

Introduction: Food Studies and Global Studies in the Asia Pacific

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Background of this collection

The papers in this online collection are the outcome of the symposium on “Globalization, food and social identities in the Pacific region” held at Sophia University on Feb. 21-22, 2009. Although the globalization of food production and consumption is a phenomenon as old as agriculture itself, the increased speed and scale of transnational flows of food products, foodways and food producers has resulted in a greater interaction among cultures and increased cross-border dependencies for supplies. It was thus significant that this conference was held in Tokyo, a center of celebrated international cuisine, and in Japan, a country with one of the world’s highest rates of dependency on food imports. The papers in this collection focus on these transnational linkages in the production of new food cultures in societies in the Asia/Pacific region, including the Americas and Asia, asking how foodways work as expressions of social identity, including ethnic, regional, class and national identities. Papers stress conceptual questions such as the social construction of cuisine in different social and cultural contexts, and also policy questions related to the commercial promotion of cuisines from developing countries and the livelihoods of food consumers and producers.

This symposium was a project of a research group of the Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture, funded by the Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan Academic Research Promotion Fund and Sophia University. This research group consists of seven Sophia faculty members conducting research on food culture in field sites in China, South East Asia, and Latin America. Other participants in the symposium were invited from institutions around the world for the two day event. As discussed below, this collection also represents an Asian Pacific perspective on food globalization, partly by virtue of being produced in Asia, partly by virtue of the focus of many papers on inter-Asian cultural flows. One goal of this collection of relatively short papers was to build ties between scholars in Japan and scholars from other institutions in the Asia Pacific region, broadly conceived,

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and make their research available to a global audience in an attractive and easily readable format. All contributions published in this online collection were reviewed in a double blind peer-reviewed process. We decided to publish this as an online collection because we wanted to explore a variety of issues from interdisciplinary and diverse geographical standpoints that would not easily mold into an ordinary book. We also hope that with online publication, we can reach a wider readership than a paper-based collection. We also have used the online format to publish more photographic images, which are particularly helpful in research on cuisine and food as material culture.

Food Studies and Global Studies

Food studies and studies of globalization have become inseparable (Nuetzenadel and Trentman 2008, 1). An important context for this symposium and the online paper collection was the establishment of a Graduate School of Global Studies (GSGS) at Sophia University in 2006. Global studies is a new interdisciplinary academic field that has arisen from intensive scholarly engagements with the complex phenomena of globalization. The advent of global studies recognizes that neither traditional disciplinary training nor interdisciplinary area studies programs are adequate for studying the cross-border flows of people, ideas and commodities in contexts in which the nation is now decentered as the unit of analysis (Wank 2003; AAGS 2010). Several GSGS members have contributed to this collection of papers, with backgrounds spanning the social sciences and humanities. Notably for the program, the very first Ph.D. candidate in the English-language based program, Rossella Ceccarini, has contributed an article to this collection, which, like her dissertation, focuses on culinary globalization.

Food studies have a close and growing affiliation with global studies. Over the past decade several edited volumes and review articles have been published that explicitly address food and globalization (Inglis and Gimlin 2009; Nuetzenadel and Trentmann 2008; Phillips 2006; Cwiertka and Walraven 2002; Grew 1999; Goodman and Watts 1997). Because of the materiality of the subject matter, studies of food allow us to trace the complex processes of globalization, including linkages between historical, economic, cultural and political analyses that are often isolated in narrower disciplinary studies. Food studies have long been concerned with what Arjun Appadurai (1986) calls “the social lives of things,” the complex transnational chains that bring a product through multiple hands from producers to consumers. Sidney Mintz’s (1985) study of sugar has become a classic study in global history that broke the association of food cultures with narrow place-based communities of consumption and production (Phillips 2006, 38). Food is not only a by-product of global flows of people, money, and ideas, but is one of the main motives and central concerns



Source: Stock photo, Microsoft

of actors in all processes globalization. People conquered, colonized and traded largely out of a concern for food, whether it be Southeast Asian spices, African coffee beans, Chinese tea or South American cocoa (Turner 2005; Mintz 1985; Wild 2005; Robertson 2010; Smith 2008).

Food studies especially serve to highlight the historical dimensions of processes of globalization (Nuetzenadel and Trentman 2008, 3). Food represents perhaps the first form of globalization in the spread of cultivated crops across the Eurasian continent beginning nearly 10,000 years ago (Mitten 2004). By the time of the Roman Empire, trade routes for foodstuffs had been established stretching as far as from Rome to East Africa and India (Inglis and Gimlin 2009, Murray 2007). In Asia long-distance trade networks in foodstuffs were also being established by the 5th century CE (Wu and Cheung 2003). While some would argue that these early form of culinary exchange represent only “proto-globalization” (Grew 1999), the first indisputable wave of economic and political globalization, the early European colonization in 15th century, was largely motivated by food concerns, especially by goals of seizing control of spice trading routes (Turner 2005). Even more significant for subsequent human history, the discovery of American foods radically altered the diets of European, African and Asian people, creating the first truly global flows of foods, if not yet processed food products. The next phase of culinary globalization began with colonial plantation agriculture that resulted in the first mass-markets for tropical products such as tea, sugar, chocolate and coffee, reaching to the working classes of metropolitan countries, especially Britain (Smith 2008). Finally, since World War II we have entered a new phase of mass culinary globalization that includes not only the globalization of foodstuffs and food products, but also of cuisines, producers, menus, restaurant designs and most every other aspect of



Source: Stock photo, Microsoft (Veer Images)

food production and consumption. Indeed food studies show that some form of interdisciplinary global studies is necessary to understand the changing context of everyday living in the past several hundred years.

Beyond their role in constructing global histories, foods (and discussions of food) have served as key “global imaginaries” for representations of globalization in both popular and scholarly discourse (Phillips 2006, 43). Fast foods and industrial processed foods are the most common images associated with the idea of “globalization,” as is evident in such terms as “McDonaldization,” “Coca-colonization” or “Coca-globalization”(Ritzer 1995; Foster 2008; Wagnleitner 1994), which have been used to represent cultural globalization in general, and not simply food globalization. Despite the prevalence of these images of corporate-led global culinary imperialism, most recent studies of culinary globalization question the assumptions of cultural homogenization associated with the spread of even brands such as McDonalds, which are often appropriated by consumers in different ways according to local



Source: Stock photo, Microsoft

contexts (Watson 1997). Food studies therefore also provide some of the best evidence for processes of localization, or “glocalization,” the processes of cultural appropriation, redefinition and local resistance that accompany all transnational cultural flows. Examples of pan-Pacific foods abound in the papers in this collection, ranging from Galapagos sea cucumbers eaten in China to Japanese nouveau cuisine with roots in Peru and served in New York.

Food studies also share with global studies a concern for macro-micro linkages, especially links between the large scale political and economic structures that shape global food production and the more localized spheres of consumption (Inglis and Gimlin 2009; Watson and Caldwell 2005). Tracing the intricate, cross-border linkages involved in modern industrial food systems calls for methods spanning geographic borders and disciplinary boundaries (Wilk 2006; Pollan 2007; Clapp and Cohen 2009; McMichael 1994; Friedman 1982). As Ceccarini shows in her paper, there are now transnational linkages involved even in the production of “artisanal” products such as hand-tossed Neapolitan pizza that remain firmly associated with particular places though now made far from those places. There are thus not one but multiple “food globalizations” (Inglis and Grimlin 2009), ranging from industrial food production systems, to informal networks of artisanal producers and even the transnational politics of cuisines, such as the “slow food” movement (Watson and Caldwell 2005).

The Asia Pacific

The focus on the “Asia Pacific” in this collection is best understood not as a regional designation but a perspectival designation, as a counter to the Atlantic perspective that has dominated studies of food globalization, and global studies more generally. Beginning with world systems scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein (1984), global studies has long been dominated by a five-century narrative of western expansion that begins with European colonialism and ends with American global

hegemony. Similarly, the usual narrative of culinary globalization focuses on the establishment of an “Atlantic system,” beginning with the Columbian conquest, followed by European plantation agriculture, and ending in American fast food hegemony. This collection represents (a partial) move away from the Atlantic perspective and towards a Pacific perspective on global changes in culinary culture. In recent publications in global studies and foods studies this Atlantic bias has been modified with an emphasis on the history of food trading systems centered in Asia (Dai 2003; Kratoska 2008).



Artisanal Sake Tasting at the Japanese Ambassador’s Residence in Washington
Source: http://www.jetro.org/trends/food_event_sake.php

Evidence for a new Pacific perspective on culinary globalization can be found in studies of Asian cuisines moving into areas once dominated by European culinary traditions. Several academic collaborations have been published emphasizing the development and globalization of Asian cuisines (Wu and Cheung 2002; Cheung and Tan 2007; Cwiertka and Walraven 2002). The export of Asian cuisines is not a new process, of course. Chinese cuisine has been popular in some areas of the West for decades (Wu and Cheung 2002; Moehring 2008). The current waves of Asian culinary globalization, however, are more complexly and thickly layered than those even two decades ago. As authors in this present collection point out, cross-border culinary flows now include new types of transnational actors that create a denser social and cultural environment for the production and reception of foreign cuisines, including a “local” social environment that is itself more “globalized” and mobile. As papers in this collection by Shoko Imai and Jean Duruz show, a new breed of Asian “celebrity chefs” in Australian and North American cities are far removed from the relatively nameless immigrant entrepreneurs who first brought Asian cuisines to western consumers in

ethnic enclaves. Star chefs are not the only new types of social agents active in the production of global Asian cuisines. Local and international media producers are largely responsible for the reputations of these new cultural icons. Krishnendu Ray's paper points to the food critic as a key agent of culinary globalization, ranging from the anonymous Zagat contributor to the named New York Times food critic, both of whom might be considered more culinary cosmopolitans than culinary locals in their reactions to imported Asian food. Other actors that are not mentioned in most accounts of culinary globalization are designers and artists who design food products and restaurant venues. The designers of the Sake labels investigated by Patricia Yarrow in this collection are just as much producers of cultural globalization as the brewers and merchants of this traditional Japanese alcoholic beverage. Finally, as Kosaku Yoshino points out in his paper, Asian governments are also active in the

promotion of cuisines, in order to project what I describe as "culinary soft power." Culinary globalization is thus embedded in a thick flow of mobile contexts, actors and images that are also global in scope and transnational in organization. The result is that Asian cuisines now have a much greater prominence globally than in the past, in globalized urban environments that increasingly are disjoint from the national hinterlands. For example, restaurants in Shanghai and Tokyo described in my contribution to this collection are now likely to be designed by architectural firms based abroad, or by foreign firms with offices in these cities. Given the importance of built spaces in the production of high cuisine, designers and architects are some of the most central contributors to Shanghai's cosmopolitan culinary culture.



Above: North Korean themed café in Shanghai's trendy Tianzifang District
 Below: Chartres French Restaurant in Shanghai
 Photos by Liu Fang

An Asian Pacific perspective on globalization is also a specific claim about the new centrality of the region to global flows of both cuisine and food products. As Asia has risen in economic importance, the countries in the region have an increasingly powerful effect, not only on global tastes, but also on the global food supplies. Ted Bestor's study of Tsukiji fish market points out the impact of Japan on the global supply chains for high-grade fish (Bestor 2004). In this collection, Sidney Cheung traces the "social life" of the North American crayfish as it travels from the rivers of Louisiana in North America, to streams of Japan to the farm of China, and then "back again," in the form of an export commodity. Jun Akamine's work on the sea cucumber points out how China's role as a food exporter is increasingly overshadowed by its role as a food importer, with impacts on the ecology of fishing far from Asia, in the ecologically sensitive Galapagos islands. Kenneth Ruddle and Naomichi Ishige's paper traces the diffusion of fermented fish products through human migration in East Asia using the methods of ethno-linguistics. A Pacific perspective is thus an acknowledgement of a new global economic order in the production of food, but also points out the importance of regional systems of food globalization prior to the European system.

Food and social identities

Food is a central element of cultural identity in all societies (Montanari 2006). In the modern era cuisine has become an essential component of the representation of the imagined community of the nation, often involving piecing together a "national" cuisine out of disparate regional and local elements that once would scarcely have been found together (Appadurai 1988). Contrastive local and global elements of social identity are simultaneously constructed through importing and localizing foods. Images of the global and local "nourish each other" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1999, 260).



Consuming "Japanese Curry" in Tokyo's Narita Airport
Photo by James Farrer

Very often, the production of national cuisine has involved the indigenization of imported elements, which are re-imagined as "local" ingredients, such as tomatoes in Italian cuisine, or spicy peppers in Korean cuisine (Inglis and Gimlin 2009). On the other hand, in the current wave of cultural globalization, foreign cuisines may also be adopted as national symbols without even losing their foreign connotations. It is noted with only slight irony in either country that "curry" has become perhaps the national dish in both the United Kingdom

and in Japan. Similarly, Doner Kebab is as much a German national snack as Bratwurst is in post-millennial Germany. In this collection, Michiko Kubo's paper on Indonesian cuisine points out how the process of national culinary construction can be aided by the rise of global food conglomerates that produce industrial food products aimed at national markets. Transnational corporations may thus serve to define and homogenize "national" tastes, even as they bring in foreign flavors.

The production of producing national food cultures may be both abetted and frustrated by processes of cultural and economic globalization. Mauro Neves's paper in this collection on the globally prominent Mexican film *Como agua para chocolate* points to the importance of food in artistic representations of national culture, in this case through the genre of "food film." This film uses highly eroticized and fantastical portrayals of food not only to represent human passions generally, but also to celebrate an imagined Mexican sensibility. Because the film was widely watched and admired by foreign film critics and audiences, more than by audiences in Mexico, Neves's analysis points to the complex and ambivalent relationship of foreign observers to the local constructions of cultural distinctiveness. The foreign gaze is threatening, but also defining. On the other hand, processes of economic and cultural globalization are not always supportive of national culinary myths. As Hiroyuki Tani's paper on maize in Mexican culture shows, after being long established as a symbol of the Mexican nation, maize has increasingly become a "politically neutral plant" due to the processes of neo-liberal globalization under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Put simply, the national government found trade liberalization more persuasive than maintaining the sacred status of the nation's most symbolically important staple.

Both culinary globalization and culinary nationalism have resulted in the strong push for food localization and for the protection of what are perceived as authentic local foodways (Wilk 2006). However, despite their ideological devotion to the "local," many of these culinary cultural movements themselves are highly globalized, as Stephanie Assmann's paper on the "slow food" movement illustrates. One of the chief ideological grounds for promoting local food in Japan is the high rate of dependency of Japan on food imports. Culinary regionalism is not only constructed vis-à-vis foreign foods, however, but also may be constructed in contrast to national culinary imaginaries. David Wank's paper in this collection shows how the regional cuisine of Shanxi is produced as a way of distinguishing the region within China, and promoting regional tourism and investment. However, as we have already seen with the local/global distinction, the region/nation distinction involves the simultaneous construction of both elements of the binary. Shanxi cuisine remains embedded in a Chinese national imaginary, and is aimed at customers from all over China, not only at locals. National images are as important as local images in the construction of the

authentic local restaurant. Both Yoshino's and Ceccarini's papers in this collection also point to the importance of tourism in the construction of culinary "authenticity." In the case of Italian and Malaysian cuisine restaurants in Tokyo, the tourism may not involve the act of leaving the country, but rather using the restaurant as a place for imaginary travels, including reliving and reimagining actual travel experiences.

Place and locality are not the only elements of social identity represented through food. Food is often an expression of social distinctions within a community, especially class distinctions. Wealthy people in all societies have often been culinary cosmopolitans (Cwiertka 2002; Goody 1996), but it is important also to note how different segments of the upper class distinguish among themselves through culinary consumption (Bourdieu 1985). The foreign cuisine restaurants of Shanghai I discuss in my paper are much more likely to be frequented by the "white collar" professionals with high cultural capital, while Chinese entrepreneurs with less transnational cultural capital but plenty of economic capital are more likely to opt for the seafood restaurants serving sea cucumbers, shark fins, bird nests and other symbolic representations of wealth in a more "Chinese" context.

At the same time that high cuisine is consumed as a symbol of cultural sophistication, it also enters the realm of artistic and cultural consumption. Food producers become not just workers but also creative artists. Indeed, the social distinctions and class identities produced in restaurant are not merely those of the customers, but also those of the food producers themselves. As Ceccarini's research shows, the celebration of pizza makers through contests, prizes and personal marketing elevates the pizza to the level of a cuisine, rather than a quick snack or street food. It also elevates the pizzaioli from worker to artisan. Leschziner's paper on the world of high cuisine chefs in North America points out that cuisine has become a field of artistic production with its own codes of creativity. Consumption of cuisine like other forms of artistic consumption relies upon an appreciation of the "originality" and "creativity" of the producer whose identity as an artist separates him (occasionally her) from other types of kitchen workers. At the extreme end, the high cuisine artist becomes a celebrity chef, such as those discussed by Imai, Duruz and myself in this collection, with his or her own cookbooks, television shows and named restaurants.

Finally, food also is a focus of identity politics. One form of culinary politics consists of the promoting of "culinary soft power" by nation states, regional entities and even cities. Here food culture is seen as one form of cultural commodity that is linked to national, local or regional prestige, but also the possibilities of promoting tourism, investment and exports. Yoshino's essay in this collection points out the ways in which Malaysia has tried to raise its national prestige by promoting



Malaysian cuisine abroad. As my paper in this collection points out, Japan's government in particular has engaged in policies to promote Japanese culinary soft power. For example, the Japan pavilion at the 2010 Shanghai International Expo celebrates Japan's reputation for high cuisine with a pricey "six star" restaurant that refers directly to the Michelin stars awarded to the Kyoto-based chefs who are responsible for managing the exhibit restaurant (Okudera and Kotoyori 2010).



Culinary politics are a peculiar window onto a pluralistic identity politics. Culinary choices and practices point to the seemingly promiscuous mixings of social identity claims that culinary globalization has made possible. Most top international chefs I interviewed in Shanghai were not at all shy about celebrating their distinctive cosmopolitan styles, but neither were they shy about their own tastes for and interests in local traditional foods. Not all chefs or customers are equally cosmopolitan in their tastes, but increasingly, the environment of global cities promotes

Restaurants offering sushi and Korean BBQ in Toronto
Photos by James Farrer

a cosmopolitanism of food consumption at the same time that it promotes the development of specialized local cuisines. There is no contradiction in liking different foods. Culinary nationalism, culinary localism and culinary cosmopolitanism are less oppositional than simply different menu items that can change daily. If food has been essential to the production of images of local, regional and national culture, it is also central to the production of a "global imaginary" (Phillips 2006, 43). To the degree that culinary cosmopolitanism is a reflection of a general open mindedness toward new cultural experiences then we can say that the culture of culinary globalization offers positive examples for cultural pluralism through a "global imaginary" of travelling cuisines.

The organization of this collection

This is an online collection, so that each paper can be read alone or downloaded in any order. Therefore, each paper has been numbered beginning with the page number 1. All papers include abstracts, so we do not supply a summary of each paper here. The collection can be divided into three groups. The first group of papers explores the transnational circuits of particular food products, chains of supply, ecological impacts, cultural definitions and ties to national and local identities. The second group of papers focuses on the development of “cuisines” in the context of food globalization, looking at cuisines as expressions of national identity and social class, and also as the outcomes of local and transnational political strategies. The third group of papers focuses on food producers as agents of cultural globalization and also as creators of culture.

Biographies of each contributor can be found by clicking on the links on the contents page. Details about the Institute of Comparative Culture are available on our institute webpage, and details of the global food project can be found on the food project webpage.

Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture Website:

<http://icc fla.sophia.ac.jp/index.htm>

Globalizing Food Consumption and the Construction of Social Identity Project Website:

<http://icc fla.sophia.ac.jp/Sophia%20University%20ICC%20Global%20Food%20Project/index.htm>

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