food, they are not necessarily conscious of the reason for their preferences. Individuals are not always conscious of the feelings that are inscribed in their bodies.

In sum, culinary preference is a sensory choice generated by bodily practices and eating experiences; it is an individual choice but formed in social networks and thus is constitutive of the grounds of social interaction; it is associated with people's emotional experience, even though individuals are often not conscious of how a preference is formed. But how are culinary preferences formed in a wider social context and how do individuals make sense of those preferences?

To investigate the processes underlying consumers' perceptions and bodily practices, I paid attention to their definitions and understandings of Taiwanese cuisine, but also focused on their food-centered life histories. During my fieldwork of 2007 and 2008, I collected informants' accounts of experiences of food, eating, and cooking from their childhood to the present, as well as details related to cooking methods, ways of seasoning, and descriptions of taste.[9]

8 See, for example, the researches collected in Korsmeyer (ed.), 2005.

9 In addition to their claimed food preferences, I observed their daily food practices such as cooking methods, eating-out choices, and the food stocked in their refrigerators. Most of the interviews were conducted at the homes of the informants to obtain non-verbal information about their eating habits, their cultural dispositions, and the total repertoire of their social practices. Such "food-centered life histories" were collected from 24 informants—15 females and 9 males.

Informants Who Had Clear Definitions of "Taiwanese Cuisine"

1. Perspectives related to locality and gender

Some informants had clear definitions of "Taiwanese cuisine," though these definitions were quite different one to the next. Mrs. Huang[10] was one of those possessing an especially clear impression. She viewed it as the traditional wisdom of Taiwanese women, and she defined its qualities by explaining three representative dishes: stewed pork sauce (*Bah-sin-a* in Hokkien) [11], milkfish (*Chanos chanos*), and braised fish *wuliuzhi* 五柳枝 (literally, "five willow branches").[12]

Mrs. Huang's perspective on stewed pork sauce came from her childhood experiences in rural Tainan in the south of Taiwan. Born in 1932 to a peasant family, Mrs. Huang grew up under Japanese colonial rule and had to do heavy work on a farm. The lack of material resources and dignity made her childhood a painful period.

"The colonized people were very poor," Mrs. Huang said with a hint of anger. Her childhood memories are haunted by the hardships she suffered and witnessed before the end of the Second World War. She remembers that when the Japanese army drafted an older neighborhood boy to go off to fight in the war, his whole family wailed. During hre childhood, she was often called a "Qing slave" (*qingguonu* 清國奴) by the Japanese children. These experiences left a deep impression and gave her the clear idea that being ruled by colonists was a tragedy. She suggested that such experiences influenced the tastes of local people. For example, during the colonial era, Tainan was an important area for growing and processing sugar cane (He 2007:162-191). But local Taiwanese were not allowed to eat the cane they had planted on their own land; instead, the harvest had to be sold to Japanese sugar enterprises at a fixed price, which was quite low. To explain, Mrs.

10 Mrs. Huang was born in 1932 in Tainan County. Being enthusiastic about local affairs, she started to teach cooking in Tainan in 2001. I use shortened names throughout this paper when referring to my informants to maintain their anonymity in accordance with their wishes.

11 Hokkien is a language commonly used in Taiwan and the southern Fujian Province of China, the language is thus known as *Taiyu* (Taiwanese language) or *Minnan* (Southern Fukienese). Because Hokkien is spoken by Hoklo people, it is also called Hoklo language.

12 *Wuliuzhi* refers to a specific recipe: first, sauté or deep-fry a fish; then prepare the braised vegetables—soy sauce and five finely sliced vegetables such as radish, onion, spring onion, mushroom and garlic; finally, spoon the braised vegetables over the fish.

Huang cited a popular Taiwanese saying among the cane farmers: "The most stupid thing you can do is plant cane for Japanese companies to weigh."[13] She noted that sometimes she and her friends would find a piece of cane that had fallen from a cane-train and share it, enjoying the sweet taste. Nevertheless, after eating it, they had to carefully dry the residue of the cane on the roof and then burn it, for there would be serious punishment if the Japanese police discovered it. Mrs. Huang argued that the lack of sugar in the colonial era explains the current Tainan preference for sugar.

> Tainan dishes are famous for their sweet taste now, because people here tend to add more sugar than in all the other regions of Taiwan. You see, people did not have sugar in the past, even though Tainan was where sugar was produced; therefore, people there felt happy that they could finally enjoy it. That is why people cannot help but add sugar when cooking.[14]

In addition to sugar, pork was rare during her childhood. Although most households in rural areas had pigs, they were raised for sale and not for consumption at home. Only at Chinese New Year and important festivals did rural people eat pork. Mrs. Huang explained that feeding a pig took much time and food, making it an expensive undertaking. In this context, "stewed pork sauce" was a good way to make economical use of a pig. The sauce consisted of stewed pork with dried shrimps, dried mushrooms, rice wine, and various seasonings, and "only one spoon of it could make you finish a bowl of rice," said Mrs. Huang. Stewed pork sauce is a basic element in many Taiwanese local dishes, such as peddler's noodles (*danzaimian* 擔仔麵), rice cake (*migao* 米糕), and rice with stewed pork sauce on top (*luroufan* 滷肉飯), all of which are still popular today. An important delicacy forty years ago, stewed pork sauce represents the old days of suffering and hard work, and Mrs. Huang regards it as symbolic of the Taiwanese people, who always worked hard in a tough environment.

While pork sauce is a common food that people can acquire in many places across Taiwan, Mrs. Huang's story of milkfish bound it clearly to her hometown, Tainan. Tainan, the first developed settlement in Taiwan, became the prefectural city in early Qing times. Milkfish had been an important product of aquaculture there since the late 17th century.

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13 The proverb is uttered in Hokkien, the language of the Hoklo, and is written as "天下第一戇，種甘蔗乎會社磅."

14 Interview: Mrs. Huang (7/22/2008, Tainan).

Historian Lian Heng noted that milkfish was a local specialty of Tainan and that no milkfish aquaculture existed north of Jiayi (Lian 1962 [1918]:714,718).

Being native to Tainan, Mrs. Huang argued that milkfish should be a culinary symbol of Taiwan as a whole:

> The Jia-nan Plain is the homeland of milkfish, … we should pass down the taste of milkfish generation to generation because it is a taste that Taiwanese people should not forget … a bowl of unseasoned milkfish soup not only is a delicious soup, but marks the history of the struggle of the Taiwanese, as well.[15]

By embedding milkfish in Taiwanese history, Mrs. Huang expanded its meaning from a local product to a symbol of the Taiwanese people, making explicit the connections between food, nation, and people. These connections present material culture as having the potential to serve as a medium for identity. Local food comprises not only "placed cultural artifacts" but also "dis-placed materials and practices" that can yield new meanings (Cook & Crang 1996).

In addition to connecting local food with the nation, Mrs. Huang's consciousness about Taiwanese cultural traditions related to her nearly 50-year-long role as a housewife, which was significant in her explanations about the dish *wuliuzhi.* Mrs. Huang's husband owned a private clinic in Tainan, so she worked at home to manage the clinic and take care of her children. In 2001, she started to promote household management and took up this work as a serious profession. She gave lectures in nearby communities and published books to promote her ideas of "kitchen management," teaching the correct way to use a refrigerator and effectively prepare meals. Arguing that a housewife should be considered a professional worker whose responsibilities require considerable knowledge and creativity, she claimed that the dish *wuliuzhi* reveals the wisdom of housewives. She explained that when Taiwanese housewives serve this dish, they reserve the fish for their husbands and children and themselves eat only the vegetables on top. Since the five vegetables have diverse nutritional elements and are delicious, housewives—even without eating the fish—can fully enjoy this dish with their families. In addition, Mrs. Huang stated that many simple dishes can be made delicious if they are prepared with these five ingredients. As such, according to Mrs. Huang, *wuliuzhi* is not only a cooking method perfectly embodying the wisdom of Taiwanese women, it is also a symbol of correct relations and care within Taiwanese families.

15 Interview: Mrs. Huang.

Although this dish was popular among elites during the early period of Japanese colonialism and can be found on the menus of famous old restaurants (Shinju 1903: 76),[16] its origins and the meaning of the term *wuliuzhi* remain uncertain. *Wuliu* is an alternative name of the famous Chinese poet, Tao Yuan-ming (365-427 A.D.); however, it is still uncertain why his name should be adopted as the name of a dish. Lin Wen-yue, a scholar of Chinese literature who prepares this dish, also notes that its origins are obscure (Lin 1999:142). In other words, Mrs. Huang's interpretation is likely her own invention, based on her lived experiences and housewife lore. Since the original meaning of this name is unknown, consumers can change or expand its meaning by conferring on it their own particular understanding.

Mrs. Huang's identification with Taiwanese cuisine is rooted in a specific local perspective (a Tainan perspective) and a gender perspective (as woman and mother). Her preferences for stewed pork sauce, milkfish, and *wuliuzhi* seem rooted in her social position and lived experiences—as a child growing up in rural Taiwan, an inhabitant of the important fishing region of Tainan, and a housewife. These personal experiences influenced not only her culinary preferences but also her understanding of Taiwanese cuisine. Because personal experiences are different, one's interpretation of Taiwanese cuisine could be shaped by different perspectives other than those of gender and locality; ethnicity also proved important in this regard.

2. Perspectives related to ethnicity

While ethnic politics has long played a key role in Taiwan politics, the categorization "four main ethnic groups" (*sida zuqun* 四大族群) became popular only in the late 1980s (Wang 2003:3; Rudolph 2004:98). It refers to the Hoklo, Hakka, Mainlander, and Aborigine populations. Aborigines are the indigenous people of Taiwan who are part of the Austronesian language family. Mainlanders are those Chinese who migrated to Taiwan from the Chinese mainland after 1945. The Hoklo and Hakka indicate Han Chinese whose ancestors emigrated from China to Taiwan from the early 17th to the late 19th century. The Hoklo are those who came from Fujian Province, and the Hakka from

16 This dish can be also found in recipes on newspapers, see for example: "Oishi Taiwan ryôri [Delicious Taiwanese cuisine]," *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpô [Taiwan Daily News]*, 10/16/1934(6).

Guangdong Province.[17] Although the term "ethnic group" in this categorization scheme is more a political classification than an anthropological one (Wang 2003; Rudolph 2004), it has been adopted as an important frame of reference by many Taiwanese people, such as Mr. Tan.[18]

Born a Hakka in Xinzhu County, Mr. Tan was enthusiastic about introducing me to Hakka culinary culture, and he displayed a marked sensitivity about Hakka-ness. Interestingly, Mr. Tan's consciousness of "being Hakka" became prominent only after he left his home village for Taipei at the age of 13. When he moved in the 1960s to Tonghua Street 通化街 in one of the developing regions of Taipei City, he met many migrants. He discovered various Mainland and Hoklo snacks and dishes for the first time, and these new food experiences highlighted ethnic differences and made him think of the Hakka foods from his childhood.

> This area had just started developing when I moved there, and most inhabitants were migrants from other counties or areas just outside Taipei. Many migrants sold food to make a living, and Hakka people tended to sell traditional Hakka snacks or dishes. It was quite easy to recognize Hakka people from what they sold … pickled vegetables, rice cake, mochi cake, and so on…, when you found someone selling these snacks, you knew they were Hakka. [Laughing] you didn't even have to ask them whether they were Hakka!

Hakka migrants originally sold Hakka food to make a living, but these dishes or snacks evolved into a distinctive marker of Hakka ethnicity. Mr. Tan explained with confidence that the differences between Hakka food and other ethnic foods are significant. For example, he mentioned that *qicengta* 七層塔 (*Ocimum basilicum)* is a popular herb used by Hakka families. When I argued that Hoklo families also used *qicengta* in cooking, Tan responded:

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17 In the latest survey conducted by the Council for Hakka Affairs (CHA) in the summer of 2008, 69.2% of the total population in Taiwan chose Hoklo as their single "ethnic identity," with 13.5% choosing Hakka, 1.9% regarding themselves as Aborigines, and 9.3% as Mainlanders (CHA 2008:77). In this survey, 4% of the interviewees did not choose any "ethnic group" but regarded themselves as "Taiwanese." The outcome of this survey can be acquired on the website of the Council for Hakka Affairs: http://www.hakka.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=43944&CtNode= 1894&mp=1869&ps= (retrieved 3/20/2009)

18 Mr. Tan was born in 1951. At the time of the interviews, he was living in Taipei, selling vegetables in a market, and shouldering most of the responsibility in raising three children.

> The Hoklo might eat *qicengta* several times a week, but we Hakka eat *qicengta* in almost three meals everyday! We have had various ways of cooking it …. When I lived in Xinzhu, I could smell the aroma of *qicengta* when I approached our house; its flavor was really special and strong. But now, the smell of *qicengta* is not so good. I don't know why, but its smell is different from what it used to be.[19]

Sensory perception is an important means by which cultural and historical memories are encoded in food (Seremetakis 1994). The smell of *qicengta* reminded Mr. Tan of his childhood in a Hakka village and, therefore, served as a medium through which he could recall his childhood and old home. *Qicengta* was also an indicator of sameness and difference: it was something that bonded the Hakka together and distinguished them from other ethnic groups.

While the smell of *qicengta* constituted part of Mr. Tan's memory of food and childhood, in his personal experience the herb also had an affect on the very bodies of Hakka people. When his first son was born, the hospital did a special inspection of his liver after finding out that Mr. Tan was a Hakka. The doctor explained that this was because a higher percentage of Hakka have a specific kind of liver disease for which "eating too much *qicengta*" was regarded as a possible cause at the time.[20]

These experiences constitute Mr. Tan's bodily memory of *qicengta* and established in his mind a connection between that bodily memory and Hakka-ness. To Mr. Tan, food consumption deeply embedded *qicengta* in daily life and in the bodies of Hakka people. He also associated Hakka food practices with the environment where the Hakka lived. He explained that the Hakka ate lots of *qicengta,* not because it was delicious but because it can grow in poor soil. Most Hakka were still quite poor during the 1950s, so it was common to eat *qicengta* as a daily vegetable. It was at this point that the smell of *qicengta* became strongly associated with the tough environment in which he had grown up. Mr. Tan's father was a soldier and usually away from home, so as a child Mr. Tan had to help his mother with various jobs to earn a tiny income. He recalled those hard days in the Hakka village:

> My mother had to gather excrement for use as fertilizer, and this job was just one of many. She had to do so many kinds of work just to feed us…. I was very little at that time, and I always followed her around, suffocating from the disgusting smell of

19 Interview: Mr. Tan (3/8/2008, Taipei).

20 Interview: Mr. Tan.

> toilets and counting the number of houses—that way, I knew when the job would be over.[21]

In the harsh conditions of the time, Mr. Tan said that they had to raise their own food and could not afford to buy at the market. Another Hakka dish developed in these hard times was "rice-wine crab." Mr. Tan explained,

> All senior Hakka are thoroughly familiar with this dish: you'd catch small crabs from the river and put them in bottles with salt and rice wine, then eat them without cooking them over heat. Few Hoklo ate crab in this way. It is really, really delicious, very tasty.[22]

Mr. Tan's memory of childhood was linked to the various smells and tastes from his lived experience, and he made sense of these sensual memories from a Hakka perspective. Even though my questions initially focused on his impressions of Taiwanese cuisine, he immediately started to talk about Hakka food. As de Certeau, Giard, and Mayol (1998:183) argue, everyday food-consumption practices make "concrete one of the specific modes of relation between a person and the world, thus forming one of the fundamental landmarks in space-time." Mr. Tan conceived his eating as a Hakka foodway, and such a perspective, as well as daily practice, reversely confirms and strengthens the way he made sense of the world. Ethnicity was an important means by which Mr. Tan understood the relationship between people in Taiwanese society.

The "four main ethnic groups" concept was an effective categorization scheme for Mr. Tan, and the differences among ethnic groups were significant in his point of view. His wife came from a Hoklo family, and they first met through the introduction of a matchmaker. Mrs. Tan worked in a company owned by her brother, and she invested most of her time and energy in her job. To take care of both his mother and his children, Mr. Tan resigned from his job at the Taipei City Government in 1983, and subsequently helped his mother plant and sell vegetables in the market near his home. Mr. Tan did most of the housework, including cooking and child rearing.[23] His marriage to a Hoklo influenced his consciousness about ethnic groups in daily life. His understanding of Hoklo people resulted mainly from his interactions with his wife and her relatives.

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21 However, to date there is insufficient medical evidence to support an association between *qicengta* and liver disease.

22 Interview: Mr. Tan.

23 Interview: Mr. Tan.

He used to compare the Hakka with the Hoklo regarding food, customs, and ways of thinking. Married life had not met his expectations, but Mr. Tan tended to attribute his wife's weak points to her Hoklo background. For example, he regarded the Hoklo as clever calculators who concentrated more on business than family and who were not as painstaking as the Hakka when undertaking tasks. He even expressed regret at not having married a Hakka woman.

His negative impression of the Hoklo emerged again in his opinion regarding Taiwanese politicians who ignore the culture and importance of Hakka people. Although some politicians claim the power of determination on behalf of "all Taiwanese," Mr. Tan complained that they actually privilege Hoklo culture and that their ignorance of the Hakka is obvious in their language use. He argued that the term "Taiwanese language" (*Taiyu* 台語) should not refer only to the Hoklo language. Despite the establishment of the Council for Hakka Affairs, he stated, "I don't think those politicians really care about Hakka affairs. Yes they care, but only during the election campaigns." Given these critiques, Mr. Tan had little interest in political affairs and nation-building activities, such as the campaign for rectifying Taiwan's official name or marches demonstrating for Taiwan's entry into the United Nations. Mr. Tan agreed that Taiwan was a distinct nation composed of different ethnic groups, but he further argued that these ethnic groups should enjoy equal status. He exhibited great enthusiasm for exploring the history of the Hakka and the story of his family's migration. He carefully preserved family archives for his children, and furthermore, he made a study on his own of the historical development of Taipei, particularly the area where he was living. He took considerable pride in his historical knowledge and his research undertakings. However, his enthusiasm for the history of the Hakka and Taipei was not inspired by policies or politicians.

In this case, the understanding of Taiwanese cuisine came mainly from an ethnicity perspective. Mr. Tan's consciousness about ethnicity and nation clearly echoed the "four main ethnic groups" concept. Both his memories of Hakka dishes and his interaction with other ethnic groups helped shape his perspective.

3. Taiwanese cuisine as a national cuisine

Of the informants who gave clear definitions of Taiwanese cuisine, four argued that it has become a national cuisine and is a crucial part of Taiwan's national culture. One

of these was Mr. Tsai.[24] Born in Taizhong in 1949, Mr. Tsai dropped out of high school at the age of 16 and started to learn photography. Having worked for newspapers and magazines as a professional photographer since 1974, he had taken thousands of photos of people, scenery, and folk activities across Taiwan. With the emergence in the late 1970s of social movements demanding greater liberalization, Mr. Tsai had many opportunities to contact activists and participate in their political demonstrations. He agrees that Taiwan has become an independent nation and that Taiwanese people should have more power of determination. Furthermore, he and his friends who advocated political reforms prefer to dine in Taiwanese restaurants where political dissidents had gathered during the 1980s.

He stated that "Taiwanese cuisine" naturally refers to local dishes eaten by the majority of Taiwanese every day. He placed particular emphasis on local snacks, such as rice with stewed pork sauce and fried spareribs soup. He argued that these foods are prepared in the small places where Taiwanese people grow up and, thus, are a crucial part of their lived experience. Just as his photos of temples, ancient monuments, and elderly people bring him a sense of "being rooted in this soil," so too did local snacks. This is why he felt most comfortable enjoying the snacks with which he was familiar. He regarded beef noodles as a foreign dish, one that had been falsely "nationalized" by certain Taiwanese politicians. He argued that beef noodles were foreign because the dish had not been widely enjoyed by local people before the resettlement of the Nationalist government in Taiwan. At least, it was not a common dish in his hometown of Taizhong, so was not an accustomed food, not a taste rooted in his memory.

Interestingly, while Mr. Tsai regarded beef noodles as foreign, younger informants consider it a "national dish" and perfectly representative of Taiwan. Accepting the explanation of historian Lu Yao-dong (2001:194-201), my informant Jay[25] believes that beef noodles were invented in modern Taiwan; he argues that this dish is a hybrid of foods from the mainland and Taiwan, and thus it is the symbol of a new Taiwanese culinary culture. Born in 1969, Jay grew up during the period of political liberalization and accepts that Taiwan is a distinct nation. Although he does not advocate Taiwan's independence, his enthusiasm for Taiwanese foods is obvious. Having lived in Kaohsiung for almost forty years, he compiled a list of "the best snacks, dishes, and specialties in Taiwan." Jay is very proud of Taiwanese food and considers it the best in the world.

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24 The absence of the mother was also pointed out by Mr. Tan's son, who even described his mother as "selfish" and "not taking care of the family" in a later interview (5/24/2008, Taipei).

25 I met Mr. Tsai through a friend who is also a photographer.

Whenever his friends visit from other cities or countries, he takes them on a "gourmet trip" around the city or even across Taiwan. Most of the dishes he recommends are not haute cuisine from restaurants. Rather, he most strongly admires local snacks, which he regards as the "authentic Taiwanese taste." These include rice cakes, small meat dumplings, and various types of seafood sold by the seaside in Kaohsiung. These snacks are cheap, substantial, and delicious, and Jay argued that these features are the decisive advantages of Taiwanese cuisine. He also had a positive attitude about the adoption of local snacks in state banquets. When Tainan snacks like milkfish ball soups (*shimuyuwantang* 虱目魚丸湯) and bowl cakes made of rice (*wanguo* 碗粿) were served at an inauguration banquet for the first time in year 2000, media reports highlighted the national honor that local snacks were receiving by inclusion in a state event. Jay agreed that the adoption of local snacks as state-banquet dishes would bring them more attention and effectively raise the status of Taiwanese snacks.

Jay's father runs a Chinese medicine clinic located in a market in Kaohsiung City. As a youngster, Jay used to eat local dishes every day and became acquainted with the owners of the stalls. Although he did not engage in political or social movements like Mr. Tsai, Jay does voice a sense of pride very similar to that voiced by Mr. Tsai and the other two informants who regarded Taiwanese cuisine a national cuisine. They agreed that Taiwanese cuisine was a genuine and distinctive cultural property of Taiwan.

4. Perspectives related to Chinese cuisine

While some informants defined Taiwanese cuisine as a national cuisine, others considered it a Chinese regional cuisine. The four informants taking this latter tack exhibited a much stronger interest in Chinese than Taiwanese cuisine, with three of them being the descendents of Mainlanders.

Mrs. Hsieh's[26] family migrated from Mainland China to Taiwan in 1955 when the US navy helped the Nationalist government ship inhabitants from Dachen Island to

26 Mrs. Hsieh was born in 1946 in Zhejiang Province and lived in Taipei at the time of the interviews. She worked in the Taipei City Government until her retirement in 2006.

Taiwan.[27] These people from Dachen were celebrated as patriots (*Dachen yibao* 大陳義胞) by the Nationalist government. After their evacuation, the government built thirty-five new villages in twelve counties for the refugees and provided them with food for one year (Chen 1987:118-119). Mrs. Hsieh's family are also members of these "Dachen patriots."

Born in 1946 in Huangyan 黃岩 in Zhejiang, Mrs. Hsieh have moved with her family to Dachen Island in 1947. Her father ran a successful fishing boat business on Dachen and she led a good life as a very little girl. They had servants and cooks at home, and she even had her own wet nurse. Their financial condition suffered after the family's move to Taiwan in 1955, when they were settled in a new village in Xinzhu County. The fishing boat business did not survive the move, and instead Mrs. Hsieh's parents prepared dried eels for a living. At the age of 15, Mrs. Hsieh worked as an embroiderer, as did her four sisters.

Seafood was an essential food resource for Dachen people because the island is located near an important fishing ground, and most inhabitants are engaged in the fishery industry (Chen 1987:14-15; Chen 1982:10). Among other products, eel was popular and important as a festival food on the island. Every family on Dachen prepared dried eels before the Chinese New Year, and so dried eel became a "taste of home" for many of the older Taiwanese who had lived on Dachen for many years. Even after leaving Dachen for Xinzhu, many of these people preserved the practice of drying eels in their Taiwan villages. Mrs. Hsieh remembers the various methods of cooking eel:

> We cut eels from the back and dried them naturally, relying on the strong wind. We had a very large square for drying them in our village.… Dried eel is really delicious; it has a very appealing flavor. We would just slice it. Beer goes well with the taste of dried eel, the flavor is really great. Furthermore, you can cook it with rice cakes or stir-fried noodles.… As for the eel head and tail, they are wonderful to stew with meat.[28]

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27 This military action was known as the "Dachen evacuation" during the civil war between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party. These evacuees constituted a migration that took place much later than that of other Mainlanders who had fled to Taiwan between 1945 and 1949. Viewing Taiwan as a base for preventing the expansion of the Communist camp, the US government became involved in the civil war and moved about 18,000 civilians and 15,000 troops from Dachen to Taiwan (Chen 1987:122).

28 Interview: Mrs. Hsieh (2/16/2008, Taipei).

Mrs. Hsieh notes, as well, that dried shrimp and "fish noodles" are representative Dachen specialties. Made with fish and sweet-potato starch, fish noodles are actually an ingredient that can be added to any dish. "It can create a very special flavor for all dishes,"[29] Mrs. Hsieh claimed.

Migration-food studies have shown that many migrants have maintained their original eating habits, viewing food as a connection between themselves and their home countries. As Kunow (2003:158) argues, food is essentially a representation used to support constructions of an "imaginary homeland" (Rushdie 1991), and food thus becomes a negotiation between "here" and "there." This phenomenon is also true in Mrs. Hsieh's case. She was excited to describe the details of specialties from her hometown, complaining that her sons were not interested in these dishes so she seldom cooked them. However, she still prepared this "taste of home" on Chinese New Year and other festivals, not because these dishes were popular in her family but because she was emotionally attached to the community and to the land of her origin. For Mrs. Hsieh, cooking and eating Dachen food was a way of enacting the past and embodying cultural memory. By preparing and sharing one's traditional hometown foods on special communal occasions, like Chinese New Year, a common sense of belonging can be recreated and celebrated.

What needs to be highlighted is that Mrs. Hsieh's preference for Dachen food displays not only a nostalgic emotion but also a sense of pride and distinction, and the sense of pride is closely associated with the image of the Dachen patriot. She pointed out that Dachen people differ from other Mainlanders because they are established patriots. To Mrs. Hsieh, Dachen people shared the experience of extraordinary suffering during the war and, under great duress, left their tiny island only because of orders issued by the Nationalist government. Although forced to leave home, most Dachen people felt relieved to have moved to Taiwan under the leadership of Chiang Ching-kuo, the son of Chiang Kai-shek.[30] Before the evacuation, the younger Chiang had visited Dachen Island several times, even during bombardments. Chiang's visits were viewed as a sign of the government's deep respect for the Dachen; the order to evacuate was also regarded as an immediate way to halt the endless bombing. It is in this context that many Dachen people

29 Mrs. Hsieh presented me with a detailed explanation of each step in the preparation of fish noodles. She mentioned that she had made fish noodles whenever she longed for its flavor, but that now she would seldom make them because her family did not like the seasoning.

30 This assertion was suggested by Mrs. Hsieh in the interview; Ke's (2002:45-49) research on the Dachen people offers a similar observation. Dachen people respected Chiang Ching-kuo and thanked him for his visits during the war; their trust in him was an important reason for the evacuation's smooth execution.

express gratitude to the Nationalist government, particularly to the Chiang family. In addition to the military action that took them to a safer place, the government provided them with practical financial and educational support. For example, in 1955 Madam Chiang established Guang-Hua Children's Home, which had both a kindergarten and an elementary school, to care for 201 children from Dachen Island and for orphans of soldiers.[31] The school was expanded eventually into a junior high school (1958) and later into a senior high school (1969). All the students enjoyed both the facilities and meals free of charge.

The Dachen people who received such care from the government trusted and relied extensively on the Nationalist leaders. Mrs. Hsieh herself graduated from the elementary school established by Madam Chiang, and her two brothers received their senior high school degrees there. Her gratitude toward the Chiang family and the Nationalist government was apparent. For example, when she described the re-establishment of the Dachen villages, she could not remember exactly who had formulated the policy, but she quickly attributed it to Chiang Ching-kuo, saying, "He is the only person who was really concerned about us."

If Mrs. Hsieh's food narratives were intertwined with her memory of the forced migration from her hometown, that migration was closely associated with the "nation," which directly and in large measure means the Nationalist government and in particular the Chiang family. In other words, the experience of migration constituted the grounding for both her memory of food and her political identification.

Cases Lacking a Clear Definition of "Taiwanese Cuisine"

Not all Taiwanese consumers have a clear idea of Taiwanese cuisine. Six of my informants had no sense of a Taiwanese cuisine at all, and another five suggested an alternative categorization of dishes.

Those informants who had no idea at all did not see a strong substantial or symbolic difference between Taiwanese cuisine and Chinese cuisine. Most were housewives who live in rural regions. They had little interest in dining in restaurants that specialized in Taiwanese cuisine because, as both Mrs. Peng and Mrs. Ye argued,

31 It was renamed Hua Xin Children's Home in 1956.

the dishes served in "Taiwanese restaurants" are easily cooked at home and so there was no sound reason to spend money in restaurants for them. For them, eating out meant a chance "to eat something one cannot make at home," and the cost of dishes was the most important consideration governing whether or not to eat out.

This attitude can be traced back to their difficulty lives during childhood. Born in villages in remote counties, Mrs. Cheng, Mr. Guo, and Mrs. Peng had led self-sufficient lives and had to work hard for their families even as children. Before the 1970s, they would eat chiefly dried sweet potato and pickled vegetables, and would add a little meat to their diets only during the Chinese New Year or religious festivals in their villages. Interestingly, although the festival dishes they remember are listed as authentic Taiwanese cuisine in cookbooks, media, and Taiwanese restaurant menus, these consumer-informants did not acknowledge them as "Taiwanese cuisine."

In addition, among the five informants who raised an alternative categorization of dishes, "Taiwanese cuisine" was a meaningless category. Mrs. Shi, who is of Aboriginal ethnicity, simply categorized dishes as either Aboriginal or Han. For Mr. and Mrs. Xu, a couple who had lived on Penghu Island for almost 80 years, Taiwanese cuisine referred to all dishes from Taiwan Island, since Penghu has its own food culture, which has been shaped by poor soil, windy weather, and the fishing industry. Mr. Li, who grew up in an extraordinarily rich family that provided him a Western-style education, came to enjoy steak, apple pie, and English afternoon tea during the 1950s and 1960s. Hence, he adopted the categorization of Chinese and Western cuisine, and the notion of a Taiwanese cuisine was meaningless to him. Another informant, Ms. Ming, admitted to a gap between her culinary preferences and national consciousness; her case helps clarify the complicated relationship between these two factors.

Ms. Ming[32] worked in a company owned by the Nationalist Party, and most of her colleagues were descendants of Mainlanders who had migrated to Taiwan after 1945. Having received a degree in Chinese literature, she favored Chinese culture and was inclined to support Taiwan's future unification with the Mainland. Since her parents hailed from Shanghai, she claimed a clear "Chinese identity" in both cultural and political domains. But her food preferences were various, starting with a specific Chinese regional cuisine (Zhejiang cuisine) and extending to various Chinese foods, Thai foods, and Western foods; in recent years, her favorite has been Hakka cuisine.

32 Born in 1967 in Taipei, Ms. Ming was working in Taipei at the time of my interview. I met her through a friend who was her colleague.

Ms. Ming's parents moved from Shanghai to Taiwan after the Second World War, and her mother prepared many Shanghai dishes. Because her mother prohibited her children from eating out, young Ms. Ming had few chances to try local snacks from food stalls and had never even eaten Chinese dumplings (*jiaozi* 餃子), a typical food of northern China. According to her self-description, her food map expanded for the first time in junior high school, when she shared a lunch box with her best friend whose mother hailed from Hunan Province. Hunan cuisine is famous for its spiciness, and Ms. Ming described the food in her friend's lunch as having "very strong flavors, using lots of peppers, vinegar, and garlic; anyway, it was very spicy." In contrast to the pungent and spicy flavors of Hunan dishes, Ms. Ming described Shanghai cuisine as featuring "the flavors of soy sauce and sugar." In other words, she distinguished these regional cuisines by her sensual memory of their taste; she had no interest in acquiring more information about their history or recipes.

Ms. Ming's taste map expanded again after she met her partner, who was born in a Hokkien-speaking peasant family. With his family she "found many surprises on the dining table." This is where she first developed an understanding of "local food in Taiwan."

> My boyfriend is an authentic *benshengren* 本省人, and I am an authentic *waishengren* 外省人;[33] therefore, we have found many differences between us when eating. For example, I had never eaten "pickled cucumber with pork" or "dried radish with eggs," but they are authentic "Taiwanese bensheng," aren't they? And my boyfriend had never eaten yellow bean sprouts until he knew me, but this ingredient is quite normal in my family's meals.[34]

Aware of their food-related differences, she concluded that these were rooted in the different lifestyles of *bensheng* and *waisheng* families:

> I found there was a radical difference between our families: my mother took two hours to prepare a meal—she made dishes in a complicated, slow way, but my boyfriend's mother had to cook quickly for a big family, basically within 30 minutes. Well…his mother also had to work on the farm, but my mother was a housewife. As a result, our dishes were different. For example, my mother prepared sparerib

33 *Benshengren* and *waishengren*, literally "native province people" and "people from other provinces," are terms used in Taiwan to distinguish local people from Mainlanders who moved to Taiwan after the Second World War, mainly during 1945-1949.

34 Interview: Ms. Ming (5/24/2008, Taipei).

> soup every day, and the soup would need to be stewed for two hours, but he [Ms. Ming's boyfriend] did not know anything about the dish during his childhood.[35]

Ms. Ming's comparison implies that *bensheng* and *waisheng* was a normal method of categorization, a naturalized frame of reference. She used this frame of reference when attempting to identify differences in daily-life foods. She could distinguish the dishes of her boyfriend's peasant family from those of her own urban family, pointing out their features and ascribing the culinary differences to differences in modes of labor. Ms. Ming did not regard the culinary differences as regional or as rural-urban; instead, she understood them as *bensheng* and *waisheng* differences. Ms. Ming could not explain to me how she had come by this classification, and this inability likely stemmed from her unconscious adoption of it in her understanding her relationship to her boyfriend and his family.

What should be stressed here is that although Ms. Ming continued to use this classification consciously and could list dishes in both categories, she did not consider *bensheng* foods to be "Taiwanese cuisine." Ms. Ming even admitted that "I have no idea what Taiwanese cuisine is." Clearly Ms. Ming acquired her conception of *bensheng* and *waisheng* by repeating her family's dining practices and comparing them with the practices of her partner and of his family, yet over the course of this complex back-and-forth process, the notion of a Taiwanese cuisine never entered into her perceptions.

Ms. Ming's map of tastes continued to expand as she acquired more experience, and she claimed to me that her tastes have grown quite different from those of her family. Her latest preference was for Hakka cuisine, which she liked for its rich and salty flavors; dishes associated with Shanghai and *bensheng* had become too sweet for her. Still, though she liked Hakka dishes and wanted to travel around the countryside to experience more authentic Hakka foods, she had little interest in either the history of the Hakka people or the stories behind the dishes. When she enjoyed the foods in Hakka restaurants, she did not think of the Hakka features embedded in their cuisine, including their historical hardships and their frugal way of life. Rather, she just enjoyed the taste of the foods and gave other matters "not much thought."

Ms. Ming's case reveals a certain disconnect between her culinary preferences, her memories, and her identity. She insisted that although she had some preferred foods, there were actually few foods she did not accept. While some consumers believe that food can carry ethical, cultural, or historical meanings, she seldom associated food with a specific culture. Although she knew about certain differences among regional dishes,

35 Interview: Ms. Ming.

she did not link them to culture, ethnicity, or nationalism. In other words, in contrast to informants whose culinary preferences exhibited a strong identification with an ethnicity or nationalism, for Ms. Ming, all those elements were disconnected. She did not treat food as a bearer of culture, and thus she rather easily crossed the boundaries separating cuisines. People who detach food from culture, as did Ms. Ming, may show interest in food and cooking but do not value it as the heritage of an ethnic group or a nation.

What Makes Food "Taiwanese"?

Social position and social experience

The comparison of the above cases shows that "Taiwanese cuisine" is not meaningful to all consumers, and even people who regard it as a meaningful concept understand it from diverse perspectives. Consumers' social positions and social experiences are influential in shaping these diverse perspectives through bodily memories of specific flavors and contexts. In concrete terms, consumers' understandings of Taiwanese cuisine are established on two grounds. The first ground comprises a set of behaviors concerning food preparation (planting and cooking), eating, and sharing. By repeating these food practices in daily life, consumers develop their own food memories and habits, such as milkfish for Mrs. Huang and *qicengta* for Mr. Tan. Second, these memories and habits gain different meanings depending on the specifics of social position, such as gender, ethnicity, and social class. The social position of an individual is multi-faceted, as is his or her identity. Further, the weight of different facets of identity varies across individuals and this in turn heavily depends on their social positions and lived experiences.

In addition to producing different definitions of "Taiwanese cuisine," the correlation between culinary preferences and national consciousness differs from consumer to consumer. While some—such as Mrs. Huang, Mr. Tan, Mr. Tsai, and Mrs. Hsieh—exhibit coherent tendencies in their culinary preferences and in national consciousness, the connections are not so obvious in other cases. Chaney's concept of "sensibility" is useful for clarifying how culinary preferences are linked to one's perception of nation. Chaney defines "sensibility" as

> …a way of responding to events, or actions or phenomena that has a certain pattern or coherence, to the extent that identifying a sensibility provides a way of explaining or predicting responses to new situations…these responses and choices

> are imbued by those concerned with ethical and aesthetic significance—ways of living that are fundamental to a sense of identity. [Chaney 1996: 8]

In other words, sensibility is a kind of framework inscribed in the individual, which serves as the principles that guide his or her behavior and reactions to varying social conditions. Imbued with ethical and aesthetic concerns, this is a frame of reference that people employ to make sense of their experiences.

Adopting the concept of "sensibility" and Bourdieu's concept of "habitus," Tivadar and Luthar (2005:216) show that there is a significant association between Slovenian consumers' food practices and their worldviews and cultural consumption. The researchers argue that sensibility is "a selection and configuration of interests and practices and a particular valuation of them," which can produce a distinct way of life where variables in the field of culture or politics are consistent with variables in the fields of food. In this sense, food-consumption preferences and impressions are better understood as articulations of ethical, political, and cultural choices that "together form a predictable homology, which results in an identifiable sensibility," and the homology comes from a specific inherent logic within the framework (ibid.). Tivadar and Luthar argue that food practices and attitudes should be considered in relation to cultural, ethical, and political attributes and not only to socio-demographic factors such as class, education, and gender.

The concept of "sensibility" provides a possible explanation for the association between culinary preference and national consciousness. Sensibility rests on certain unifying principles that can influence the total repertoire of an individual's practices, including speech patterns, cultural consumption, and food practices. These unifying principles influence individuals' behaviors and social actions, as well as their food consumption. For example, Mrs. Huang's preference for Taiwanese cuisine and Mrs. Hsieh's preference for Chinese cuisine represent coherent political and cultural dispositions by which they situate themselves in the world. Their perceptions of Taiwanese cuisine and their food-consumption behaviors are guided by the very sensibility by which they make sense of the world. It is on this basis that culinary preference and national consciousness can be linked. When consumers do not have coherent attitudes in political, ethnic, and aesthetic spheres, then there will be either no or weak coherence between national consciousness and food preferences.

Bodily memory is key in the formation of sensibility. When individuals have explicit bodily memories about food and nation (though they may not be conscious of them), their sensibility is more pronounced. For example, Mrs. Huang's memory of her painful life under colonial rule and its association with a pork dish, Mr. Tan's memory of poor

Hakka people and the smell of *qicengta*, and Mrs. Hsieh's memory of migration and the various fish on Dachen Island. These explicit linkages between nationhood or ethnicity and food can strengthen people's sensibilities. In contrast, although Ms. Ming expressed a clear national identity and Mrs. Cheng and Mrs. Peng both experienced suffering and deprivation in their childhoods, their understandings of nation and their experience of food were not linked. Thus, the correlation between their culinary preferences and national consciousness was weak.

While Chaney suggests that sensibility is a framework inscribed in an individual that people employ to make sense of their experiences, the present study shows that individuals do not place uniform emphasis on social categories such as nation, ethnicity, locality, gender, and so on. Therefore, I suggest that one's sensibility in fact derives from multiple social categories, and may vary depending on the degree of importance one assigns to those social categories.

Sensibility is cultivated as early as infancy, and the formation of sensibility is influenced by both verbal forms of discourse and non-verbal sensual/bodily experiences, such as touching, tasting, and smelling. Through education, media exposure, and various bodily practices, individuals acquire knowledge, information, and experiences that help develop their sensibilities. As a frame of reference for individuals, sensibility filters incoming information and helps people to create their own meanings. Intellectual training, cultural identification, and life experiences all help shape this set of principles that guides behavior and responses to phenomena.

Since the experiences of discourse and sensual/bodily practices differ among individuals, they develop different sensibilities. Social categories such as gender, ethnicity and nation are assigned differing priority. Thus individuals can ignore, embrace, or resist various phenomena that engage gender, ethnicity, or nation, or they can participate in creating new meanings for them. For example, the informants in this research differed regarding their own understanding of Taiwanese cuisine. Some highlighted the symbolic importance of locality, and some made sense of it from the perspective of ethnicity. These different understandings are closely associated with individuals' own lived experiences and bodily memories regarding food and nation, although many of these experiences and memories remain inaccessible to the consciousness.

Because of their different sensibilities, nation is not necessarily a prime concern. Consumers can make their own interpretations of objects marked as "national" or resist such external stimuli by simply regarding them as meaningless. "National cuisine" is a meaningful concept for those consumers who have a relatively strong sensibility toward the nation and who regard food as representative of a nation's cultural values.

Need for inclusion and exclusion

The examples introduced in this paper show that food can help define "me" and "us," and can thus serve as part of our physical surroundings. Bell and Valentine (1997:168) argued that food "articulates notions of inclusion and exclusion, of national pride and xenophobia." This paper further demonstrates that the meaning of food and its function of inclusion and exclusion operate only when the individual or the collective conceives of that meaning or actively constructs the meaning that is assigned to foods. These meanings, despite emerging in repeated daily-life practices, do not self-evidently act as a boundary-marker, and the imbedding effect of "nation" is not the same across all consumers. One's continual awareness regarding one's own identity and repeated practices that are manifest in dining habits translates national identity into "a language that people can understand and experience, even if unconsciously" (Palmer 1998:195). Mrs. Huang's case shows how the body acts as a critical site for the performance of identity. Her preference for eating Taiwanese cuisine is a presentation of her identification with Taiwan, and her partaking of specific foods reaffirms her sense of cultural inclusion. However, for consumers who do not confer cultural values on food, culinary preference is built on eating habits, and "national cuisine" is less meaningful.

Furthermore, this paper illustrates how consumers can play an active role in shaping the meaning of Taiwanese cuisine. Mrs. Huang interpreted the dish *wuliuzhi* in her own way and promoted it in her household-management class. Through teaching in communities and publishing, her ideas were being disseminated to a wider population; but consumers who neither teach nor publish can still hold their own interpretations. Even in cases where consumer behavior echoes the idea of nation-building, those behaviors are not necessarily the product of political ideology or propaganda. For example, Mrs. Huang and Mr. Tan exhibited a stronger "Taiwanese consciousness" or "Hakka consciousness"; however, this consciousness resulted not so much from political movements and propaganda as from their own experiences and understanding, which had accumulated over the course of daily life. In other words, consumer support of national cuisine cannot be explained by the influence of government and politicians. Those parties may instead seek support by articulating discourses that echo consumers' experiences and understanding, such as the promotion of Hakka cuisine.

Food is often viewed as a boundary marker in anthropological research. Sutton (2001:5) has suggested that there is a broad consensus that food is about identity creation and maintenance. However, this study reveals the restricted boundary-marker roles that food can play. The preference for Taiwanese cuisine cannot be simply labeled as an expression of Taiwanese identity. Food preferences are rooted in the living experiences

and bodily memories of modern consumers, and these experiences can clearly serve as grounds Taiwanese identity formation. But there is no significant causal relationship between Taiwanese identity and a preference for Taiwanese cuisine. For those consumers who express a strong preference for Taiwanese cuisine and marked nationalistic sentiments, their food preferences share the same ground with their Taiwanese identity but do not result from that identity.

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身體記憶與感知方式：「臺灣菜」研究中的飲食喜好與國家意識

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本文以身體記憶（bodily memory）概念分析消費者對「臺灣菜」的不同定義、認知與喜好，並檢視這些不同的認知方式及喜好與個人的國家意識具有何種關連。筆者認為，對特定飲食的喜好可概念化為一種身體記憶，身體記憶的形成與個體的社會位置、社會經驗與身體感受密切相關。而此社會位置、經驗與感受，其實也構成了「國家意識」形成的基礎。因此，對於飲食喜好與國家意識二者的關連，不宜以線性因果關係去理解，而要從形塑二者的共同基礎進行探究。

此影響特定國族飲食喜好與國家意識的共同基礎，則與人們理解社會的感知方式（sensibility）相涉。不同的感知方式促使人們對國家與國家文化產生不同的理解，對「臺灣菜」的定義與認知也因此不同，可能來自性別、族群、國家等不同的視角。「國族料理」（national cuisine）是否為具意義的項目，因個體的感知方式而異。個體對國族料理的強烈喜好也不能單純解釋為國族認同的展現。食物雖經常被指認為一種標誌、維持族群疆界的重要文化要素，但此標誌與畫界的功能仍有其限度。

關鍵詞：臺灣菜、身體記憶、體現、感知、國家意識