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Taking ramen seriously : food, labor, and everyday life in modern Japan

Author
Solt, George Sekine

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Taking Ramen Seriously: Food, Labor, and Everyday Life in Modern Japan

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

George Sekine Solt

Committee in Charge:

Professor Stefan Tanaka, Co-Chair
Professor Takashi Fujitani, Co-Chair
Professor Masao Miyoshi
Professor Christena Turner
Professor Daniel Widener

2009

The Dissertation of George Sekine Solt is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and in form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Co-Chair

Co-Chair

University of California, San Diego

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VITA

2000	Bachelor of Arts, Amherst College
2002	Master of Pacific International Affairs Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies University of California, San Diego
2005-2006	Visiting Research Fellow, Sophia University (Tokyo, Japan)
2008-2009	Instructor, New York University
2009	Doctor of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History (Modern Japan)

Studies in Globalization Literature
Professor Masao Miyoshi

Studies in African-American History
Professor Daniel Widener

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Taking Ramen Seriously: Food, Labor, and Everyday Life in Modern Japan

by

George Sekine Solt

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, San Diego, 2009

Professor Stefan Tanaka, Co-Chair
Professor Takashi Fujitani, Co-Chair

The study of food can divulge some of the most basic characteristics of different people's social organization at any given point in time, and is a useful way to address issues of historical change and continuity at the level of everyday life. The study of food through history is also an important way to bridge the conceptual bifurcation of labor, on one hand, and leisure on the other. Because eating is the most basic activity necessary for the reproduction of labor power, as well as a social activity

thick with symbolic associations of recreation and superfluity, it reveals the tight connections between work, rest, and macroeconomic organization in ways that may otherwise not be evident.

Building on these notions, in this dissertation, I examine the reconstitution of Chinese noodle-soup in modern Japan at key moments to illuminate the political and economic logic of changes in everyday life. I study the social historical implications of changing food practices by examining shifts in the popularity, material constitution, and meanings attributed to Chinese noodle-soup and its association with different categories over time. The designation of the dish as foreign, urban, cheap, nutritious, fast, slow, novel, traditional, unhealthy, or Japanese in various social-economic contexts reveals how dietary practices and ideas about nourishment are tightly interlaced with shifting labor conditions, industrialization, international trade relations, and state policy-making. Dietary change, as seen through one particular dish, therefore, serves as the medium for establishing the connections between shifts in the political economy and everyday life practices in modern Japan.

Introduction

In this dissertation, I examine the reconstitution of Chinese noodle-soup in modern Japan at key moments to illuminate the political and economic logic of changes in everyday life. I study the social implications of changing food practices by examining shifts in the popularity, material constitution, and meanings attributed to Chinese noodle-soup and its association with different categories over time. The designation of Chinese noodle-soup as foreign, urban, cheap, nutritious, fast, slow, novel, traditional, or Japanese in different times and social-economic contexts reveals how dietary practices and ideas about nourishment are tightly interlaced with shifting labor conditions, industrialization, international trade relations, and state policy-making. The connections between shifts in the practices of daily life and larger political economic trends form the core subject of the study.

My aim is to present a social biography of Chinese noodle-soup as a means to explore the connections between broader changes in the political economy of Japan and shifts at the level of everyday life as seen through modifications of food practices. The study of food through history is also an important way to bridge the conceptual bifurcation of labor, on one hand, and leisure on the other. Because eating is the most basic activity necessary for the reproduction of labor power, as well as a social activity thick with symbolic associations of recreation and superfluity, it reveals the tight connections between work, rest, and macroeconomic organization in ways that may otherwise not be evident.

Chinese noodle-soup in Japan is most commonly referred to as "ramen," but is also sold as "Chūka soba," and "Shina soba," which are older terms for the food dating back to the early postwar and the prewar periods, respectively. The dish usually consists of a fatty, meat-based soup with alkali-laced noodles made from wheat flour, and various toppings such as egg, roasted pork (chāshū), stewed bamboo shoots (menma), bean sprouts, and seaweed (nori). It is served in a distinct Japanese-style Chinese bowl with a Chinese-style spoon that are closely associated with the dish. The most significant difference between the Chinese-style noodles and those consumed in Japan prior to the late 19th century, such as sōmen, soba, kishimen, or udon, is the use of alkali water (kansui) in the process of making the noodles, and the use of meat (instead of fish and seaweed) in preparing the broth for the soup.

Ramen is eaten at Chinese food eateries, workplace cafeterias, restaurant stalls, pushcarts, and at home in its instant form. Ramen shops can be found in nearly every locale of Japan, but are particularly common in urban areas, with a heavy concentration in the Tokyo metropolitan district and smaller cities such as Sapporo in the north and Hakata in the south. More recently, restaurants serving ramen have been spreading throughout metropolitan centers of global finance capital (where Japanese expatriate communities can be found in large concentrations) such as Paris, London, Bangkok, Los Angeles, New York, and somewhat ironically, Shanghai, among many other cities.

The dish evolved differently in each area of Japan, and in some parts (such as the Kansai region) it never quite achieved the popularity of other wheat-flour based foods such as Okonomiyaki (pancakes with vegetables, meat, and/or seafood). In many of the cities that grew rapidly in the interwar period, however, it became one of the principal foods marking the arrival of a modern urban lifestyle. In Tokyo, as well as in regional hubs such as Sapporo and Hakata, the spread of Chinese noodle-soup as a cheap and filling meal-on-the-go that was affordable to the masses marked the beginning of new manners of engagement with food, labor, and everyday life.

The longevity of the dish can be attributed to its flexibility in terms of its materials and meanings, which shift perennially to accommodate transformations in the broader social organization and political economic order. These conditions are discernable through changes in its name, valuation, ingredients, producers, consumers, manners of ingestion, and popular imagery. As a nexus of both changing materials and symbolic associations, Chinese noodle-soup provides a concrete site to study the changing practices associated with food, labor, and everyday life in urban Japan, and the way they connect to broad shifts in state policy, corporate strategy, and the reconfiguration of common sense with respect to food practices over the course of the last century.

Food and the Study of Everyday Life

I begin the study with the premise that the changing availability and popularity of any given food is a useful indicator of the intersections between macroeconomic and dietary change, showing how historical contingency, economic planning, and consumer preferences interact to produce lasting habits that become embedded with great social meaning. Unpacking the interplay of factors driving the popularization of one food therefore provides a way to study the process by which a seemingly banal custom, such as eating Chinese noodle-soup, became transformed from a cheap and convenient food for the hurried workers of modern industry, to a tradition associated with the Japanese nation as a whole. Before the position of ramen as a nexus of materials and meanings in modern Japan can be examined, however, a broader explanation of the reasons for studying everyday life practices under the disciplinary rubric of history is in order.

One of the first attempts to establish a rationale for the study of everyday life practices as a serious scholarly endeavor was put forth by Leon Trotsky. In his 1923 essay, *Habit and Custom*, Trotsky points to the urgent need for scholarship on the customs of workers in order to better understand the ways in which they facilitated or hindered political progress (towards a classless society). He argues that customs of working people, built up over centuries, often had the effect of stifling political progress towards equality, and demanded further analysis by journalists and authors alike. Trotsky notes that regardless of how radically the vanguard wished to remake Russian politics, its ambitions were tempered by the lack of a corresponding transformation in the conservative norms of the working people, particularly the relegation of women to domestic work. Trotsky thus finds the transformation of everyday life habits and customs to be an urgent matter in terms of the political liberation of working people, and women in particular. He asserts:

> [N]ew morals cannot be produced out of nothing; they must be arrived at with the aid of elements already existing, but capable of development. It is therefore necessary to recognize what are these elements. This applies not only to the transformation of morals, but to every form of conscious human activity. It is therefore necessary first to know what already exists, and in what manner its change of form is proceeding, if we are to cooperate in the re-creation of morals.

> We must first see what is really going on in the factory, among the workers, in the cooperative, the club, the school, the tavern, and the street. All this we have to understand; that is, we must recognize the remnants of the past and the seeds of the future. We must call upon our authors and journalists to work in this direction. They must describe life for us as it emerges from the tempest of revolution. [Trotsky 1973:25-30 in Highmore 2002:86]

Remarking on *Habit and Custom*, the theorist of everyday life studies, Ben Highmore notes, "It is this insistence on a cultural politics located at the level of the everyday, alongside a recognition of everyday life's invisibility, that gives Trotsky's thought a continued pertinence for the study of everyday life." [Highmore 2002:86]

Writing roughly a decade after Trotsky, Japanese philosophers such as Tosaka Jun, Gonda Yasunosuke, and Kon Wajiro each advanced ideas similar to Trotsky's in calling for the further analysis of everyday life as a category worthy of scientific inquiry. In *Overcome by Modernity*, H.D. Harootunian remarks on the high level of interest among Japanese thinkers in the everyday habits of urban workers during the prewar period, and finds the work of Tosaka Jun in particular to be noteworthy in terms of its prescience in anticipating some of the themes related to the study of everyday life revisited by European scholars such as Henri Lefebvre and Michel De Certeau.

Tosaka, in arguing against an increasingly common conceptualization of an imaginary, eternal Japanese culture in the study of history, found the process by which custom becomes embedded in everyday life to be the most revealing site of historical change. Focusing on clothing and the historicity of customs in dress, Tosaka noted that despite the material reality possessed by clothing, and its depth in meanings, theoretical concern for it had been thin. [Harootunian 2000: 120] Therefore, he argued, "custom [must] be resituated within the process of capitalist development, and this require[s] revising the idea of custom as something that should not only be grasped as popular or base, but [as] a category that ha[s] theoretical meaning." [Harootunian 2000:123] As Tosaka recognized, the process by which practice becomes embedded in everyday life as custom, then elevated to tradition vis-à-vis its cognitive attachment to the timeless nation, is a valuable site to study the process of historical change within modern capitalist development. Therefore, as Harootunian argues, Tosaka "imagined a conception of history that would open the way for practice in history that historicism, in all of its forms, had simply foreclosed." [Harootunian 2000: 137]

In *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre similarly argues for the need to open the realm of philosophy to action as a way to investigate the connections between the reproduction of the capitalist social order and the changing customs of working people. By gaining knowledge of the philosophies embedded in and expressed through everyday life, he contends, a critique of the philosophies that sustain the politico-economic order becomes possible. As Highmore notes, "Lefebvre's project is both a diagnosis of modern everyday life and a reclamation of its critical potential. For Lefebvre the business of 'critique' is not simply to provide an analytic perspective for assessing contemporary everyday life, it must always include the recovery of critical practices (or potential critical practices) to be found within everyday life itself." [Highmore 2002:225] Building on the Marxian notion of the "total man" as the "man of praxis," Lefebvre's famous phrase, "Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all," points to the need to reconcile philosophy with practice in order to better comprehend how politics is transformed through the accumulation of quotidian practices. [Lefebvre 1992: 127]

The relevance of Lefebvre's contention is all the more powerful when considered in terms of the study of history, where details concerning the practices of everyday life, though often obscured by their ordinariness, have the potential to divulge as much about the objective conditions and worldviews of the times as do the dominant narratives involving heroes and villains. Lefebvre writes:

> Now the historian helps us to enter historical reality by showing us for example how the former kings of France turned themselves into feudal landowners and established the solid foundations on which their 'grand policy' was built by buying fiefs and increasing their ownership of land. Unglamorous facts were actually the more important ones, and for us historians they are more revealing than sensational events. [Lefebvre 1992: 134]

The quote above can also be applied to the study of ramen and dietary change: "unglamorous facts" such as changes in the naming of noodles, the availability of rice in relation to wheat flour particularly after the Fifteen-Year War, or the spotlighting of the dish as a promotional tool for regional tourism, can be more revealing of the shifts in social economic organization than the sensational events of the times. In other words, a sustained focus on Chinese noodle-soup's fluctuations serves to highlight the interconnectivity between changes in everyday life practices, economic trends, and state policies. In tracing the shifts in the material and symbolic constitution of Chinese noodle-soup, and highlighting their connections to changes in consumption, labor, and conceptions of leisure, my dissertation aims to unearth some of the "cultural politics located at the level of the everyday." [Highmoore 2002:225] By pointing to the linkages between the rise of instant foods, the spread of wheat-flour in Japan, shifts in Japan's labor and capital markets, the U.S. Occupation, and the Cold War in East Asia, for example, I again attempt to draw on Lefebvre's notion of the usefulness of unglamorous facts in conveying how modifications of quotidian customs, and shifts in what is considered normal at the level of the everyday, are of the highest political significance and thus usefulness for the study of history.

In this way, food, and the manners in which it is gathered, prepared, consumed, and perceived, is a powerful site for conveying the class and other divisions that are present in any given community, and the way those divisions change over time. As Sidney Mintz notes, "What we like, what we eat, how we eat it, and how we feel about it are phenomenologically interrelated matters; together, they speak eloquently to the question of how we perceive ourselves in relation to others." [Mintz 1985: 4] Similarly, in his analysis of the role of food in the French class system, Pierre Bourdieu argues that gastronomical tastes in modern societies are highly interconnected with "aesthetic judgment," which itself is embedded with schemes of dominance and subordination. [Bourdieu 1984: 11]

Bourdieu points to the contrasting principles found in the meanings ascribed to food such as formality, exoticness, and tradition, to argue that food is an invaluable guide to understanding the process of social ordering. Issues such as what foods are consumed by which groups of people, and in turn, how identities connoting relationships of hierarchy or difference are produced and reinforced can inform one of the ways in which eating practices signify social rank. To this end, an analysis of the social ranking implied by the consumption and production of ramen, and the changing usage of ramen motifs in literature, film, and politics is helpful in understanding how the dish has been used to reinforce categories of social difference through its designation as Chinese, working class, masculine, cheap, authentic, or Japanese in different times.

The symbolic associations made with a given food, and how they change over time, however, are certainly more enlightening when contextualized within the material conditions and economic logic governing the people under consideration. Taking this argument to the extreme, however, food anthropologist Marvin Harris sparked a contentious debate in the subfield of food studies in the discipline of anthropology in the late 1980s when he charged that too many other anthropologists tended to overanalyze the customs of the people they studied, representing them as purely religious taboos, without adequately investigating the material or biological reasoning behind the practices. In short, Harris faults food studies experts for focusing excessively on the symbolic aspects of eating practices without properly considering the biological, rational, and economic bases for the religious meanings implied by the consumption of specific foods for certain groups.

In his research, Harris finds that nearly all religious taboos or predilections concerning food have a strong rational basis with clear economic or biological benefits when examined closely, and that the symbolic meanings are clearly derived from the economic or biological considerations. For example, he cites the Hindu prohibition of beef consumption as a logical outcome of that group's dependence on cows for milk and dung for fertilizer, compared with the relatively minute benefit of a one-time slaughtering. [Harris and Ross 1987: 47] While Harris' position concerning the power of materialism in explaining food history is provocative, it is not necessarily antithetical to the position of Mary Douglas and others who focus more on the symbolic meanings associated with food. Harris' materialist approach may explain the political and economic logic behind the popularization of certain foods and eating habits, but it does not explain the meanings invested into the foods and their symbolism, which in turn take on an economic logic of their own.

A materialist approach to the study of dietary change and the popularization of ramen in modern Japan would emphasize that a confluence of Chinese migration, an increase in the production of meat and wheat resulting from European imperialism, and the creation of an industrial labor force were all necessary precursors to the spread of Shina soba[1] as part of the urban Japanese landscape in the 1920s. Yet, to understand the role of Chinese noodle-soup as the cheap and hearty food of the Orientalized Other for the consumption of soldiers, students, and industrial workers, as opposed to the position of a food such as French cake, made also from wheat but a high-class food associated with the idealized West, Bourdieu's ideas about the social rankings implied through food are essential. In this way, the varying symbolic meanings of Chinese noodle-soup and their connection to shifts in labor and economic organization in Japan will be studied in concert to employ the

[1] Shina is the pre-surrender Japanese term for China, wrought with colonial overtones and rejected by the Chinese Nationalists. It was replaced after the war with the term Chūgoku. Soba is the Japanese term for noodles, usually referring to buckwheat noodles. Shina soba is the prewar term for Chinese noodle-soup combining the two words.

dish as an indicator of the correlation between changes in politics and everyday life.

While transformations in dietary habits can be a rich source for historians, most writing on the history of food in Japan has treated it as an enduring expression of the cultural preferences of the timeless and homogeneous national community. This tendency has obscured the contingent political and economic relationships that have constituted its specific formations. Some notable examples of this trend include Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacobs's *The Essence of Japanese Cuisine* and Koizumi Takeo's *Shoku to Nihonjin no chie*.

The authors of these texts present valuable empirical evidence concerning historical changes in food habits in Japan, particularly of the elite. Yet, they rely on an ahistorically construed nation-centered framework that emphasizes the unique aesthetics of the enduring Japanese community, rather than underlining the historical contingency and changing forces of production involved at each point of transition in dietary practice. Ashkenazi and Jacobs write:

> Rules, for the social scientist, are an outsider's attempt to reach the essence of the actor's norms. Quite often, actors are unconscious of abstracted rule(s): they know, somehow, that things are either wrong or right. One of the experiments we did during the progress of this study illustrates this nicely: asked to place items on a plate or table, Japanese respondents always had a clear idea of right or wrong placement, but could rarely explain why or how they reached that intuitive conclusion…And where we find that many, or most of the rules are followed in the same way throughout a society, we can argue that the society itself is relatively homogenous: something we see in Japanese food culture, and which reflects a great degree of uniformity within Japanese culture as a whole. [Ashkenazi and Jacobs 2000: 23-24]

The main problem with the above-noted approach based on "rules" is its weakness in addressing historical change. By deducing the "rules" of a given "society" (i.e. identifying bourgeois norms) without paying proper attention to class and other differences, and also by discounting how these practices change over time in meaning and in form, the study becomes a tautological exercise in identifying everlasting Japanese cultural inclinations and categorizing them as such, without questioning the historicity of the foods and their relationship to the category of "Japanese." The idea that the food preferences or aesthetic sensibility of some (elite) Japanese can be construed as representative of the abiding national community is precisely the type of move that Tosaka criticized in *Nihon ideorogiron*. By presuming the existence of a national community with shared aesthetic sensibilities backward into time immemorial, the authors frame the food habits of people in Japan into a neat set of rules based on arbitrary religious or cultural preferences, rather than seriously analyzing the contingent historical circumstances that gave rise to these food habits. Thus, Ashkenazi and Jacobs reach the following predictable and vague conclusion with respect to dietary change in Japan:

> Throughout this process of change, however, whether from indigenous or exogenous sources, Japanese cuisine has managed to maintain and protect its own inherent, basic characteristics. These do not consist in the usage of particular foods or preparation methods, but in an underlying philosophy on the one hand, and a particular *cluster* of features on the other. [Ashkenazi and Jacobs 2000: 35]

Ashkenazi and Jacobs are among the few scholars writing in English on Japanese food practices, but their approach is more-or-less representative of the dominant trend within Japanese scholarship on dietary change as well. Koizumi Takeo, a well-known expert of Japanese food history for example, argues in the preface to *Shoku to Nihonjin no chie*:

> This book presents roughly 100 stories that convey the wisdom that is apparent in the various foods created by Japanese from ancient to modern times, and will explain how the innovations resulting from this nation's intelligence are of the utmost rationality, and are the product of an almost obsessively inquiring mind. If the reader can grasp even a small sense of the depth of intelligence or the superb way of thinking of the Japanese people from reading this book, I will be truly pleased. [Koizumi 2002: iii]

While Koizumi's language is clearly more overt in its championing of Japanese culture than that of Ashkenazi and Jacobs, his goal of locating the timeless Japanese community's collective wisdom through the study of food practices is not too different from Ashkenazi and Jacobs' discussion of the "rules" and the "essence of Japanese cuisine." Both employ an essentialist analytical style that identifies cultural preferences that are supposedly informed by the ageless religious beliefs (or ethnic attributes) of a Japanese nation dating back to the *Tale of Genji*. The temptation to fall back on the analytical category of "Japan" or "Japanese culture" as the starting and ending points for studies on food highlights the risks involved in relying solely on a nation-bound semiotic approach without properly identifying the historicity and political-economic functions of the practices that are being studied. Tosaka noted so much in his seminal 1935 essay, *Nihon Ideorogii-ron*, where he noted:

> The special character of Japan appears to reside in the claim that Japan is spiritually superior to other nations and people. Perhaps all forms of Japanism may be reduced to this fundamental tenet of Japanese spirituality. Still, what sort of thing the Japanese spirit is and how it is supposed to be the superior essence of Japan have not, in my mind, been given a rational and scientific explanation. This, too, is understandable, for in essence even the Japanese spirit—or what Japan is in itself—is not, according to Japanism's own insistence, an explainable object; indeed,

> when closely scrutinized, it is nothing other than a method and a principle employed in explaining everything rather arbitrarily.
>
> However, arbitrarily bringing forth the single concrete geographical, historical, and social existence in the universe called Japan and letting it become a kind of philosophical principle is, in essence, something very weird when considered from the standpoint of commonsense. Indeed, if this were a philosophy termed "Venus-ism" or "Daffodil-ism," no one would ever take it seriously from the beginning.
>
> But the problem is that at the same time that it can be thought that Japanism has no rational or scientific content whatsoever, one is able arbitrarily to read into it any content whatsoever. [Tosaka 1998: 356-7]

Tosaka rejects the circular and tautological reasoning at the foundation of Japanism. Despite the seeming obviousness of such a statement, Japanism as an approach to the study of all things Japanese remains largely intact in the form of Japanese (food) studies as carried out both within and outside Japan, illustrated by the two examples above. The devastating critique launched by Tosaka in the 1930s against the logical shortcomings of Japanism notwithstanding, arguments pointing to the uniqueness of Japan's enduring national spirit as a method for explaining all aspects of everyday life show no signs of abatement even in the twenty-first century.

Remaining mindful of the pitfalls in studying everyday life practices without relating their significance to a referent more meaningful than a vaguely and arbitrarily construed national community, in this dissertation I highlight the contingency of factors involved in the changing dietary habits of urban workers in modern Japan as manifested in the popularization of Chinese noodle-soup at key historical junctures. The goal is to shift the emphasis away from the allegedly tribal continuities or Japanistic principles expressed by the widespread consumption of certain foods (i.e. noodles or rice as *the* most representative food of Japan), and to instead connect dietary changes to broader transformations in the economy and social organization. The connections can inform us of the parallels or divergences across advanced industrialized capitalist countries in terms of the politics of food, labor, and leisure practices. I therefore highlight the logic of political and economic change revealed by the popularization of Chinese noodle-soup at different times in the hope of moving beyond a purely Japanist style of reasoning that would again predictably conclude how the Japanese people took another foreign idea, object, or practice and made it their own (in this case, Chinese noodle-soup).

Academic works in English on the history of food in Japan have been steadily increasing in the last few years and will continue to rise for the foreseeable future due to the heightened attention towards food in general among historians and anthropologists. As of now, however, no more than half a dozen notable works on the history of food in modern Japan have been published. In this way, the subfield is still in an early stage of formation, and will continue to expand due to its rich potential.

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time* is one of the first English-language studies on food history in Japan that applied the ideas of Bourdieu regarding eating practices and social distinction. The book examines rice as a symbol of the Japanese Self, or national identity, and traces its changes in relation to cultural "Others" from pre-modern times to the present. Ohnuki-Tierney asserts:

> As a people, the Japanese have repeatedly reconceptualized themselves

> as they encountered different others—Chinese and Westerners—by using rice as a metaphor for themselves. In addition to rice grains as food, rice paddies have played an enormously important role in the self-identity or identities of the Japanese. Thus, the symbolism of rice is bifurcated: on the one hand, "rice as our food" and, on the other hand, "rice paddies as our land," each reinforcing the other. [Ohnuki-Tierney 1993:4]

Ohnuki-Tierney's work represents a significant advance in terms of English-language studies of food in Japan. Yet, Ohnuki-Tierney's method of tracing Japanese identities through food fails to appreciate the historical emergence of national identity itself as a modern phenomenon, and as a result, can only reveal so much when naturalized as an ahistorical category applied equally across pre-modern and modern times. Nevertheless, the book is remarkable in its originality of approach, and is a significant piece in laying the groundwork for other English language scholarship on the history of food in Japan.

Since the publication of Ohnuki-Tierney's *Rice As Self*, there has been a steadily growing body of work on the historical significance of food in Japan. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, Theodore Bestor, Katarzyna Cwiertka, Merry White, and Michael Ashkenazi are the best-known Anglo-American academics working in the subfield of Japanese food studies. Cwiertka is a historian, while Bestor, Ohnuki-Tierney, White, and Ashkenazi are anthropologists.

Although a scholarly text on the history of ramen has yet to be published in English, the forthcoming work of Barak Kushner on the subject is highly anticipated within the field of Japanese food studies. Kushner's earlier piece on ramen examines the shifts in Japan's national identity as seen through the noodle-soup, and resembles Ohnuki-Tierney's work on rice in this regard. In Japanese, Okuyama Tadamasa, Kawata Tsuyoshi, Okada Tetsu, and Kosuge Keiko have each written well-known monographs on the history of ramen in Japan, and many others have written on noodles in general, or instant ramen in particular.

To date, Okuyama and Kawata's texts on ramen represent the strongest academic contributions to the study of food and political economy in modern Japan using Chinese noodle-soup. While the focus of the authors on ramen is unique, their works build on a well-developed field of critical food scholarship in Japan, which was spawned in large part by the early work of Tsumura Takashi, as well as Murai Yoshinori and his students, regarding the shift to large-scale industrial food production in Japan and its devastating environmental and social impacts on communities in Japan and surrounding countries.

In addition, there are a number of texts in U.S. history examining the interconnections between food and gender (Katherine Parkin), class (Jack Goody), ethnicity (Joel Denker), counter-culture (Warren Belasco), war (Amy Bentley), and other themes that have informed my understanding of the similarities in changing food practices worldwide. Mark Swislocki's work on restaurant culture and the transformation of Shanghai into a modern city is another important recent work on the connection between food, politics, and everyday life that I draw on as a model. Most importantly, Katarzyna Cwiertka's pioneering study of the history of food in modern Japan, particularly on the spread of Chinese food in prewar Japan, has been very suggestive for highlighting the connections between imperialism and changing food practices in chapter one.

Synopsis

The dissertation is divided into six chapters with each examining a significant shift in the meaning and usage of the dish in relation to the historical context. The first chapter considers the emergence of new foods against the backdrop of European imperialism, Chinese migration, and the industrialization of the economy from the 1880s to the 1930s. The roots of Japanese ramen can be traced to the food practices of migrant workers from China in the 1880s who settled in the Yokohama district for foreign residents. The few Japanese who had the experience of eating the dish referred to it as Nankin soba after the foreign Chinese settlement known as Nankin machi (Japanese for "Nanjing town") in their records, and described it as a simple dish consisting of salt-based chicken-broth soup and some noodles as an end to a multi-course meal. As industrial economic activity surged in the 1910s and 1920s, the dish became popularized as Shina soba and was served in department stores, Chinese restaurants, Western-style eateries, and small pushcart stands as an ostensibly Chinese dish, taking its place as one of the first non-Western-derived foods integrated into the menu of mass society in prewar Japan.

The popularity of Chinese noodle-soup in the prewar period was part of a broader rise of new commodities and forms of entertainment for the city-dwellers of pre-war Tokyo driven by the rise of a mass consumer culture. The new work schedules, technologies (mechanized noodle production, wheat flour processing), movement of workers (including Chinese and Koreans), and commodity choices were all part of the spread of Japanese-style Chinese noodle-soup in the prewar era.

The popularization of Chinese noodle-soup in the newly industrialized urban areas of Japan during the interwar period was indicative of a number of broader shifts in social and economic organization at the time: 1) the broader move toward a wheat-flour centered, meat-intensive diet among urban workers in Japan, made possible by a shift toward large-scale agricultural production and rapid transport of these ingredients for military purposes in the late 19th century; 2) the rise of mechanized food processing and factory-based noodle production, signaling the beginning of industrial food processing in Japan; 3) the arrival of modern nutritional studies focusing on population-based conceptions of health and welfare, rooted in the abstraction of the human body into a universalized automaton; 4) the development of new subjectivities based on the arrival of a mass society in Japan, denoted by factory production, department store shopping, film-viewing, and mass-media; 5) the incorporation of everyday practices imagined as Chinese among urban workers in Japan, at a time when Japan's position in Northern China, and the competition for political-economic influence in China, was the central issue of concern in terms of global power relations.

Chinese noodle-soup also served an important political function in reconstructing the Japanese economy in the immediate postwar period. The second chapter will analyze the food crisis of the 1940s, when a lack of access to produce from the colonies, a diversion of manpower and resources away from food production, Allied bombings, and bad harvests led to widespread malnutrition. The dependence on U.S.-imported wheat flour as a substitute staple for rice during the Allied Occupation produced a resurgence in the availability of Shina soba as well as bread and biscuits, which drastically altered the eating habits of those who came of age after the war from those who did before. Noodle-makers also replaced the term Shina soba with the terms Chūka soba and ramen, typifying the shift away from words tainted with the memory of imperialism and war, and the remaking of Japan through a remaking of its Others.

The consumption of noodle-soup made from U.S.-produced wheat-flour and other imports substituted for the scarcity of rice, and alleviated the severe food shortages. The emergency importation of food by the U.S. military contributed to the containment of potentially violent uprisings based on widespread frustration regarding the poor management of food distribution. In this way, Chinese noodle-soup became a tool to contain political criticism of black market corruption (raised most forthrightly by local Communist leaders), and to promote a positive image of the U.S. as a generous benefactor of food aid in a time of starvation.

The third chapter considers dietary change during the era of high-speed reindustrialization as seen through the rise in consumption of ramen, placing it in the context of evolving notions of nutrition and U.S.-Japan relations. The period of high economic growth (1958-1973) coincided with an upsurge in ramen consumption, as the food became a central part of the increasing homogenization of dietary practices across Japan. In the process, the dish began to appear with greater frequency in works of popular culture as an embodiment of new customs developed during that era, most commonly as the quintessential energy-rich lunch of the Japanese workingman. Ramen consumption also became a fashionable custom among young people in the 1960s, as seen in many films and short stories. More fundamentally, however, the re-composition of Chinese noodle-soup in the postwar period offers insight into the deep connections between the large-scale importation of U.S. wheat flour, high-speed reindustrialization, continuities in bureaucratic, corporate, and political leadership, and trends in food consumption.

In the fourth chapter I focus on the increasing use of instant foods and its impact on changing dietary lifestyles during the same era of high growth. The rise of instant foods during the 1960s brings together the issues of changes in family structure towards the nuclear model, increasing female participation in the labor market, the idealization of household electronics in the mass media, and the heightened value of speed in the preparation and consumption of food. Instant ramen producers were particularly well-positioned to take advantage of these changes, as they processed the abundantly and cheaply available wheat flour from the U.S. into highly marked-up instant foods that were sold through newly established supermarkets to households using novel kitchen technologies such as hot-water boilers. In this manner, instant ramen became one of the most archetypal foods of the postwar dietary lifestyle as it represented a leap in both technology and lifestyle from the prewar and wartime period. Instant ramen producers such as Nissin Foods Corporation purposefully packaged their products as important marks of progress toward a more modern, scientific, and rationalized lifestyle. In this way, the rationalization of food practices made possible by instant foods produced a visible homogenization in dietary practices across households in Japan.

The standardization of the rationalized nuclear households, made possible by electric technologies, had an important political purpose of translating the economic benefits of high GNP growth concretely into enhanced convenience in the realm of everyday life. Instant foods represented a breakthrough in the application of science and industrial technology to the rationalization of everyday life practices that began in the interwar period and later rematerialized to penetrate all levels of society in the high-growth era. The consumption of these products, marketed as nutritious, convenient, and tasty alternatives to laboriously home-cooked meals, was made possible by the diffusion of supermarkets and electric kitchen technologies, which drastically altered the relationship between eating and food preparation. Journal editorials and magazine advertisements at the time provide a sense of the anxiety concerning the disruption of gender norms with respect to cooking and other household labor as a result of the proliferation of electric household technologies and instant foods.

The fourth chapter also considers the growth of the instant ramen industry specifically through the case of the Nissin Foods Corporation, examining its labor and hiring practices, patent disputes, and advertising campaigns. The story of Nissin Foods Corporation and its founder Andō Momofuku is useful for examining the growth of the industry at the level of a single company, which provides insight into the relationship between international trade, corporate growth, and changes in eating and cooking habits in Japan. Instant ramen also became a chief export product for Japanese companies, illustrating their new clout in the production and distribution of consumer goods worldwide from the 1970s. With global demand at roughly 85.7 billion servings, and an industry total of $19.4 billion in sales for 2005, the industry continues to be an important overseas component of Japanese economic activity.

Furthermore, demand continues to rise, particularly in Third World countries, where inherited cooking practices are rapidly being replaced by instant foods.[2]

The fifth chapter explores the emergence of a national discourse on the merits of handcrafted ramen in the early 1980s, and the romanticizing of working-class symbols that marked the period of high economic growth, just as they were becoming obsolete or being transformed. Handcrafted ramen became a dish of national nostalgia, and the food of the working everyman attained the status of a national food in television, film, comics, and literature, camouflaging the economic dislocations that were becoming more pronounced in the post-high growth era. The dish became an object for the promotion of regional tourism, as well as a celebrated form of entertainment for young people. The mass media fueled the elevation of eating to a form of entertainment by promoting a "gourmet boom" based on the appreciation of mainly French, Italian, and traditional Japanese cuisines. In this context, ramen attained an important symbolic function as the favorite of anti-gourmet working-class eaters, best illustrated by the Itami Jūzō film, Tampopo.

The sixth and final chapter studies the dish's canonization as a national food through the erection of a $38 million Raumen[3] Museum in Shin-Yokohama in 1994, where the consumption of ramen is celebrated as a culturally meaningful practice grounded in postwar Japanese History. The elevation of ramen (the emblematic food of the urban industrial worker) to a beloved national dish in popular culture

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[2] Nissin Foods 2005 Annual Report

[3] The Museum's planners decided to use the term raumen rather than ramen in referring to the dish because its pronunciation was purportedly closer to the original Chinese term for the dish. Such authenticating touches endowed the Museum with an aura of credibility as the undisputed establishment tracing the roots of the dish in Yokohama, the origin city of modern Chinese noodle-soup in Japan.

since the 1980s is strongly correlated with the dispossession of industrial labor as a result of the movement of manufacturing work overseas by companies, the increasing mobility and malleability of capital (or “flexible accumulation” to use David Harvey’s words), and the movement toward value-added production resulting from the shift toward a post-industrial economy.

Ramen’s humble beginnings as cheap and hearty fare for the purpose of fueling industrial labor in the high-growth period retroactively endowed it with an aura of romanticized communalism during the recessionary 1990s. Chinese noodle-soup again achieved a resurgence in popularity in this period by becoming a symbol of Japanese-ness through its associations with hard work, nostalgia, working-class masculinity, creativity, and devotion to craft above the seeking of profit, among other tropes. The creation of this image of ramen in the media bolstered notions of an organic productive community in Japan at a time when stable fulltime employment opportunities were waning. In the process, ramen garnered the status of a deep-rooted national dish with connotations of masculinity and working-class authenticity in contradistinction to trendy American fast foods and the gourmet cuisines of Italy and France associated with bourgeois femininity.

In this way, the political-economic reasons for the popularity of ramen have changed considerably over time, and have manifested themselves in the shifting symbolism of the dish from an exotic foreign food to a fuel for industrial laborers, and ultimately to a mark of national solidarity in a time of rising economic inequality and social instability. Since the 1990s, the dish and its small-scale producers have become associated in the popular imagination with a supposedly bygone resilience and work-ethic characteristic of the masculinized organic productive community (i.e. the Nation), befitting the sharply growing disparities in wealth and increasing joblessness. Through ramen, therefore, it is possible to examine how larger trends in Japan and other advanced capitalist countries have manifested themselves in subtle yet profound changes in food practices and popular understandings of these practices. The evolution of this quintessentially modern dish from an exotic foreign food to an emblem of Japanese dietary practice over the course of the 20th Century (with a $38 million Raumen Museum in Yokohama built in its honor) reveals how people experienced larger transformations in the political economy of Japan at the level of the everyday.

The connections between macro political-economic shifts and changing food habits, as seen through the prism of Chinese noodle-soup, form the core subject matter of this dissertation. Ramen serves as a microcosm for the larger narrative involving the interconnections between food production, labor practices, understandings of leisure, cooking technologies, eating conventions, nutritional science, economic policy, and foreign relations; it is the object through which the changes in everyday life and their relation to shifts in the social economic order are addressed.

Chapter One

Shina Soba and Industrialization

Introduction

The first chapter considers the introduction of Chinese noodle-soup to modern Japan in the late 19th century, and the gradual incorporation of Chinese cooking into the menus of urban eateries targeting the working masses over the next half century. I address the general problematic of tracing historical origins of everyday practices for which there are few reliable primary documents available due to the perceived triviality (or lack of association with the realm of politics) until recently. I address the creation of Chinese cuisine as a category in modern Japan along with the reasons for its relative absence compared to European cuisines prior to that time, focusing on the functionality of Chinese food as a cheap source of energy for urban industrial workers beginning in the 1910s. The absorption of Chinese-style noodle-soup into the diets of Japanese city-dwellers signaled an increasing desire for speed in the preparation and consumption of food, informing us of how the constraints of standardized time were acutely felt at the level of eating for wage laborers.

I also analyze the figurative significance of Chinese noodle-soup in representing a tangible engagement with an abstracted orientalized Other at the center of Japan's imperialist foreign policy at the time. During the interwar period, the Japanese population became increasingly dependent on foods produced in distant places including the colonies that were then shipped to the home islands and processed for domestic consumption or export. I use Chinese noodle-soup to connect the mechanized, mass-scale production process of the noodles that became common in the interwar period to profound changes in the practices of work (factory production), leisure (film-viewing, café-lounging, and restaurant-dining), and international politics (Japanese imperialism in China). I note how the spread of domesticated Chinese food in Japan was tied to larger changes in geo-politics and social-economic organization, including military expansion in Northeastern China, the growth of oligopolistic corporate conglomerates, dining out as a practice for the working masses, and the orienting of colonial economic production toward the consumption needs of metropolitan workers to further industrial development.

I also discuss how these political-economic changes led to a flourishing of socialist protest literature, in which food production became an increasingly common trope in calling attention to the deep economic disparities in interwar Japan. One short story in particular details the harsh economic realities of a pushcart operator vending Chinese noodle-soup from 1933, while another editorial analyzes the deterioration of quality in Japanese soba resulting from the large-scale processing methods. Both pieces provide a sense that the key food-related problem aggravated by industrial economic growth in the prewar period was the growing distance between producers and consumers in terms of both ingredients and cooking.

Chinese Migration and Food in the Meiji

According to the Ramen Museum of Shin-Yokohama, as well as other books mentioning the subject, the first man to eat Chinese noodle-soup in Japan was Mito

Mitsukuni (better known as Mito Kōmon), a famous feudal lord in Japanese history/folklore. A record of Mito Kōmon's activities from 1665 indicates that a famous Chinese refugee of the Ming government living in Mito at the time, known as Zhu Shun Shui cooked a Chinese-style noodle-soup that was similar to today's ramen. While the actual degree of resemblance between what Mito Kōmon consumed and what is today known as ramen is of little relevance here, it *is* important that modern Japanese food historians chose Mito Kōmon as the first **Japanese** man of record to eat ramen as it anchors the dish as having a definitive Japanese origin story, complete with a Chinese cook and Japanese lord.[4]

The mythical origin story of the arrival of ramen in effect obscures the more modern beginnings of the dish, which are rooted in both European and Japanese imperialism. European imperialism accounts for Japan's initial top-down incorporation of a food economy centered around the production of meat, dairy, wheat-flour, and other European dietary staples beginning in the 1880s, and Japanese imperialism in continental Asia accounts for the popularization of Chinese food in the interwar period. Katarzyna Cwiertka asserts, "The popularity of Western and Chinese food in interwar Japan denotes the cultural implications of imperialism in East Asia. The eagerness with which the Japanese masses engaged in 'eating the West' and 'eating Asia' suggests an ambiguity in the position of Japan at the time—a colonizer with the consciousness that had been colonized by the West." [Cwiertka 2003:91]

[4] "History of Ramen" in Ramen Museum of Shin-Yokohama, Japan, March 5, 2003.

While it is futile to attempt to locate a definitive origin of ramen in Japan, most historical accounts of the dish suggest that its beginnings can be traced to Yokohama with the remaking of the city into a center of international trade and foreign residence in 1858. The Chinese residents of Yokohama's Nankinmachi ("Nanjing town" in Japanese, referring to the Chinatown district) were known to eat Nankin soba ("Nanjing noodles," a precursor to ramen), which the Chinese called both lao-mien (noodles cut by knife) and la-mien (noodles stretched by hand) depending on the preparation technique. The noodle-soups were simple, containing only alkali-laced noodles and salty pork-bone-based soup (no toppings), and were usually eaten at the end of a multi-course meal containing more elaborate dishes. The consumers of Nankin soba at this point were almost exclusively Chinese workers, traders, and students, and perhaps a few Japanese shippers, traders, customs agents, and the like who came in regular contact with the foreign residents.

Although the historical significance of the Europeans who settled in Yokohama and Kobe in exposing elite Japanese to Western high culture is well known, settlers from China also became important conduits for Japan's foreign learning in the modern period. Chinese tradesmen who hailed largely from the Southern coastal areas of the mainland often became the target of Japanese resentment for their advantageous position in terms of trade and other intercourse with the Europeans.

Particularly in the earliest stage of migration, many of the Chinese residents worked for the Europeans in occupations such as construction, tailoring, and printing, in addition to shipping and trading.

The Meiji government eased the law requiring foreigners to reside in designated settlement territories in 1889, but the part of Yokohama that had been assigned to the Chinese continued to exist as a distinctly ghettoized locale known as Nankinmachi (or "Nanjing town"). By this time, a handful of adventurous Japanese urban-dwellers willing to try new foods in new environments such as Chinese food shops began to appear, writing short pieces in journals regarding the pleasures of eating exotic foods in Yokohama's Nankinmachi. [Okada 2002:87-88]

Despite the popularity of European-style dining among elite Japanese beginning in the 1870s, Chinese food remained almost completely foreign to most non-Chinese people in Japan until the 1910s.[5] Furthermore, the people in Japan who *did* begin consuming Chinese food in the 1910s were residents of the Asakusa district that housed day laborers and industrial workers of large factories (textiles, chemicals, food-processing), who did so because it was considered cheap and filling. The four-decade lag in acceptance of Chinese food in contrast to European food illustrates the ways in which European imperialism produced Euro-centric estimations of non-European dietary preferences and other everyday life practices even outside of Europe. Ishige describes the discrepancy as follows:

> Due to their geopolitical situation, throughout history the Japanese had taken China as the model for civilization. But the nineteenth-century Japanese intellectuals were aware that Europeans had successfully invaded China in the Opium War, and so had concluded even before the

[5] Katarzyna Cwiertka has defined modern Japanese cuisine as a culinary "tripod" consisting of a hybrid of Japanese, Western, and Chinese cuisines. She dates the intellectual foundation of the culinary tripod to an essay by Noguchi Hokugen in the inaugural edition of *Fūzoku gahō* published in 1880. In the article, titled, 'Shokumotsu chōri ron,' he discusses the meritorious characteristics of each type of cuisine (nutrition for Western, appearance and taste for Japanese, and Chinese as a healthy cross between the two) and calls for an amalgamation of the three as the way to carry Japanese food forward into modern times. [Cwiertka 2003:100]

> opening of the country that the civilization of Europe and America was what moved the world. When it came to modernization, China was discarded and Western civilization was adopted as the model. Western food was seen as civilized cuisine with much to learn from, while Chinese food was neglected as the cooking of stagnant Asia. Victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5 reinforced the tendency to scorn China. Chinese food was considered 'unsanitary' and in the Chinatown districts that had grown up in Kobe, Yokohama and Nagasaki the only customers at Chinese restaurants were local Chinese residents. It was not until the end of the First World War that the Japanese began to perceive Chinese food as tasty and economical, and Chinese restaurants appeared in significant numbers in the cities. [Ishige 2001:143]

The perception of Chinese food as "unsanitary" and European food as "civilized" were not simply separate observations of dispassionate Japanese taking in foreign influences, but rather resulted from a contradistinction generated by the epistemology of modern Europe itself. The European-derived concept of hygiene based on antiseptic living, and its supplanting of pre-modern cosmological understandings of health in terms of "guarding life," was an integral part of the so-called process of "civilization and enlightenment." [Rogaski 2005] One of the consequences was that Japanese estimations of Chinese food, and most things considered Chinese, turned negative during the Meiji period.

As the name and image of China shifted from that of a center of high culture (Chūgoku, or "Middle Kingdom") to an aging, conquered nation unable to modernize (Shina), the term for the dish and the social strata of those associated with its consumption changed as well. Known initially as "Nankin soba" (Nanjing noodles) among the few cultured elites to try it during the early Meiji period, the dish was gradually reconfigured into "Shina soba" (Chinese noodles, using the colonial Japanese term for China) during the 1910s and 1920s, when it became a food associated with the industrial worker of urban Japan and consumed on a mass scale. At the same time, Western foods such as beefsteaks, biscuits, and cake became associated with the diets of the Europeanizing elite, illustrating the ways in which cultural hierarchies based on the geopolitics of the time were constructed and reinforced at the everyday level through the differentiation of eating practices.

The conceptual remaking of China as "Japan's Orient" in light of the need to construct Japan itself as a Euro-American-style imperialist nation-state, also led to a shift away from a city-specific identification for the noodles (Nankin soba) to a nation-specific identification (Shina Soba), in which a totalized, static, imaginary community of the denigrated "Other" came to be represented by the word Shina. The conceptual construction of Shina (the pre-surrender Japanese term for China) as an "early, glorious stage of oriental culture," which at the same time was "helpless, antiquarian, arrogant, guileful, militarily incompetent, and misunderstanding of Japan's true aims" was central to Japanese self-rationalizations for imperialism in East Asia. [Tanaka 1993:200-201]

The above-mentioned schema of rendering cultural difference into categories of temporal advancement still colors most of the production of scholarship in the social sciences. The attribution of all modern concepts and objects to the idealized West, and the equation of antiquated glory to China also cloud the scholarship on the history of foreign food influences in Japan. In some of the most authoritative works on the history of food in Japan, there is a noticeable trend of assigning Chinese dietary influences to pre-modern times and European influences to modern times. For example, in Adachi Iwao's oft-cited survey of Japanese food history, he includes a substantial section on Chinese food practices that people inhabiting the Archipelago absorbed during the 6th century, such as drinking tea. There is also a section of considerable length on the incorporation of Western food practices, such as the consumption of meat, in the modern period. But the author curiously leaves out any reference to the incorporation of Chinese food ways in the modern era, and he is not unique in this respect.

Rapid Industrial Growth and Changes in the Food Supply

The first wave of industrialization following the Sino-Japanese War expanded the urban workforce, which was a process that had already been underway from the mid-1880s. As Nakamura Takafusa observes, “Increases in employed population were concentrated in the secondary and tertiary sectors, which accounted for virtually all the increases in total employed population.” [Nakamura 1983:18] The primary sector consists of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; the secondary sector consists of mining, manufacturing, and construction; the tertiary sector consists of transportation, communications, trade, services, etc.

Food processing became a major component of the industrial economy, and food canning in particular was one of the earliest industries to develop in the Meiji period. The development of a nationwide rail network around the turn of the century also facilitated the distribution of food products, thereby stimulating industrial food production and processing as a whole. Canned foods became especially important for the military, and were distributed to soldiers for the first time in the Seinan Civil War of 1877. The military use of canned foods spiked during the Sino-Japanese

War and Russo-Japanese War, when the government spent a total of 2,515,738 yen and 23,099,209 yen, respectively, mainly on canned meat and fish. [Akiyama 2002:62]

The growth in urban wage laborers working at places such as canning factories and other light industrial enterprises during the latter half of the Meiji period created a heightened demand for eateries and outdoor dining establishments in the cities. According to a survey conducted by the Tokyo municipal government, by 1897, there were 476 formal restaurants, 4,470 small eating/drinking establishments, 143 teahouses, and 476 sake houses within city limits operating at the time. [Akiyama 2002:73] Particularly in the vicinity of Asakusa and Ueno, which housed much of the industrial workforce, rows of yatai carts, small eateries, and teahouses lined the narrow pathways of the city streets. Yet, at this early stage of industrialization, the number of Chinese eateries catering to Japanese diners was still negligible. It was not until the Taisho period that Chinese food became a noticeable part of the urban working class's diet.

The First World War fundamentally transformed the structure of the Japanese economy by stimulating the process of industrialization that had already been underway for three decades. The war in Europe allowed Japan to take the place of the Great Powers in many of the Asian colonial markets, creating a boon for exporters and boosting industrial production overall. Specifically, between 1914 and 1918, Japan's industrial output rose from 1.4 billion to 6.8 billion yen. [Gordon 2003: 139] While manufacturing had already been growing at a relatively high rate of 5% per year on average in the decade following the Russo-Japanese War, during

World War One, it jumped to 9.3% per year. [Akiyama 2002:73] In 1919, industrial production overtook agricultural production in terms of output for the first time, netting 6.74 billion yen and 4.16 billion yen, respectively. [Takemura 2004:92] According to Nakamura, five notable trends marked the economic boom generated by the First World War: 1) an increase in production; 2) a worsening of income distribution; 3) a rise in employment and particularly a working class in secondary industry; 4) heavy and chemical industrialization with urban electrification that changed the character of industry; 5) the advance of imperialism. [Nakamura 1983:153]

Industries such as steel, chemicals, textiles, tools, and food products all saw a dramatic rise in output, but the growth in production did not result in a corresponding increase in real wages for workers. In fact, real wages for industrial workers decreased between 1916 and 1918, even as corporate profits soared. The result was a rise in the visibility of social problems resulting from heightening economic inequality, and a newfound boisterousness on the part of industrial workers, whose ranks swelled by 1.4 million over the course of the war. The farming population correspondingly declined by approximately 1.2 million over the same period. [Nakamura 1983:148]

In 1918, a series of rallies, protests, and rebellions involving both industrial workers and farmers in Japan signaled the dawn of a new age of mass political organization. The protests of 1918, known collectively as the Rice Riots, involved roughly one million protesters, and produced a mass awakening that consequently initiated the era of party cabinets, labor unions, and social policies. According to

Michael Lewis, the Rice Riots consisted of a wave of mass protests involving "traditional protest," city riots, rural riots, and coalfield riots, each of which contributed to the subsequent implementation of social welfare policies. The city riots in particular combined protests against rising rice prices with demands for social reform and political participation as the rights of "citizens." One point noted by Lewis is that a chief demand of the rioters was that they be provided with Japanese rice, not rice from the colonies, which was considered oily and smelly (due to the oil-treated hemp sacks in which traders shipped them), even though Korean and Taiwanese rice was usually available at much lower costs. [Lewis 1990:184]

The rapid pace of industrialization that accompanied the economic boom during World War I raised Japanese dependence on food from the colonies, and widened the wage differential between agricultural and industrial laborers. Agricultural wages fell sharply relative to industrial wages in particular during the wartime boom due to the increased competition from colonial agricultural production. As Hayami and Ruttan point out, "the success of the program [of colonial agricultural development] in raising rice production and productivity in the two colonies permitted large-scale imports of rice from these territories, which in turn depressed the price and further discouraged the production of rice in Japan." [Hayami and Ruttan 1970:574] Thus, the imperial economy's increased dependency on cheap labor and food supplies from the colonies reduced welfare for agricultural workers at home, which in turn accelerated the shift away from the primary sector toward the secondary and tertiary sectors. In addition to stimulating colonial rice production, the government began studying ways to substitute rice with other staple grains such as wheat and soybeans in the case of future shortfalls in rice supplies for the growing metropolitan population. In 1919, for example, the government published a pamphlet titled, "Recipes for Rice Surrogates." [Cwiertka 2004:121] The shortage of rice, and the need for substitute staples to alleviate food scarcity among residents of urban industrial areas would become even more pronounced during 1940s, when the second major Chinese-noodle-soup boom occurred in urban Japan.

The advent of nutritional science designed to maximize the productivity of the working population was another central feature of the sweeping changes occurring in interwar period. Although Japanese scientists were already conducting basic nutritional studies based on European theories and methods in the early 1880s, the proliferation of research centers and academic societies dedicated to the study of nutrition did not take off until the late 1910s and 1920s. The establishment of the Institute for the Study of Physics and Chemistry (Rikagaku kenkyūjo) in 1917 paved the way for food studies, and national societies such as the Nutritional Studies Association (Eiyō gakkai) soon followed.

The institutes conducted studies that were meant in large part to address the growing problems surrounding food production and distribution, particularly that of providing adequate nutrition for the industrial workforce to remain productive. To this end, they built on French notions of a "minimum standard of living" invented during the 1840s and developed thereafter, to find the cheapest ways to reproduce labor power. Dana Simmons argues:

> Chemists in this period invented a new paradigm for measuring the human economy: the minimum standard of living. In 1840s France a complex of concepts emerged for quantifying and normalizing life functions. Minimum standards fixed quantities of food, air, and other consumer goods deemed necessary to sustain life. I claim that by the twentieth century, a wide field of measurement and intervention focused specifically on the consuming body. Its practitioners shared a common program: to maintain bodily functions at the lowest possible expense of goods and money. Consumption and waste became the object of intensive scientific optimization. [Simmons 2004:13]

Japanese scientists were fully in touch with the state of nutritional studies in Europe and the Americas by the late Meiji period, and were full participants in the race to isolate vitamins and chemical compounds in various foods, as seen from the invention of monosodium glutamate in Japan.

Mass Consumerism in Interwar Japan

The rapid transformation of Tokyo into an industrial city during the 1910s and 1920s involved many changes in the daily life practices of its inhabitants as well. Specifically within the context of post-WWI Japan, Harootunian observes that “new social constituencies and subject positions like the people (minshū), the masses (taishū), the modern boy (mobo), modern girl (moga), café waitress, bar maid, and so on, validated by recently introduced commodities people were encouraged to buy and use, called attention to a new kind of social life in Japan for the first time in its history, sometimes called modan raifu or simply seikatsu.” [Harootunian 2000: 97] A sense of subversion became associated with many of these social constituencies, particularly the modern girl, factory worker, and the Marx boy, as their activism or very lifestyle called into question the established norms of gender, class, and political authority. Miriam Silverberg argues, "there was a critical tension between the coexistence of an ethnocentric, essentialist, and productivist state ideology and apparatus premised on ultimate allegiance to the emperor, in whom sovereignty resided, and the flourishing of this highly commodified consumer culture selling contradictory images of class, gender, cultural traditions, and leisure." [Silverberg 1993:62]

Cafes were one of the most noticeable establishments where the "commodified consumer culture" noted by Silverberg proliferated during the 1920s, and also where customers commonly consumed Chinese noodle-soup in prewar Japan. Particularly in Sapporo, the dish became a fixture of cafes and sold as "ramen" rather than Shina soba already in the 1930s, a much-touted point in the lore of ramen history discussed further below. The café became a fixture of everyday life in Tokyo as well, particularly after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 destroyed much of the old city. Elise Tipton argues, "It is no exaggeration to describe the decade after the earthquake as 'the café era…' [t]he cafes and bars made Ginza a 'theater' or 'stage' upon which modern life was performed…Cafes flourished in other districts, especially Asakusa and increasingly Shinjuku, but they did not possess the top-class image of Ginza cafes." [Tipton 2000:122-123] Writers frequently employed the motif of the café to illustrate the social problems associated with capitalist modernity in Japan during the 1920s. Tipton states,

> As in this "Jokyū no uta" (Song of a Café Waitress) and Hayashi Fumiko's Hōrōki, the eroticized, commodified, and victimized representation of the café waitress dominates the "dark side" of modernity. Out of her context of the café also emerge glimpses of economic stagnation and depression for the new white-collar middle

> class in images of the "wretched" unemployed or poorly paid salarymen who comprised the majority of patrons. Alternatively, images of patrons buying erotic services evoke a new era of decadent mass consumerism and selfish indulgence. [Tipton 2000:120]

Another emblem of modern city life in the form of mass consumer culture that flourished in the interwar period was the department store and its restaurants. Incidentally, it was another place where Shina soba was commonly served, along with dumplings, fried rice, and other domesticated Chinese foods. Cwiertka argues that department store dining halls "represented the mass catering of the future not only because of their multicultural menus," but also due to their heavy reliance on technology and rationalized corporate structure of advertising, supply-chain management, and attention to hygiene and speed in their operations. [Cwiertka 2003:108]

The film-viewing experience was another emblematic component of modern everyday life for city-dwellers, and it too was deeply connected to the consumption of Chinese noodle-soup, as a visit to the Shina soba pushcart stall became a common destination for people after watching a movie beginning in the 1920s and 1930s. Particularly in Asakusa, which attracted thousands of daily visitors to its movie theaters, Shina soba-eating became a hallmark of a visit to the neighborhood. In referring to the crowds, theaters, shops, and food stands that transformed Asakusa from a lively pilgrimage site into a dynamic space of modern city life, Silverberg notes, "In sum, the eroticism of Asakusa could be defined by sensation, food, motion, and vision." [Silverberg 2006:178]

The new practices of everyday life partaken by people in urban Japan such as film-viewing, department store-shopping, Shina soba-dining, or café-mingling during the interwar period spawned new efforts to study their historical and anthropological implications by Japanese ethnographers using scientific means of analysis. Intellectuals such as Yanagita Kunio, Kon Wajirō, and Gonda Yasunosuke each recorded the drastic changes in everyday life that were taking place from the late Meiji to the early Showa period, leaving a wealth of data on how new types of foods and ways of consuming them, among other practices, fit the new work schedules and everyday lives of urbanites in this period.[6] Kon in particular recorded the practices of everyday life that were transforming rapidly as Tokyo industrialized with the intent of transmitting to subsequent generations accurate knowledge of contemporary customs. Kon, who referred to his work as "modernology," observed how new identities were formed as people increasingly defined themselves and one another through the commodities they consumed, and the way they consumed them. [Harootunian 2000:95]

Kon's focus on the changes in everyday custom was also significant in its implications for the making and study of history. As Harootunian notes, "[t]he past, in Kon's thinking, appears only to show how different the present—the contemporary is…Kon is not at all interested in establishing a continuity with it through a category of tradition." [Harootunian 2000:182] In producing a record of contemporary custom that differed from (national) tradition, Kon's work presented a

[6] See, for example, Yanagita Kunio *Japanese Manners and Customs in the Meiji Era*, Kon Wajirō *Kon Wajirō shü*, and Gonda Yasunosuke *Gonda Yasunosuke chosakushū*.

potential, similar to that of Tosaka's, for practice to be considered at the level of experience (within the context of capitalist industrial development), rather than through the realm of a static, imaginary, national culture. The adaptation of new practices of everyday life among the laboring masses in the industrial metropolis of Tokyo, including the consumption of new foods such as Shina soba, provided evidence of these social changes in a concrete way.

Shina Soba: Food for the Urban Masses of Interwar Japan

For newcomers to the city arriving from the countryside, the flourishing of cafes, bars, restaurants, department stores, and theaters in post-earthquake Tokyo signaled the arrival of modern life. One of the new types of establishments that proliferated in interwar Japan was the Shina shoku (Chinese food) restaurant or Shina soba yatai (pushcart stall) catering mainly to wage-earners in Asakusa, Ueno, and other the working-class districts. Part of the city-going experience for many included a visit to the Chinese noodle-soup stand for a taste of the quintessential dish of modern Tokyo, as seen in a short scene in an early film directed by Ozu Yasujirō. In the film, Hitori Musuko (Only Son), released in 1936, a young widow from the countryside struggles to put her only son through school in the hopes that he will be able to find good work in the city after graduating. The son eventually moves to Tokyo to find work, leaving his mother alone in the countryside. After ten years she pays a visit to the city to find out how he is living. The disconnect between the successful career path she assumed he had taken, and the revelation of the actual conditions of unemployment and poverty in which she finds her son, forms much of the dramatic tension in the film.

She learns that in his time away, her son had betrothed and spawned a son without bothering to inform her, catching her by complete surprise. In addition, the mother finds that her son is broke and out of stable work, which is another unexpected development. When he takes her on a tour of the city, he treats her to a bowl of Chinese noodle-soup at a pushcart stall using the little money he has. She is completely unfamiliar with the dish, and only tries it after her son urges her to do so. The scene illustrates both the novelty of the dish from the perspective of an old woman from the countryside, and the son's inability to afford a more proper meal. [Hitori Musuko]

Not only was Shina soba an important food in marking the arrival of the new customs associated with urban everyday life witnessed in areas such as Asakusa, it became the most widely recognized component of an assimilated and domesticated "Chinese cuisine" in Japan that flourished in the interwar period. Despite the misgivings or unfamiliarity towards Chinese food held by Japanese during the Meiji period (noted by Ishige above), by the 1920s and 1930s, people in urban Japan were enjoying domesticated Chinese-style cuisine on a widespread scale. Katarzyna Cwiertka observes:

> Throughout the 1930s, fancy eating-out establishments serving Chinese cuisine became popular in Japanese cities. Cafes with chinoiserie decorations and waitresses dressed in Chinese costume flourished…Chinese liquors (shinazake) were increasingly featured in the advertising of department stores, and the descriptions of food habits of the Chinese population appeared in popular magazines. Chinese food

> and drink translated colonialism into a concrete experience. [Cwiertka 2003:114]

By 1923, Tokyo was home to roughly 1,000 Chinese food restaurants and 5,000 Western food restaurants, not including the numerous cafes, bars, and mobile food carts. [Ishige 2001:157] Ishige notes,

> Western and Chinese cuisine were accepted largely because they provided foods that were lacking in the native cuisine—meat, oils and fats, and spices. As knowledge of modern nutritional science spread, meat dishes came to be seen as energy providers, and Western and Chinese foods were considered highly nutritious. The mass media also promoted new foods and nutritional awareness. Foreign-style recipes appeared regularly in women's magazines from the 1920s, and nutritious foods became a common topic of radio programs and newspaper articles in the early 1930s. [Ishige 2001:157]

Ishige's description of the driving forces behind the popularization of Chinese and Western foods in the 1920s highlights the interconnectedness of modern nutritional science and the changing dietary habits of people in Japan and throughout the industrialized world. His explanation of the domestication and adoption of Chinese and Western-style foods on a mass scale in the 1920s points to the spread of scientifically-sanctioned perceptions regarding their strong nutritional qualities, particularly with respect to meat, wheat, and dairy products. The development of mass media, and the spread of scientific knowledge concerning food and nutrition to people in city and country alike also took off around the 1920s, as Ishige mentions.

The publication of women's magazines and their wide circulation throughout Japan also contributed to dietary change and the awareness of different types of foreign foods. Yamada Masahira was a cook who played a particularly significant role in spreading recipes and knowledge about Chinese food to audiences in Japan through his articles in housewives' journals. Yamada established his reputation with a set of serialized articles featured in Fujin no tomo (a popular housewives' journal) beginning in 1924, titled, "Shirōto ni dekiru Shina ryōri" (Chinese Food for Beginners). A collection of his articles was later published in 1926 and quickly became one of the best sellers of the time.

With over 20 years of experience as a student of cooking in China, Yamada's writing often lamented the modern Japanese obsession with all things Western and the relative lack of appreciation for the nutrition and variety found in Chinese cuisine. In the preface to his book, he argues:

> Chinese food is nutritious, sanitary, and at the same time extremely suitable for everyday household dining. Even so, in recent years our country has not recognized this, and Western food has been absorbed into households much more definitively, which puzzles me, especially considering the geographic proximity of China. Part of the problem may be that there is a misunderstanding concerning Chinese food that it is too difficult to prepare. Therefore, I realized that in order to spread knowledge of Chinese cooking, it is necessary to begin with the simplest and most pragmatic dishes, which comprise the recipes in this book. [Okada 2000:115]

The fact that Yamada chose to define Chinese food as "nutritious" and "sanitary" is again telling, as it points to the rise in nutritional consciousness with respect to foreign foods noted above, as well as a deliberate effort on the part of Yamada to rectify the common view of Chinese food as "unsanitary."

While authors such as Yamada spread the word concerning the benefits of Chinese food as a source of nutrition through housewives' magazines, the military was the first site where most non-urban Japanese actually encountered assimilated Chinese-style cooking. The military thus became one of the primary places where the findings of state-sponsored nutritional science were disseminated to the masses. Katarzyna Cwiertka asserts:

> The shift in attitude towards Chinese food, the rise of Chinese food from cheap food for the lower classes to a culinary fashion, was initiated by the inclusion of Chinese dishes into the military menus during the 1920s. The respectability that the military enjoyed in Japanese society facilitated the advance of Chinese cuisine. Moreover, military dieticians propagated Chinese recipes as cheap, nourishing, and close to Japanese cooking. [Cwiertka 2003:113]

As Cwiertka finds, the interest in Chinese food on the part of government bureaucrats administering military nutrition was due to its "cheap and nourishing" characteristics, and its proximity in flavoring to Japanese cooking. The popularization of Chinese food in Japan during the 1920 and 1930s was thus a confluence of the elements noted above: the rise of the industrial working class with heavy demands for food, the colonial outsourcing of food production, modern nutritional science advocating more wheat, meat, and dairy intake, mechanized production techniques such as wheat-processing and noodle-making, and Japanese imperialism in Northeast China. Each of the above-mentioned changes—in food supply, Sino-Japanese relations, industrial production, labor specialization, nutritional science, leisure activities, and eating practices—were closely tied together and manifested concretely in the popularization of Chinese noodle-soup in this period.

In 1910, the first Japanese-operated Shina shoku shop of record opened in the Asakusa District of Tokyo, an area significantly known for its teeming population of low-wage workers. The restaurant, Rai-rai ken (a name that would later be used for countless other ramen shops in the postwar period), became known for its cheap, tasty, and fast Shina soba as well as other Chinese foods, such as shūmai and wonton, which quickly earned it popularity among local residents. [Okada 2001:92] Many other shops in urban areas followed suit, causing a small Shina shoku boom in various cities in Japan. By the early Taisho period, the wave of industrial output brought on by the Great War in Europe had produced a sizeable contingency of Japanese-operated Shina shoku and Shina soba shops catering largely to the local workers and students. The cheapness of Chinese noodle-soup (made possible by the industrialization of food production), and the rapidity with which it was served, made it an ideal food for wage-workers and students in a hurry. Nankin soba in the late Meiji, on the other hand, had been produced largely by and for the Chinese migrants of Nankinmachi.

Shina soba thus became a recognizable component of the urban, working-class landscape of downtown Tokyo by the 1920s. The increasing popularity of Shina soba as one of the first forms of mechanically-processed, mass-produced foods reflects directly upon the new work schedules, technologies, movement of workers and students (including Chinese), and commodity choices that the working masses of urban Japan encountered and produced. Shina soba became an emblematic food of the interwar mass culture for the following reasons: 1) its cheapness in symbolic value via associations with Shina, as opposed to the West; 2) the mechanized, mass-scale production process of the noodles, making it a food truly of and for a factory society; 3) the short amount of time necessary to prepare and consume the meal; 4) the increasingly desocialized eating practices that it epitomized. Each of these elements is a facet of Japan's development as a modern capitalist nation-state, and illustrates why the food became a staple of the working masses.

The low symbolic status of Shina soba as a dish introduced by people from Shina (a conquered, defeated nation no longer worthy of emulation particularly after the Sino-Japanese War), as opposed to the more highly regarded foods from the nations of the West (croquette, steak, cake) reflected the class differences associated with the primary consumers of each type of food. As stated above, although it was Japan's exposure to the gunboat diplomacy of the U.S. and imperialist nations of Western Europe that caused Chinese *and* Western foods to be introduced and consumed in Meiji Japan on a newfound scale, the two cuisines were absorbed at different rates, and became categorized differently due to the disparity in international political prestige enjoyed by each group—one the colonized, one the colonizer. Shina soba thus became a marker of cheapness partly due to its associations with the defeated Shina, while bread and cake, for example, became associated more with the bourgeoisie.

The industrialization of food production was also a factor in the proliferation of cheap noodle shops during the interwar period. The first noodle-making machine in Japan appeared in 1883. [Okada 2001:71] From that time on, mechanized noodle making rapidly grew, and eventually superseded the hand-stretched method, probably during the late 1910s. The delivery of basic foodstuffs such as rice, flour, soy, and sugar from the colonies to the metropole for processing entailed an overall rationalization of food production, distribution, and consumption. The transition to a factory system for the production of food was but a part of a larger transition to a factory society in Japan and elsewhere.

The adaptation of Shina soba by the wage-earning masses, for whom the constraints of standardized time were felt most acutely, also signaled the increasing desire for rapidity in the preparation and consumption of food. In making Shina soba, cooks usually prepared a large pot of soup to serve an entire day's worth of bowls, leaving only the boiling of the noodles to be left for when the orders were placed. In this manner, Shina soba was usually served within a couple of minutes of the customer's arrival, making it particularly appealing to the hungry, exhausted, and hurried worker of modern industry. It is again no wonder that a food with this quality of speed appealed to the wage-earning masses of Tokyo, whose work was measured in standardized units of time.

The escalation of the atomization that accompanied capitalist development in Japan is another qualitative change in everyday life that can be seen in the popularization of eating Shina soba, and more so with respect to instant ramen. As Mintz notes in his analysis of Britain in the 19th century, "[n]ew schedules of work and rest, changing conditions of employment, the end of the dependent relationship of agricultural laborer to squire, the development of a putting-out system, then a factory system—these were among the contextual conditions for changes in food habits." [Mintz 1985:183] These conditions "made ingestion more individualized" and “desocialized eating.” Therefore, Mintz argues, “choices to be made about eating—when, where, what, how much, how quickly—are now made with less reference to fellow eaters, and within ranges predetermined, on one hand, by food technology and, on the other, by what are perceived as time constraints.” [Mintz 1985:202] Shina soba fits quite neatly into this picture, as its increase in popularity in the interwar period, and even more so afterwards, reflected changing eating habits caused by the industrialization of the Japanese economy. The rise in individualized, outdoor dining, and the proportional decrease in the consumption of home-cooked meals were thus deeply intertwined with the rapid rise in demand for industrial workers in the city during World War One and after the Great Kanto Earthquake.

The adaptation of Shina soba as a food for the modern, industrial Japanese worker was thus apparent by the early Taisho period, when shops such as Rai-rai ken began to appear as viable profit-making entities. By 1928, the consumption of Shina soba was significant enough for the first Shina Soba Producers’ Trade Union of Greater Tokyo to be established, signaling the rise of the working class as a political force as well. [Okada 2001:104] In this manner, one can see that the consumption of Shina soba no longer epitomized an exotic culinary experience (as it had for those bunkajin [Okada’s word] who first tried Nankin soba in Yokohama’s Chinese ghetto), but rather a “custom” increasingly associated with the working masses of Tokyo.

Food in Early Showa Proletarian Literature

In her article on food in 1920s Japanese literature, Tomoko Aoyama argues that proletariat literature during that decade focused on class divisions and exploitation within industrial workplaces, unlike stories produced during the previous decade, which had tended to focus on exploitation within the agricultural sector. [Aoyama 2000:156] She cites Kobayashi Takiji's classic, "Crab Cannery Boat" ("Kani kōsen") published in 1929, and Sata Ineko's short story, "From the Caramel Factory" ("Kyarameru kōjō kara") published in 1928, as examples of this trend. In Kobayashi's well-known piece, the filth and anger accompanying work on a crab-canning boat are described in horrific detail, and the central metaphor repeated throughout the tale is of workers being eaten by the forces of industrial capitalism. Construction workers in Hokkaidō are described as "eating their own limbs in order to survive," and miners are described as being "sliced like tuna" in frequent explosions. Similarly, the workers at the crab cannery are eaten alive by fleas and ticks on the lower decks of the boat, while their bosses feast on the upper deck. The climax of the story occurs when the workers recognize the identity of their true enemies: the industrialists who exploit the workers under the pretext of "a mission to solve the problems of over-population and food shortage," the military that protects the industrialists from the workers, and the imperial family, to whom the company makes a presentation of its product once a year. Thus, by the end, the workers are fully aware of who is responsible for their condition of being eaten. [Aoyama 2000:156]

In "From the Caramel Factory," the heroine is a thirteen-year-old who battles hunger and cold while working in a caramel factory. She is allowed to eat only broken fragments of caramel and sweet potatoes, the latter for which she is charged from her meager salary. The contrast in class privilege between the producers of the candies and the consumers is powerfully highlighted by the story. Thus, as secondary sector employment rapidly expanded in the 1920s, proletariat literature describing the agony of work in the food processing industry and the inequality built into the industrialization process became common.

Another example of the use of food in proletariat literature from that era is a short story by Satomura Kinzō, titled “Chronicle of Starting a Shina Soba Shop,” published in 1933 by the journal Kaizō.[7] The story describes a day in the life of a newcomer to the Shina soba yatai business, who struggles to make ends meet for his family and maintain a semblance of dignity at the same time. Most of the story illustrates the physical and mental hardships and the technical difficulties involved in building a Shina soba yatai business. Not only is the tale a glimpse into the life of the yatai operator’s routine, it is also a critique of the economic and social desperation in which he finds himself consigned.

The story begins with the narrator preparing for work as the sun goes down, underlining how out of synch he is with the natural cycle of diurnal sleep. The author, writing in the first-person, states how agonizing the routine remains no matter how many times he repeats it. Next, he describes the pain he feels in his calves as a result of pulling the yatai cart on a nightly basis, and asks himself why he must begin working at a time of the day when even the birds are easing into rest. He wonders aloud, “Can such an existence be considered living?” [Satomura 1933:54]

[7] Yamamoto Mitsuhiko launched the journal *Kaizō* in 1919, which became known for its left-leaning and Christian pieces addressing the social problems accompanying capitalist development. Authorities shut down the publication of the journal and charged its publishers with promoting communism in 1942 as part of the Yokohama Incident.

Despite his clear disdain for the work, he continues out of a sense of responsibility toward his wife and four-year-old son. Although he pities his wife for having to bear a poverty-ridden lifestyle, he also resents her for not understanding the toil involved in making a living out of a Shina soba yatai. He states, “She is unconcerned whether I put food on the table by writing, yatai vending, or going off to work in the countryside, so long as there is enough to get along.” [Satomura 1933:55]

The desire to provide for his son, however, keeps the narrator inspired to keep working everyday. Yet, he asks, “How many others have discarded their ideals and worked tirelessly just for the sake of providing a living for their children, only to become ugly carcasses or insect shells left by the wayside?” [Satomura 1933:55] The narrator’s thoughts thus turn negative once again as he leaves his home, pulling his cart into the dark street.

Next, he complains about the intricacy of running the business, particularly the blowing of the charumera flute[8] that became the signature call of all roaming Shina soba yatai operators around that time. He distresses over the mocks and insults from café waitresses and passersby, who tell him that his lack of talent in playing the flute also deters them from trying his noodles. People trying to sleep often berate him for playing the flute in their neighborhood so late at night. [Satomura 1933:57] Competition is also fierce. By the time he arrives at the café district of Kōenji, there are already five or six other Shina soba yatai set up. He

[8] The charumera flute, which disappeared from Japanese cities (along with the roaming yatai business as a whole) in the early 1960s, is still used by food cart vendors in parts of Southeast Asia. It is a wooden reed instrument that is usually played to the tune of so-la-ti-la-so so-la-ti-so-la.

continues walking because he is unlikely to win over any new customers in such a saturated market anyhow.

After serving a few unhappy customers who complain about his undercooking of the noodles, he encounters a group of seven café waitresses who order a bowl each. One of them is drunk, and begins to demean him with all manners of insults. The author concludes the story by stating, "The waitresses are human too. When they get drunk, they too want to pick on someone weaker than themselves—that's just part of being human. In this case, I was happy to soothe the rage of the drunken café waitress." [Satomura 1933:60] The Shina soba yatai operator, according to the description in the story, is thus sufficiently powerless as to enable the women of the night to feel comfortable in belittling him. In this way, the Shina soba maker sacrifices himself for the good of all, serving as the last-resort whipping-post in the nocturnal economy of decadence and desperation.

Kobayashi Kurasaburō's "Account of a Soba Shop," published in the December 1938 edition of *Chūō kōrōn*, another left-leaning journal, is less concerned with poverty than with industrial capitalism's supplanting of inherited food practices. Kobayashi's editorial decries the undercutting of long-existing food practices by foreign foods and industrial food production, and elucidates at length on the value of old-time soba shops, which largely disappeared from Tokyo after the 1923 earthquake. He begins the piece by grumbling about the lack of expertise in the contemporary soba business, where "one finds shops selling Shina soba, curry rice, shiruko, and mitsumame all under one roof. In the old times, a soba shop would be embarrassed to serve even rice-based dishes. These days, it is sad to see so many soba shops that do not seem like soba shops (sobaya rashiku nai sobaya)." [Kobayashi 1938:428]

The author goes on to bemoan the industrialization of the soba production process, pointing out how it has resulted in lower quality food and a corruption of the principles governing the food business in general. He states, "In the old days, local farmers in Nakano, Koenji, and Musashino grew the buckwheat, and soba shops used to turn the buckwheat into soba-flour themselves, which is why the soba was so fresh. These days, however, the buckwheat travels long distances and soba flour is mass-produced by big merchants. The priority for these merchants is not how to make the tastiest food, but how to produce the food at the lowest cost. In this way, the merchants' first instinct is to use the abacus to calculate profits, which is simply unavoidable….Furthermore, these days, shops actually advertise it when they hand-make their noodles, meaning machine-produced soba has become ubiquitous. It did not used to be like that." [Kobayashi 1938:430]

The editorial's critical perspective toward the transformation in food production speaks to many of the disruptions caused by the overall shift to an industrial economy. The decline in farmers and farmland near the metropole, the large food corporations' attention to cutting costs and taking profits above all else, and the newfound value of the handmade were central features of the shift to a factory system that would only become more accentuated in the postwar period. Kobayashi ends by lamenting the loss of the old-time language that marked the everyday life of the pre-industrial soba shop. The author's attention to the correspondence between trends in food production, economic organization, and the use of language relates a sense of the connectedness with which many intellectuals understood the different areas of social life undergoing rapid transformation.

Local Shina Soba Origin Stories and the Writing of History

Partly because of the low symbolic value of consuming Shina soba, and partly because of its ordinariness as a commodity, there are few records concerning the dish, the people who produced it, or those who consumed it during the prewar period. Thus, for information about Shina soba in this period, we must turn to anecdotal evidence and legends recorded during the 1970s and 1980s concerning certain Japanese proprietors who paved the way for the popularization of the dish in the postwar period. There are a number of illuminating local origin stories that highlight the centrality of Chinese cooks and Japanese eccentrics in popularizing the dish, beginning with the story of Rai-rai ken's founding in 1910.

Ozaki Kenichi was a customs agent working in Yokohama who resigned from his relatively prestigious work in government to open the first Japanese-run Shina soba shop of record. The fact that a customs agent would leave an official occupation of repute (underscored by the saber that accompanied the uniform) to work as a restaurateur in the Shitamachi district of Tokyo was indeed rare, but also pioneered a path that many other white collar workers would follow in the postwar period, a phenomenon known as datsu-sara, or salary-man escapee. In his days as a customs official, Ozaki frequented the Chinese restaurants of Nankinmachi, which were only a stone's throw from his workplace. In launching Rai-rai ken, Ozaki hired Chinese chefs from Nankinmachi who hailed from the Guangdong region, and used alkali-laced noodles in their soups. However, unlike the plain noodle-soups with no toppings served in Nankinmachi, Rai-rai ken is known to have served their Shina soba with chaashū (roasted pork), naruto (fish-meal cake), and scallions, a concoction that would later serve as the model for authentic Tokyo ramen. Rai-rai ken later added sliced marinated bamboo shoots known as “Shina take” (Chinese bamboo) to their Shina soba, which also became a fixture of the dish after the war. Just as Shina soba became Chūka soba or ramen, Shina take became known as “menma” (short for “men no matake”) in the postwar period. [Okuyama 2003:47-48]

Although nearly every city in Japan has its own origin stories of Japanese Shina soba pioneers, the tale of Ōhisa Masaji (and chef Wang Wen Zai) in Sapporo is of particular interest and fame in Japan due to the centrality of Sapporo ramen in the postwar period, and the glimpse it provides into anti-Chinese discrimination at the time. Ōhisa, like Ozaki of Rai-rai ken, had worked for the government, first for the national railroad company, then as an officer in the police force, before opening a Shina shoku restaurant. In 1922, after meeting Wang Wen Zai, a native of Shandong Province who had been working as a cook in Sakhalin (Karafutō), Ōhisa and his wife decided to convert their small bento shop into Shina Ryōri Takeya, catering mainly to local students and railroad workers.

Ōhisa Tatsu, the wife of the proprietor, witnessed how chef Wang and the other Chinese workers often endured insults from customers, who would order the dish using the terms “Chankoro soba,” and “Chan soba,” Chankoro and Chan-chan being some of the most derogatory terms possible for a Japanese person to call a Chinese person at the time. In an effort to assuage some of the degradation, Ōhisa

Tatsu claims that she suggested they replace the term Shina soba with ramen on the menu, gradually easing customers out of the habit of using the offensive terms. The practice eventually caught on around Sapporo, which in turn became the first city (and the only one during the prewar period) where the term ramen circulated more widely than Shina soba. [Okuyama 2003:57]

Ōhisa Tatsu's self-gratifying story promoting her own role in coining the term ramen and breaking down ethnic barriers may not be entirely baseless, but it is undoubtedly as much a product of the postwar sensibilities and practices that prevailed at the time of the story's recording in the 1980s as anything else. The tale attributes the renaming of the dish to Japanese female compassion for a pitiable foreigner during the high era of Japanese imperialism, rather than defeat in war. The crystallization of a dominant historical narrative for ramen during the 1980s and its political functions will be explored in more depth later, but it is noteworthy that what little evidence that is available regarding the dish and the relationships surrounding it in the interwar period are deeply colored by the sensibilities of writers from the 1980s, who were the first to record such materials as serious history.

Ōhisa opened a second shop in 1928, named Hōran, in the city of Asahikawa, Hokkaido. Asahikawa's location as the last point north on the Hokkaido train line made it a collection and processing point for agricultural goods. The high volume of wheat flour and livestock passing through Asahikawa, and the large number of industrial workers in food processing factories (as well as a garrison of soldiers stationed there), made it a logical place for Shina soba and other fast-food shop operators to open business.

Shina shoku restaurants also began appearing in other small cities such as Sano, Kurume, Wakayama, Onomichi, Hakata, Kumamoto, and Kagoshima during the 1920s and 1930s. All of these cities had a relatively high volume of industrial workers (often Chinese and Korean), food-processing plants, and train traffic, which like Asahikawa, made them logical spots for Shina soba shop operators to thrive. Sano, which was a city of roughly 50,000 at the beginning of the Showa period, already had 160 Shina soba shops (including yatai) by 1928. [Okuyama 2003:70] Again, the presence of wheat-growing farms and flour processing plants in the vicinity, as well as a high concentration of industrial workers (involved in the textile industry in the case of Sano) provided a suitable backdrop for the early development of Chinese noodle-soup in that city. Sano's significance as a transportation hub where the Jōetsu line and the Tōhoku line joined route also contributed to its development as an important regional center of early industry. Furthermore, Sano was one of the first places where mechanized, large-scale noodle production replaced the hand-stretched method. Thus, the fact that Sano, an important city in the silk trade, became a relatively early center for the production and consumption of Chinese noodle-soup is not surprising.

According to Ogawa Hideo, the current third-generation owner of the renowned Sano ramen shop, Hōraiken, the first establishment to serve Shina soba in the city was Ebisu Shokudō, which opened in 1916. Although Ebisu Shokudō was supposedly a Western-style eatery, its chef was Chinese, and he decided to include some Chinese foods on the menu, including Shina soba. Ogawa Risaburō, Hideo's grandfather, was an apprentice for the unnamed Chinese cook at Ebisu Shokudō, and eventually learned the trade of Shina soba creation. In 1930, Ogawa Risaburō created his own yatai business and began selling Shina soba using the recipe he had learned while apprenticing. His success led him to establish Hōraiken, which became one of the first restaurants in Sano to specialize in Shina soba, according to his grandson and current owner. [Okuyama 2003:70]

The origin story of ramen in Wakayama centers on a man from Korea known as Takamoto Kōji, who began a yatai operation in 1940, which he named Marutaka. His idiosyncratic method of preparing the soup—boiling the pork bone in soy sauce once, then using those bones for soup broth and that soy sauce as marinade for the chāshū—became the standard "Wakayama method" for preparing ramen, and his protégés, most of whom were Korean, dominated the postwar ramen-making business in Wakayama. The centrality of not only Chinese but also Korean migrant workers in pioneering the spread of Shina soba is again underscored by the story of Takamoto.

Miyamoto Tokio, who had previously run an udon yatai business, launched the first Shina soba shop of record in Kyūshū in 1938. The name of the store, Nankin Senryō (南京千両[9]), was a pun on the homonym (南京占領) meaning "Occupy Nanjing," celebrating the infamous 1937 invasion of Nanjing by the Japanese Army. The overt anti-Chinese sentiment of Miyamoto, who had himself apprenticed under a Chinese chef in Yokohama's Nankinmachi just a few years earlier, stands in stark contrast to the tale of attempted racial harmony on the part of

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[9] Senryō is the Japanese term for the *Sarcandra glabra* plant, which grows wildly throughout East Asia, and is used as a decoration in Japanese New Year's decorations.

Ōhisa Tatsu toward chef Wang discussed above.

In technical terms, however, Miyamoto was a talented chef who pioneered the Kyūshū-style tonkotsu soup base, consisting of pork bones boiled down in water over hours into a “muddy white” consistency with relatively little soy sauce added, usually served with extra thin white noodles. Miyamoto is said to have developed his soup-making methods from watching Chinese chefs cook chanpon noodles (also known as Shina udon, a regional specialty of Nagasaki) during his apprenticeship in Nankinmachi. Miyamoto’s shop catered mainly to students and soldiers stationed in Kurume, which partially explains why he chose to name his restaurant “Occupy Nanjing.” [Okuyama 2003:77]

Onomichi was another center of early industrial production, serving as a hub for the ship-building trade. The sizeable industrial workforce, which included a relatively high number of Taiwanese and Korean migrant workers, made Onomichi another fertile space for the emergence of Shina soba shops and yatai during the prewar period. Zhu A Chun, a migrant worker from Taichung, Taiwan, worked at a shipyard until he lost his job, when he opened what has subsequently been recorded as the first Shina soba operation in Onomichi. Zhu’s Shina soba yatai, which he eventually expanded into a small restaurant, became a popular attraction for the after-movie crowd as well as his former coworkers at the shipyards. [Okuyama 2003:84]

A similar history to that of Shina soba can be found in the history of Shina udon, now known as chanpon, which became popular in the city of Nagasaki around the turn of the century. A man named Chen Ping Jun from Fujian Province opened a restaurant named Shikairō 1899, which became known as the first place to serve Shina udon in Nagasaki. Although Chinese students studying in Japan formed his primary customer base in the beginning, increasing numbers of the local population also came to know the inexpensive and hearty meals afforded by Chen, and by 1903, he created a menu in Japanese listing items popular with the locals.[10]

As seen from the examples above, the popularization of Shina soba (and Shina udon) was deeply intertwined with the new flow of goods and people brought about by Japanese colonialism and industrialization. The migration of people from country to city, the formation of an industrial workforce that included Chinese laborers as cooks, and the incorporation of Chinese food into Japanese military diets produced the backdrop for a surge in businesses offering cheap, hearty, and fast Chinese noodle-soup. The students, soldiers, shipyard workers, dock workers, train workers, and other industrial workers mentioned in the origin stories above formed the core demand for Shina soba and other foods served rapidly for a cheap price. Furthermore, people in the colonies and margins of the homeland produced much of the foodstuffs for the industrial laborers in the metropole, as noted earlier, providing fuel for overall economic growth in a literal way.

The significance of locomotive transportation in creating industrial cities where goods, people, and factories surrounded train stations is also apparent from the locations that became home to eateries serving Shina soba in the prewar period. Cities that became known for their Shina soba (such as Sapporo, and Sano) were also regional transport hubs where the processing of foods and other raw materials

[10] Chanpon Museum, Shikairō Restaurant, Nagasaki , June 3, 2006.

from the rural areas and colonies occurred. The mass production and processing of the ingredients that allowed for the popularization of Chinese noodle-soup as a cheap food for the working masses was thus not simply a matter of taste or consumer preference, but was deeply rooted in a transformation in new forms of economic production.

Most of all, the centrality of China in Japan's foreign imaginary and military expansion during the modern period (especially in the 1920s and 1930s) is apparent from any attempt to trace the beginnings of Shina soba. The widespread consumption of Chinese noodle-soup in department stores, small Chinese food eateries, military facilities, workplace cafeterias, and pushcarts, is tightly interwoven with the history of Japan's military expansion in China, the migration of Chinese students and workers from Southern China and Taiwan to Japan, the migration of Japanese and Korean farmers to Manchuria, and the movement of Japanese farmers into the urban industrial workforce. Nevertheless, the Ramen Museum's permanent exhibition in Shin-Yokohama makes no mention of colonialism, nor the military's role in popularizing Chinese foods in the 1920s, instead emphasizing how Japanese chefs creatively altered the dish to suit "Japanese tastes."

Chapter Two

Chūka Soba and The U.S. Occupation

> "My wish is that we return to a situation consistent with the fundamental laws of economics, where people with lower levels of income eat more wheat, and people with higher levels of income eat rice."
>
> -Ikeda Hayato, Minister of Finance, December 7, 1950

Introduction

The second notable phase in the popularization of Chinese noodle-soup in Japan occurred during the U.S. Occupation (1945-1952). The resurgence in consumption of the dish was the result of a strategic U.S. decision to prioritize food aid in the form of wheat flour to Japan for Cold War purposes. The scarcity of rice from the colonies and crop failures in the Japanese countryside, coupled with the relative availability of wheat-flour imported as an emergency measure by the U.S. military, provided the material conditions for the reappearance of the dish despite a government ban on the operation of eating and drinking establishments.

People in Japan also began referring to Chinese noodle-soup using a new name—Chūka soba—in this period. The term was derived from Chūgoku, the post-defeat appellation for China mandated by the Nationalist government for use by the government of Japan, meaning Middle Kingdom. Unlike the prewar and wartime period, when Chinese noodle-soup was served and eaten legally in department stores and small restaurants, during the Occupation the dish became confined to the black market street-stall scene that developed in the bombed out cities around Japan.

The most pressing problem for the vast majority of people living in wartime and Occupied Japan was the scarcity of food. The use of substitute staples such as sweet potatoes, soybeans, pumpkins, and later wheat flour therefore became central features of everyday life during the 1940s. The shortage of food and basic necessities thus continued well after the war, and in most places actually became worse after the official termination of the conflict. Despite the dramatic break in political authority represented by the arrival of MacArthur's forces and the rhetoric of democratization produced by the Americans in general, for people in Japan the issues of alimentary scarcity and the unavailability of staple goods continued to figure most prominently in their concerns after the war.

After treating the acute food shortage in Japan as a relatively low-priority issue in terms of the overall management of the occupied areas, the U.S. government changed course and began importing large amounts of wheat flour as part of its overall program to rehabilitate the Japanese economy for strategic Cold War purposes beginning in mid 1947. The U.S.-produced wheat-flour thus took on an important political function in maintaining and strengthening the corporeal composition of the workers who would rebuild what remained the largest economy in East Asia despite the destruction caused by war. Declassified U.S. Occupation documents reveal that U.S. policy toward Japan with respect to food shifted from one of begrudging emergency assistance toward one of political and economic support with strategic geopolitical calculations and commercial export interests.

In addition, the attempt to control the production and distribution of all staple foods and other basic necessities produced a sizeable black market economy, which grew significantly during the early part of the occupation. The expansion of the black market in this period provided an opening for criminal gangs to profit handsomely from the state's half-hearted attempt to regulate trade in basic goods necessary for survival. The growth of the illicit market in everyday commodities also produced a rise in gang warfare over black market turf.

The lack of resolve on the part of the Japanese government and U.S. Occupation forces to stem the black market trade aroused the suspicions of many, especially in the press, that the police and politicians at the highest levels of government were also beneficiaries of the profits being hoarded through the operation of the illegal trade. The police arrested millions of petty vendors engaged in small-scale enterprising, for example, while ignoring the few major suppliers of the goods to the markets. Communist leaders in turn led efforts to expose the sources of corruption and their ties to political circles.

Chinese noodle-soup played a key role as an emergency food in this period, as noodles made of wheat-flour developed into one of the primary substitute staples for rice, and one of the foods most commonly served at black market pushcart stall operations. In addition, the majority of people serving Chūka soba at the yatai were Korean and Chinese laborers out of industrial work, returnees from the colonies, or decommissioned soldiers, illustrating the ways in which the noodles reflected the population movements and geopolitical changes of the early postwar period. The noodle-soup chefs of the black market usually relied on wheat flour imported from the U.S., which was in high supply after the Truman administration's decision to prioritize food aid to Japan and Germany. The centrality of Chūka soba in people's memories of the period as one of the few foods available in a time of great scarcity provided the dish with a symbolic resonance that allowed it to enter seamlessly into a nationalized narrative of the postwar period half a century later. The authors of texts on the history of ramen and the planners of the Raumen Museum, who together canonized the history of the dish in the 1990s, therefore built on the significance of the noodle-soup in urban Japan during the Occupation period to anchor their story as a national narrative of tenacity and perseverance that had a particular valence for people in the "lost decade" of economic stagnation.

Wartime Rice Shortages, Substitute Staples, and Survival Foods

One of the primary causes of the wartime/occupation food crisis in Japan was the shortage of rice due to the Allies' denial of access to regular routes and supplies of food imports from the colonies, both Japanese and European. Japan became a net importer of food in 1897, and began to experience severe shortages in the staple grain of rice shortly after the industrial boom accompanying World War I. The Rice Riots of 1918 demonstrated to government officials the urgent need to address the imbalance between food supply and demand resulting from the industrialization of the economy. The government responded with a campaign to increase rice production in Korea and Taiwan, and an overall attempt to make the Japanese empire self-sufficient in terms of food, which it largely achieved by the late 1930s.

The campaign to intensify colonial rice production increased the Japanese home islands dependence on food imports over the course of the 1930s, which made the Allied blockades during the war all the more effective. Between 1931 and 1940, for example, people in the Japanese home islands depended on imports for roughly 20 percent of their total food supply, including 19 percent of rice, 67 percent of soybeans, 84 percent of sugar, and 21 percent of wheat. Rice was imported primarily from Korea and Taiwan, sugar from Taiwan and the Dutch East Indies, wheat from Australia, Canada, and the U.S., and soybeans from Manchuria. After 1943, however, blockades, ship sinkings, and crop failures in the colonies reduced imported food to roughly 9 percent of total calories consumed, roughly half of the pre-1941 level. [United States Strategic Bombing Survey 1947: 2]

Meanwhile, domestic food production dropped by an estimate of 26 percent between 1943 and 1945 due to a diversion of resources away from agriculture and toward war production. Specifically, the conscription of 874,000 able-bodied farm workers into the army between February 1944 and February 1945, the redirection of ammonia supplies from agricultural use as nitrogenous fertilizer to munitions manufacturing in the form of nitric acid, a 75% reduction in the amount of iron allocated to farm-tool production, and a requisitioning of farm horses by the army all severely hampered the ability to grow food. [United States Strategic Bombing Survey 1947: 9]

With the home islands largely cut off from Korean, Taiwanese, and Southeast Asian imports of rice after 1943, the government turned to Manchuria, to which shipping access was more secure, for more imports of soybeans and other grains. Thus, while rice imports from Korea fell by 90% between 1939 and 1945, soybean imports from Manchuria increased by 30% between 1941 and 1945. [United States Strategic Bombing Survey 1947: 2] The added imports from Manchuria, as well as a vigorous drive to boost small-scale staple food production on school grounds, home gardens, and other public land, somewhat offset the enormous loss in imported food from the colonies. However, the substitution of soybeans, sweet potatoes, potatoes and coarse grains for rice in the government's staple food rations after 1943, and the decrease in ration volumes, clearly signaled to the people that the war was not going according to plan.

Okumura Ayao, a Japanese food scholar born in 1937, describes his memories of the desperate food situation towards the end of the war as follows:

> From 1944 on, even in the countryside, the athletic grounds of local schools were converted into sweet potato fields. And we ate every part of the sweet potato plant, from the leaf to the tip of the root. We also ate every part of the kabocha pumpkins we grew, including the seeds and skin. For protein, we ate beetles, beetle larvae, and other insects that we found at the roots of the plants we picked, which we roasted or mashed. Even in the countryside, food was scarce.
>
> That year, "victory provisions" (hisshō shokuryō) became the most commonly used phrase throughout the country to refer to the changing and dwindling food supplies. The Minister of Agriculture at the time, Ishiguro, urged the populace to abandon the notion of rice as the primary staple of Japan and instead to eat any and all edibles available, including the leaves of previously uneaten plants and parts of vegetables…
>
> As Tokyo burned, it was time for "final battle food" (kessen shoku). The authorities directed us to maximize underutilized resources even

> further, and thus acorns, tree buds, roots, weeds growing on the sides of the streets, snails, and newts were eaten for the sake of survival. [Okumura 1998:174]

Okumura's memories are representative of the conditions recollected by most people in Japan for the period spanning 1944 to 1948. In this way, the historical discontinuity represented by Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945 did little to alter the material circumstances of scarcity in terms of food, clothing, and shelter, which actually worsened during the initial part of the U.S. Occupation. The gap between the momentous break in authority represented by the Emperor's announcement of surrender, and its relative lack of impact on the unrelenting conditions of hunger and poverty experienced by most people in Japan, is yet another manifestation of the disjuncture between the sensational events and personages magnified by the writing of History, and the processes of change and continuity as they are experienced by people at the level of daily practice.

Rationing, Restrained Consumption, and Bureaucratic Social Management

The state's economic mobilization for total war after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War occurred gradually in several stages, and resulted in a centrally planned economy in which state actors collected and redistributed nearly all basic necessities through local community organization. During the course of the Pacific War, state actors tightened economic controls to the point where all available human and material resources were being directed towards the needs of the military, and rationing was the central means of acquiring food other than self-production.

The rationing of food and other basic materials was a part of the wartime economic controls that the Konoe Cabinet first implemented under the National General Mobilization Law in 1938, and expanded incrementally to include almost every basic necessity by early 1942. The mobilization of the economy for war with China created a surge in demand for food due to the swell in the ranks of the military and the industrial workforce, as soldiers and heavy laborers were allotted significantly higher rations than the average civilian. Soldiers, heavy industrial workers, and average civilians were provided with 600, 420, and 330 grams of rice or rice equivalents per day respectively. [United States Strategic Bombing Survey 1947:18]

The large-scale rationing of food staples such as rice, wheat flour, eggs, fish, vegetable oil, and sugar began in 1941, and became codified under the Food Management Law of February 1942. By 1944, however, the production and importation of controlled foodstuffs could not keep pace with their allotted rationing to households, and the urban population was forced to support itself through bartering with farmers, collective gardening, and the ingestion of unfamiliar foods such as insects, boiled leaves, and tree roots in many cases. Economist Nakamura Takafusa states:

> As materials shortages grew increasingly severe, the strengthening of controls was unavoidable…During 1939, full-scale controls were extended over the entire economy…Thus, the Japanese economy by about 1940 was in effect a centrally planned command economy much like that of the former Soviet Union. [Nakamura 1995:10]

The economic controls were intended to maximize production and check the inflationary pressures created by the acute demand for raw materials generated by war production. Although the government introduced the wartime economic controls as temporary measures (e.g. the Temporary Capital Adjustment Act and the Temporary Export and Import Commodities Measure), most of the regulations were kept through the Occupation and beyond. Nakamura argues, "To a great extent, the system created during the war was inherited as the postwar economic system. The industries developed during the war became the major postwar industries; wartime technology was reborn in the postwar export industries; and the postwar national lifestyle, too, originated in changes that began during the period of conflict." [Nakamura 1995:3] The shift from light to heavy industries, the emergence of a subcontracting system for tools and parts, the development of bank-centered industrial combines, the use of administrative guidance from bureaucrats in directing economic affairs, and the move from trade unions to company unions were all wartime transformations that formed the foundation of the postwar economic system. [Nakamura 1995:3] In this way, the increased control extended over the economy by government bureaucrats during the wartime survived into the postwar period and evolved into what became understood in the U.S. as the "Japanese style" of economic management by the 1970s. [Johnson 1982]

The extension of government control in the economic sphere received much support from new bourgeois community-based activists. Popular backing for the government's drives to increase production and tighten consumption were vital to the success of the rationing system, and therefore state bureaucrats made great efforts to promote grass-roots campaigns urging people to work more and consume less. Two examples of the popular drive to limit food consumption were the Hinomaru bentō and the bimonthly "meatless days," which all residents of large cities nominally observed. The Hinomaru bentō, consisting of white rice and a pickled plum in the middle of a lunch box symbolizing the Japanese flag, became a popular symbol of restraint and civilian support for soldiers in the battlefield during the late 1930s.

Katarzyna Cwiertka observes:

> The origin of the Hinomaru bentō is attributed to an initiative from 1937 in a girls' school in the Hiroshima prefecture, where this patriotic lunch box was consumed by pupils each Monday as a token of solidarity with the troops fighting in China. By 1939 the idea was adopted by schools all over the country, and during subsequent years the 'flag lunch' rose to the symbol of wartime mobilization and national unity. However, the daily reality of the majority of the population stood in sharp contrast to this image, if only because after 1941 plain boiled rice became a luxurious item on the menu. Since the summer of 1940 the authorities had prohibited Tokyo restaurants from serving rice dishes. [Cwiertka 2006:117-118]

A voluntary abstention from eating meat on the 8th and 28th day of each month was another popular form of restraint that began in Tokyo and spread to other cities after the outbreak of war in China. In addition to the Hinomaru bentō, which was usually consumed on the first day of every month, the "meatless days" were important mechanisms to promote a sense of shared commitment between those on the home islands, for whom the war remained distant and abstract until 1944, and those in the battlefield.

Another example of a popular campaign to reduce food intake was the Japanese Housewives' Association's push to "eliminate white rice" (leaving rice unpolished, thereby adding volume) that began in 1937 and rapidly expanded. [Ishikawa 2002:142] The campaign was part of the general drive to eliminate waste in food consumption, and succeeded in becoming official policy in December 1939 in the form of the Rice Polishing Restriction Regulation, which prohibited the sale of white rice and established a mandatory extraction rate of 94% compared with the prewar average of 91.7%. [Johnston 1953:198]

The Hinomaru bentō, "meatless day," and the campaign to eliminate white rice were all made possible by the eager participation of housewives' associations and other bourgeois community groups in increasing state control over civilian life in the name of moral uplift and wartime sacrifice. The strong bourgeois-bureaucratic alliance, which coalesced around a shared belief in scientific progress and rational solutions to the social problems generated by capitalism, formed the basis for the rise of "social management" in the 1930s, and continued well into the postwar period. Sheldon Garon notes:

> What appear to be instances of top-down control by the state turn out often to have resulted from demands by nongovernmental groups, which looked to the bureaucracy to advance their agenda…These organizations were overwhelmingly middle-class in character. They were dominated by neither the great landlords nor big businessmen but rather by the old middle class of small farmers and petty entrepreneurs, and by the new middle class of educators, social workers, physicians, and the wives of salaried employees. Their middle-class nature rested, above all, on the common desire to improve the morality and behavior of the ordinary people below them. [Garon 1997:16-17]

The Japanese wartime campaigns to promote austerity and maintain popular morale were also remarkably similar to those advanced in the U.S. Amy Bentley, a U.S. food historian specializing in wartime rationing and gender, observes:

> Officials hoped to ensure public commitment by using the equal distribution of high-status and familiar foods through mandatory food rationing to increase Americans' physical and psychic satisfaction. To maintain public approval or at least tolerance of rationing, government propaganda campaigns used images of food to depict American society as stable, abundant, and unified. These campaigns were aimed particularly at securing the support of American women, who were chiefly responsible for family food consumption. [Bentley 1998:1]
>
> Preventing waste, avoiding black markets, producing food, and abiding by food rationing, however trivial they may have seemed, allowed Americans to contribute to, and feel a part of, the war effort. [Bentley 1998:4]

Bentley's description of U.S. efforts to constrain food consumption through highly gendered appeals to the patriotism of the masses could easily be applied to Japan in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In addition, the dependence on produce grown in private or collective gardens, known as "victory gardens," was a common feature of life under war in the U.S. that closely resembled events in Japan as well. Such similarities demonstrate how the social and economic controls implemented in Japan and the U.S. during the war relied on analogous means of managing the population's everyday needs for maximal collective wartime output. In both countries, bourgeois community leaders (most often associated with the church in the U.S.) and proactive state bureaucrats formed alliances based on the perceived need to manage the everyday living patterns of the working population to maximize productivity, maintain hygiene, and safeguard it from the social ills of unfettered consumerism in an age of commodity capitalism. The use of propaganda to promote restraint in consumption, and the increase in "social management" overall, was thus a common feature to both the U.S. and Japan that highlighted the similarity of internal class relations in a time of total war mobilization for each place.[11]

"What are the Capabilities of the Japanese to Provide for Themselves?": The Early Occupation (1945-1947)

The wartime food crisis only worsened after the conflict officially ended. The de-colonization and collapse of the Japanese Empire produced a massive influx of roughly six million returnees and a corresponding surge in demand for food just as the supply from the colonies was being cut off. Poor rice harvests in 1944 and 1945 due to weather and war compounded the direness of the situation, resulting in widespread malnutrition and death, particularly among children.

Although the food situation in urban Japan had already deteriorated to bare subsistence levels for most residents by the end of the war, the situation worsened during the initial three years of the Allied Occupation due to a shortfall in global food production and poor oversight of the rationing system by both the Japanese and American authorities. According to a GHQ report titled, "Food Situation during the First Year of Occupation," the staple food ration throughout 1946 was 297 grams of rice or rice equivalents (roughly 1042 calories) per person per day. The report states, "The Staple Food Ration of 1042 calories for the normal adult provided only about

[11] See also *Total War and 'Modernization'* edited by Yasushi Yamanouchi, J. Victor Koschmann, and Ryūichi Narita (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998)

65 percent of the minimum caloric feeding level which experts consider necessary even on a highly restricted basis."[12] In addition to rice and rice equivalents (discussed below), urban residents received small rations of miso, soy sauce, salt, cooking oil, vegetables, fruit, and fish. Yet, even after these rations were taken into account, the report conceded, "the total rationed diet is below subsistence level…Since there is no significant food product which is not rationed, the only means of supplementing the rationed diet is by home production, gifts, and black market purchases."[13]

Furthermore, the average civilian's ration, which was already inadequate for survival, did not arrive with the regularity that the government promised. Beginning in March 1946, residents in Tokyo and Yokohama began experiencing long delays, reductions, and even cancellations of their rations. The same report states that the average Tokyo resident received 70% of the official ration, or roughly 775 calories per day between March and June of 1946.[14]

Food management therefore became a central concern for the U.S. government in managing the populations under its military command after the war. In February 1946, the secretaries of the U.S. War Department, Commerce Department, Department of Agriculture, and Department of State formed the Combined Food Board to discuss how to distribute scarce food resources across the territories under Allied occupation. Japan, however, was only one of many occupied

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[12] Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Economic and Scientific Section, Price Control and Rationing Division, "Food Situation During the First Year of Occupation." Undated, 11 National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, 9.

areas on the verge of famine, and the U.S. administration did not treat it as a higher priority over other zones that fell under its jurisdiction. Cables exchanged between the Secretary of War and the Supreme Commander between February and May 1946, indicate that the U.S. government considered Japan's situation alongside other occupied and unoccupied areas in urgent need of food, and that the U.S. administration's fundamental position was that the onus of feeding the Japanese population rested upon the Japanese themselves. A February 28 cable states:

> In view of the U.S. obligation to assist in preventing extreme hunger, in some areas approaching a famine condition, the discussion resolved itself into these questions:
> (1) What are conditions in Japan as compared with those in other areas?
> (2) What are the capabilities of the Japanese to provide for themselves?
> (3) How can the available resources be increased?
> (4) How can transportation problems particularly in internal transport problem in the U.S. be resolved to increase shipments of foodstuffs?
>
> Regarding the need for supplies in Japan it was emphasized that your reported estimate of 1600-2100 calories intake per day per urban consumer is high as compared with some other areas and that rigid controls of rationing should be exerted at once to reduce the rate of consumption to the lowest possible level consistent with the present directives to prevent mass starvation and widespread disease and unrest.[15]

In short, the U.S. administration proposed that the primary solution to the food problem in Japan was reduction of the rate of consumption to the lowest level possible without spawning a humanitarian or political crisis, and to increase domestic production. Although the severity of the food shortage in Japan was apparent by February 1946, MacArthur's jurisdiction over all occupied territories

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[15] *GHQ/SCAP Top Secret Records*, edited by Ara Takashi, set 1 vol.2 [Tokyo: Kashiwashobo, 1995] Cable from Secretary of War, Patterson, to Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Febraury 28, 1946.

in the Far East made it necessary for him to consider the situation in Japan alongside other areas such as Korea and the Ryukyus, and to divert food from one place to another in some cases. A series of top-secret cables from April 1946 reveals that MacArthur decided to divert wheat flour shipments en route to Japan to Korea instead, in order to counter the influence of "leftist elements" there. One cable dated April 13, 1946 from MacArthur to General Dwight Eisenhower, U.S. Army Chief of Staff at the time, states:

> I am considering authorizing an immediate diversion from allocation of wheat to Japan of a token shipment of twenty-five thousand tons to Korea to alleviate a serious psychological and political crisis wherein adverse leftist elements are capitalizing on present food shortage. I am convinced that failure to provide this token shipment at once will constitute a serious threat to United States Military Government in Korea.
>
> Food requirements program for Korea has been submitted to the War Department in my radio C-59678 supplemented by information transmitted during a telecon with Colonel Gilchrist and Craig of the Department of Agriculture. During the telecon referred to it was indicated shipments of foodstuffs to Korea would have to be met from commitments already made to Japan and further that April shipments to Japan would shortfall by fifty or sixty thousand tons.
>
> The aforementioned changes in programming are untenable and are positive threats to the objectives of the Occupation both in Korea and Japan. In spite of very active cooperation by the Japanese government in increasing collection, conserving existing food stocks and increasing indigenous production, including fish, the presently approved allocations will fall short of meeting quantities required to prevent widespread malnutrition, disease, and unrest. The report to Washington by the food mission headed by Colonel Roger L. Harrison confirms these facts and emphasizes the seriousness of the situation.
>
> I strongly urge your intervention in obtaining high level consideration of the Korean food requirements as submitted by me and in obtaining firm commitment to replace the twenty-five thousand tons diverted shipment

> and to readjust later cereals shipments to Japan to compensate for shortfall expected in April shipments.[16]

Despite MacArthur's efforts to obtain replacements for the wheat diverted to Korea, Eisenhower was unable to fulfill the requests for additional food. In the end, MacArthur still decided to divert over 16,000 tons of wheat to Korea, instead of the 25,000 tons originally planned. In the final top-secret memo concerning the diversion of food to Korea, dated April 26, 1946, MacArthur notified General Hodge, the highest-ranking U.S. officer there, that he was sending two cargoes of wheat to quell the threat of leftist unrest:

> Latest advice is that despite making every effort to obtain additional foodstuffs for this theatre, War Department sees no possibility now for obtaining any commitment from Department of Agriculture or from combined food board to replace any wheat shipped for Japan if diverted to Korea.
>
> However, in view of serious Korean political situation, and despite critical position of Japanese food supply of which you have already been informed, I will divert to Korea two cargoes of wheat due to arrive in Japan first week May. Approximate tonnage one cargo 8,300 tons. ETA will be radioed earliest.[17]

The series of cables reveals the extent to which food was at the center of U.S. attempts to drive Korean politics rightward, as well as how closely connected the Japanese and Korean food situations were. The division of food between Japan

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[16]*GHQ/SCAP Top Secret Records*, edited by Ara Takashi, set 1 vol. 2, [Tokyo; Kashiwashobō 1995], 166-167. Cable from Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, General MacArthur, to Army Chief of Staff, General Eisenhower, April 13, 1946.
[17]*GHQ/SCAP Top Secret Records*, edited by Ara Takashi, set 1 vol. 2, [Tokyo; Kashiwashobō 1995], 161. Cable from Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, General MacArthur, to General Hodge, Commanding General of US Forces in Korea, April 26, 1946.

and Korea was but a smaller version of the competition over scarce American food resources that also occurred between the occupied areas of Asia and Europe.

While MacArthur wrestled with how to divide the emergency wheat shipments among various occupied areas in the Pacific, Eisenhower made the larger decisions concerning division of shipments between the European and Asian areas under U.S. occupation. As a matter of policy, Asians received much less food per capita than Europeans. A top-secret memorandum from Eisenhower to MacArthur on the subject, "Food Crisis in Germany and Japan," dated April 27 1946, reveals the relatively low priority given to Japan in relation to Germany. The report states:

> In both countries the original meager civilian food ration was reduced to a dangerous minimum when the critical world grain shortage became evident. In the hope of maintaining a 1275-calorie ration, a total of 150,000 tons of grains were allocated for Germany for the months of April, May and June. Allocations for Japan, in order to maintain an approximate 800-calorie ration during the same period, called for 450,000 tons of grain.[18]

Although the quantity of food sent to Japan was triple the amount sent to Germany, the German ration of 1275 calories was roughly 60% higher than the Japanese ration of 800 calories. The U.S. insistence that the Japanese population feed itself while knowing that domestic production levels were dangerously low, and its diversion of much-needed food to other occupied areas such as Korea and Germany, created a highly volatile atmosphere for the Japanese police and the occupation troops in the spring of 1946.

[18] Joint Chiefs of Staff Document 1662, Memorandum from the U.S. Army Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. April 27, 1946, National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

The 60% calorie differential between German and Japanese rations was but one manifestation of racial inequality in U.S. food policy toward subjects in occupied areas. Another such policy was a SCAP directive establishing different ration levels for "Occidental" and "Oriental" foreign nationals living in Japan. According to a January 15, 1946 memorandum, titled "Rations for Foreign Nationals," written by Courtney Whitney, MacArthur's Chief of Staff:

> 1. It is understood that a directive, prepared in the Economic and Scientific Section, on the above subject is being processed for dispatch to the Japanese Government. The proposed directive establishes a ration of 2,400 calories for Occidental foreign nationals and 1,800 calories for Oriental foreign nationals. Such differentiation purports to be based on higher food needs of the Occidental races.
>
> 2. Regardless of the soundness of the scientific assumptions on which the distinction between Occidentals and Orientals is proposed to be made, such a distinction in a directive from this Headquarters would: (a) impair our relations with our Allies, such as the Chinese, (b) contravene the announced policy of eliminating racism and discrimination based on race, and (c) render the Supreme Commander vulnerable to the accusation that he is fostering a doctrine of white supremacy.
>
> 3. It is suggested that, if a distinction is required in order to assure that non-Japanese residents of Japan receive a minimum food ration, some classification other than race be devised. Under the basic occupation directive, (JCS 1380/15), practical measures must be taken "to insure the health and welfare of the United Nations nationals"; (Par. 8 c). No special treatment is required or authorized for nationals of enemy or neutral nations.
>
> 4. In short, for a Headquarters representing the Allied Powers to favor Germans and Italians simply because they are of the white race above Filipinos, Chinese, and Koreans would be an anomaly, and would put this Headquarters in an unfavorable light. At the risk of favoring (from a purely dietetic point of standpoint) our Oriental Allies, any directive should give them a food ration at least equal to Occidental enemies.[19]

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[19] Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Office of the Chief of Staff for the Supreme Commander, Memorandum from the Office of the Chief of Staff. January 15, 1946. National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

Although MacArthur's office preemptively aborted the directive due to fear of bad publicity, the document illustrates the extent to which scientific views concerning racial disparities in nutritional needs still prevailed among the top-ranking members of the occupying forces. It also shows that Whitney's effort to disavow the overt racism of the policy was primarily driven by a strategic interest in improving the image of the U.S. in the eyes of Asian Allies, rather than any moral disagreement with the racial bias represented by the policy.

The shortage of food became so severe in Tokyo that by early May, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children began protesting the inadequacy of food rations and the scale of black market corruption. While the protests did not turn into violent uprisings, as SCAP and the War Department had feared, they signaled to the Americans that hunger had brought the urban masses of Japan to their breaking point. The possibility that food shortages in Japan and Germany would lead to violent rebellion against the Allied troops appeared high enough in late April 1946 to warrant a top-secret memorandum from Eisenhower to President Truman warning of the need to increase either the amount of food or the number of troops in these two areas. The last two paragraphs relate the urgency of the situation from the army's point of view:

> Reduced German and Japanese food rations will be well below the bare subsistence level, in which case disease and widespread unrest will develop in both occupation areas. From the military point of view, without regard to the long-term political consequences of such a development, requirements for major increases in the size of our occupation forces, to control unrest and preserve order, must be anticipated as an inevitable consequence.

> It is understood that the Secretaries of State, War and the Navy are presenting urgent proposals designed to alleviate this extremely grave situation. From the military point of view, immediate and drastic action is clearly indicated.[20]

The document confirms that Eisenhower requested the emergency food shipments in order to quell the possibility of violent mass rebellion, which would have required additional combat forces from the U.S. that were not readily available. Furthermore, the U.S. government provided the emergency food shipments as loans, not aid, and expected the Japanese government to pay the full price as soon as it recovered its ability to do so. As the report, "Food Year during the First Year of Occupation" states, "It should be pointed out that the food imports to Japan during the past year have not been in the form of direct relief. They have been commercial exports for which Japan is being charged in full at current U.S. prices."[21]

Not only did the U.S. charge the Japanese government full commercial export prices for the emergency food aid, it also stipulated that the Japanese recompense the occupying forces for most of the expenses incurred as a result of their occupation.

Dower notes, "Only after the Americans arrived did the Japanese learn that they would be required to pay a major portion of the costs of housing and supporting the gigantic army of occupation. As it turned out, these latter expenditures amounted to a staggering one-third of the regular budget at the beginning of the

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Economic and Scientific Section, Price Control and Rationing Division, "Food Situation During the First Year of Occupation." Undated, 11. National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

occupation…While some 3.7 million families still lacked housing of their own as of 1948, the government was required to direct a substantial portion of its annual budget to providing housing and facilities for their conquerors—and, indeed, ensuring that these met American living standards. [Dower 1999:115]

Food Aid and the Reverse Course

In the spring of 1947, the U.S. government shifted its policy from expecting the Japanese economy to recover on its own, to actively aiding its reindustrialization. The shift was the result of the Truman administration's policy of "containment" toward the Soviet Union by means of German and Japanese economic revival. Michael Schaller notes, "As the European 'containment program' took form, the United States determined that Japan, like Germany, must serve as a bastion against Soviet expansion and, more positively, a catalyst sparking regional recovery…In simplest terms, containment meant putting 'Japan, Germany, and other affiliates of the Axis…back to work.'…Without full recovery, the occupied nations would drain American resources, stifle prosperity among their neighbors, and devolve into economic chaos that would entice the Soviet Union." [Schaller 1985:77-78]

As the impending fall of the Nationalist Government to Communist forces in China became apparent by early 1947, the U.S. withdrew its troops from that conflict (while continuing to supply arms and provisions), and shifted toward a geopolitical strategy of Communist containment through the reconstitution of Japanese military and economic power. In March 1947, a Cabinet-level group of

U.S. leaders, including Navy Secretary James Forrestal, Commerce Secretary Averell Harriman, Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson, Secretary of War Robert Patterson, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, Undersecretary of the Army William Draper, and former President Herbert Hoover met to develop a long-term plan to reincorporate Japan into a U.S.-allied economic bloc of capitalist countries in the Pacific Rim. Understood geographically as a "Great Crescent," the bloc was to include Pakistan, India, Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, Formosa, and Korea, and closely resembled the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in both its demarcation and conceptualization. Schaller argues:

> Specifically, these planners envisioned three great interdependent zones of industrial power allied with the United States and against the Soviet Union. At the pinnacle stood the United States, predominant in the Western Hemisphere. A European zone centered around a restored Germany and an Asian component around Japan would complete the alliance. These two subordinate zones would become major regional centers of production and trade based on the exchange of their industrial products for raw materials with a network of less developed states. The creation of these integrated regional economies, with access to low-cost raw materials would alleviate demands for American aid and reduce the strain of dollar imports on Europe and Japan. It would also forge a matrix of anti-Communist states linked to America…The key to success, both in Europe and Asia, appeared as the restoration of German and Japanese productive capacity. [Schaller 1985:83]

In April 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a report titled, "Assistance to Other Countries from the Standpoint of National Security," which stressed America's strategic interest in rehabilitating the Japanese economy and military above all others in the region. The report noted, "Of all the countries in the Pacific area Japan deserves primary consideration for current United States assistance designed to restore her economic and military potential." [Schaller 1985:90] This was a notable departure from the Truman administration's initial approach of taking no responsibility for Japan's economic recovery, as asserted in the February 1946 cable mentioned above.

The American food imports were the most basic component of the U.S. cold war strategy of reindustrializing the Japanese and German economies. The restoration of productive capacity clearly could not occur without the U.S. first addressing the shortage of food among workers in key industries such as coal mining. An Occupation document titled, "Supplementary Distribution of Commodities for Workers," dated 1949, details the history, purpose, and specifics of a wartime supplementary ration program for heavy industrial workers that the Americans enhanced to jumpstart reindustrialization. The report states:

> The system of special allocation of commodities for workers has been in effect since 1941 when the shortage of essential commodities was widespread. Its objective was to increase worker efficiency and reduce absenteeism.
>
> After the Surrender the already war-disrupted living conditions deteriorated still further. Hence the importance of supplementary distribution of commodities to workers increased. In November 1946 the Japanese Government adopted a policy of strengthening the existing supplementary distribution program for workers in industry. Since June 1947 this policy has been recognized not only as a measure for the protection of the worker's livelihood but also as an important means in accomplishing the national economic stabilization objectives.
>
> In May 1948 the present organization and procedure for the distribution of supplementary commodities for workers was introduced.
>
> The most important commodities distributed through the national programs are staple foods, sake (Japanese rice wine), tobacco and textile

> products. Non-staple foods, shoes, soap, and other miscellaneous commodities are distributed only for certain special groups of industries or workers under a separate program. Commodities thus provided are purchased at official or specially low prices. In either even, the cost is a fraction (5-20 percent) of the prices prevailing on the free market, if the items are even available from that source.
>
> The supplementary allotment of staple food is essential to the supplementary distribution plan. The special food program covers almost all establishments engaged in mining, manufacturing, gas and electricity supply, land and maritime transportation, construction and public works activities. A few manufacturing activities of minor importance are excluded. Protective service workers, such as hospital nurses, are included in the program. The total number of workers receiving supplementary rations of staple food approximates 7.3 million.[22]

The document highlights the connection between workers' nutrition and national economic recovery, and marks June 1947 as the beginning of the U.S. government's adoption of a policy recognizing this point. The timing is noteworthy, for it came shortly after the Truman administration finalized its decision to hasten the recovery of the Japanese economy as part of the Great Crescent in the meetings mentioned earlier. In addition, the report shows that the U.S. government began administering the new system for distributing food aid to high priority population groups in May 1948, averting a third consecutive summer of severe food shortages and resultant protests.

In this way, the dependence on American wheat-flour imports during the Occupation set Japan on a course of foreign food importation that would fundamentally transform the dietary patterns of its people. In mid 1946, as rice

[22] Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Economic and Scientific Section, Labor Division, "Supplementary Distribution of Commodities for Workers." Undated. National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

rations disappeared, the government announced, “The era of flour has arrived.” [Dower 1999:169] Crude forms of bread (often made out of corn meal or batter), dumplings (*suiton*), and homemade udon became a prevalent form of sustenance making use of the Occupation flour for many malnourished Japanese in the initial postwar period. The increase in wheat flour consumption in the form of bread, however, was the most drastic. According to Ōtsuka, a historian of wheat-flour, the amount of bread consumed in Japan increased from 262,121 tons in 1948 to 611,784 tons in 1951.[Ōtsuka 1989:79]

The Occupation authorities conducted detailed surveys of housewives in Japan to find out how people were consuming the imported wheat flour. The Civil Information and Education Section published one report on March 3, 1950, titled, “Survey of Bread and Flour Utilization by the Japanese People,” stating the following:

> The general purpose of the survey was to supply information relevant to an understanding of the following problems:
>
> 1. The character of current utilization of bread and flour among the Japanese people.
>
> 2. Preferences among dietary alternatives in general and among flour products in particular.
>
> 3. Changes which might facilitate the increased use of bread and flour in the Japanese diet.
>
> These problems arise from the general facts of Japan’s postwar economy, which is not self-sufficient either in the traditional rice or in foodstuffs in general. As a consequence, the Japanese people have had to turn more and more to rice “substitutes.” The more extensive use of wheat and other cereals along with and in place of the traditional rice is bringing about a vast change in dietary habits. This change has been greeted by the Japanese people with mingled feelings. For many, bread

> and wheat products open up a new dietary vista; for others, they are unpleasant substitutes for the true Japanese diet, to be cast away as soon as economic conditions permit…The Japanese people are far from whole-hearted in their acceptance of bread and tend to regard it as a temporary expedient rather than as a permanently desirable part of the diet.
>
> Most housewives would prefer their ration in the form of flour [as opposed to bread]. In rural areas, home processing of flour products is most common; in urban areas, store processing is most common. However, most families do have flour processed commercially from time to time. When using commercial processing, about the same number of housewives have udon made up as have bread made up (urban housewives have more bread, and rural housewives have more udon made up). But in home processing, udon is prepared more commonly than bread, particularly in rural areas.[23]

The American effort to study the eating habits and improve the nutritional standards of people in postwar Japan was again part of the overall attempt to rebuild the economy for Cold War purposes. The attempt to reshape Japanese dietary patterns based on the perceived nutritional superiority of American food practices was evident in the high priority afforded to the school lunch program. School lunches were a primary vehicle for reshaping dietary practices, as bread, biscuits, and powdered milk became staples of the daily meal guaranteed initially only to elementary-school-aged schoolchildren in large cities, but later to all schoolchildren. Ehara Ayako, a scholar of food in modern Japan, notes,

The school lunch program has contributed to a major shift in the dietary habits and preferences of Japanese people. From 1947 through 1976, school

[23] Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Civil Information and Education Section, “Survey of Bread and Flour Utilization by the Japanese People.” March 3, 1950. National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

lunches made virtually no use of rice, the traditional staple; instead they featured bread and milk. Even today bread-based lunches prevail. This has made children far more receptive to Western-style meals and interfered with the transmission of Japan's traditional dietary culture. Rice consumption has slumped, while consumption of meat, milk, and dairy products has surged. Some schools are now beginning to emphasize traditional Japanese food and local specialties, but they are still a minority, and the results of their experimentation remain to be seen.[24] (Ehara 1999, 1)

Not only was the school lunch program vital in creating a sturdy workforce for a strategic anti-communist ally, it served as a powerful propaganda device to legitimize the Occupation in the eyes of the occupied. In addition, the program was an important publicity tool for the administration vis-à-vis Congress in securing funding for aid to a still unpopular Japan. A memorandum concerning the allocation of imports for the school lunch program from the Public Health and Welfare Division, dated May 25, 1948 illustrates both the program's usefulness in helping the Occupation obtain funding from congress, and the high-level U.S. involvement in seeing through its success, as represented by ex-President Hoover's personal participation:

> General Sams contended that a feeding program for children has a universal appeal and it is of particular import as it relates to the reaction of the U.S. Congress when considering and approving appropriations. A review of congressional action, he further stated, will reveal that one of the last appropriations to be reduced in any "cut-back" is an appropriation dealing directly with the welfare of children….

[24] http://www.japanecho.com/sum/1999/b2604.html

> Prior to conference with Mr. Pate, and at Mr. Pate's request, Chief, WD/PHW, conferred with ex-president Hoover, who according to Mr. Pate, maintains a genuine interest in all child feeding programs worldwide. Mr. Hoover's advice was to the effect that indigenous products and necessary imports be earmarked for a School Lunch Program, and the experience that obtained in the German School Lunch Program was outlined wherein a definite allocation for the school feeding program was devised so that any cut-back in imports to sustain the indigenous food economy would not affect the school feeding plan.[25]

As mentioned above, ex-President Hoover was one of the key planners at the cabinet-level meetings where the Truman administration developed the postwar strategy of Soviet containment through the slight reformulation of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as a Great Crescent of anti-communist countries subordinate to U.S. interests. His direct personal involvement in the school lunch program in both Japan and Germany highlights the interconnectedness between changing dietary habits in key strategic areas and U.S. Cold War policy.

U.S. Food Propaganda

The Americans diligently advertised their own purported generosity in providing their recently defeated foes with emergency food aid. Beginning in 1948, for example, the office of the Supreme Commander initiated a publicity drive to inform households that the imported food was purely the result of American beneficence, and that the U.S. was under no legal or moral obligation to provide it. To this end, the Americans "advised" the Japanese government to announce each

[25] General Headquarters, Public Health and Welfare Section, "Allocation of Imports for Japanese School Lunch Program," May 25, 1948. (Declassified E.O. 12065 Section 3-402/NNDG #775024). National Diet Library U.S. Occupation Archives Microfilm (Tokyo).

arrival of wheat cargo in newsreels and press releases to remind people in Japan of their generosity. An undated Civil Information and Education Section report details some of the Occupation's efforts to inform the Japanese public of three main points: 1) how to consume the imported foodstuffs, 2) the high nutritional value of the imported foods, 3) the American people's generosity in providing the food. According to the report, the Civil Information and Education Section's officers "assisted" the Japanese government in producing four leaflets, two manuals, and two posters to distribute nationwide as part of its campaign to inform the public. In addition, the report notes that 49 press releases, three press conferences, daily radio programs, an essay contest for Tokyo School children "on the theme of appreciation for imported foods," and even a motion picture produced by Riken Motion Picture Company, titled, "Affection Across the Sea" aimed to drive home America's munificence in providing food imports.[26]

An undated leaflet produced by the Civil Information and Education Section titled, "How to Cook Your Food Ration" is another example of the Occupation's efforts to publicize the nutritional value and generous nature of the imported food. The leaflet contains a drawing of a muscular man holding up a tray with many loaves of bread in the likeness of a weightlifter, and the caption, "Protein is a body

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[26] General Headquarters, Civil Information and Education Section, "Imported Food Utilization Program Progress Report." Undated. (Declassified E.O. 12065 Section 3-402/ NNDG #775017) National Diet Library U.S. Occupation Archives Microfilm (Tokyo).

builder. Wheat flour contains 50% more protein than rice. America is spending $250 million for your food. Learn to use it properly to get the full benefit."[27]

Despite the publicity concerning American generosity, the Japanese government eventually repaid the U.S. for the food and other aid it received during the Occupation. In January 1962, the Japanese government agreed to reimburse the U.S. $495 million over a 15-year period for the food, raw materials, and fuel that it had imported during the Occupation, in addition to the estimated $5 billion it had already spent as "war termination costs" to support the foreign troops. [Dower 1999:576] In short, the Japanese taxpayers footed the bill for the food they consumed. Yet, the American framing of the historical narrative concerning its generosity in Japan's greatest time of need became a foundational part of Japan's own official postwar history as well.

Aside from the irresistibility of self-congratulations, the U.S. effort to advertise its generosity stemmed from the desire to counter Japanese Communist Party propaganda, which maintained that economic mismanagement and corruption were to blame for the shortage of food more than material scarcity. Party leaders delivered speeches and composed communiqués urging farmers to withhold their rice from government collectors, advising urbanites to demand access to better quality food from rationing boards, and admonishing politicians to end their complacency in the black market economy. Staff at the Civil Intelligence Section routinely gathered, translated, and forwarded these communiqués and speeches by

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[27] General Headquarters, Civil Information and Education Section, "How to Cook Your Food Ration." Undated. (Declassified E.O. 12065 Section 3-402/NNDG #775017) National Diet Library U.S. Occupation Archives Microfilm (Tokyo).

leftist leaders to the office of the Supreme Commander to provide a detailed view of the overall threat to the Occupation's objectives from the Communist Party. For example, the Civil Information Section translated one Communist Party communiqué from April 8, 1948:

> We must constantly propagandize that the production of rice and wheat in Japan is sufficient to meet her demands. We must expose the fact that the diverting into blackmarket channels of food is due to the negligence of the bureaucrats and the corruptness of the rationing mechanism. We must propagandize especially that to depend on foreign countries for food will place us under the control of foreign countries and that this will lead to the destruction of the race.[28]

A top-secret GHQ translation of a Communist leader's speech in Shimane-ken from March 16, 1948, also shows how the Communist Party's policies regarding the food situation directly conflicted with government objectives.

> Subject: Communist Speaks in Opposition to Rice Delivery
>
> 1. The following information received from a reliable source is submitted for your information.
>
> 2. On 23 February 1948, Miyawaki Ryūichi, Communist Party official, made the following statements at a meeting of Communists held at the Daikōji Temple, Ibano-mura, Hikawa-gun, Shimane-ken:
>
>> The delivery of rice is annoying the farmers so much that some of the most needy have even hanged themselves. The newspapers avoid reporting such tragedies. It is not a bit necessary for farmers to deliver any part of their hoyu-mai (rice quota for living) in order to complete their rice delivery quota; as long as they do not sell all or part of their delivery quota to illegal channels. Some youth organizations posted bills, etc., warning farmers against the blackmarket, but I contend that before doing so, they should make the authorities decide on a more reasonable quota so that the farmers can complete their delivery one hundred per cent. The reason why the

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[28] Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Civil Information Section, April 8, 1948. National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

> delivery was short in the West Iwami section of Shimane-ken was that the Communist Party's drive against the unfair rice quota was effective. In comparison, in the Izumo area, the farmers delivered exorbitant quotas of rice because there our Party was not so powerful.[29]

Dower explains the situation as follows, "As the economy continued to founder, a predictable vicious circle ensued. The Communists and the radical wing of organized labor became more militant, alienating GHQ and making the Americans ever more receptive to abandoning reformism and embracing the civilian old guard; the occupation regime's increasing conservatism, in turn, goaded militants into stronger statements and more alienating actions." [Dower 1999:271]

Black Market Democracy

In addition to continuing the wartime rationing using imported food, the occupation authorities implicitly condoned the black market that grew out of the price controls by allowing the police to punish consumers and petty vendors instead of the large-scale suppliers of goods. Dower notes, "While industrialists, politicians, and former military officers made killings on the black market, while government officials lavishly wined and dined their American overlords, some 1.22 million ordinary men and women were arrested for illegal black market transactions in 1946, a number that rose to 1.36 million and then 1.5 million in the next two years." [Dower 1999:100] In these markets, vendors connected with underworld food-procuring gangs sold basic foods and household goods at handsome profits to

[29] Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Civil Information Section, March 16, 1948. National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

desperate buyers. The vendors often sold diverted government supplies and surplus U.S. military goods through links to officials as well as prostitutes receiving commodities as pay from GIs. [Ino 1999:117-120]

For those who did not receive supplementary rations from the government, or who were not connected to the criminal suppliers of basic goods, the extortionate black market became the only means of survival. Thus, basic subsistence required engagement in criminal behavior for the vast majority of people in Japan. The report, "Food Situation During First Year of Occupation" summarized the situation:

> It will be noted that the total rationed diet is below a subsistence level. However, inadequate foodstocks in Japan and the uncertainty of imports made it impossible to raise the official ration to a subsistence level. Since there is no significant food product which is not rationed, the only means of supplementing the rationed diet is by home production, gifts, and black market purchases.[30]

The increasing ratio of currency to basic goods spawned an inflationary spiral, which was reflected in both official and black market prices, though much more so in the latter. Official wholesale prices increased by a full 539% by the end of the first year of occupation, 336% in the second year, and 256% in the third year, and 127% in the fourth. In comparison, black market prices during the first year of occupation averaged roughly 34 times official prices, and fell to fourteen times official price levels by the end of 1946, nine times official prices in 1947, five times in 1948, and double in 1949. [Dower 1999:115-116]

[30] Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Economic and Scientific Section, Price Control and Rationing Division, "Food Situation During the First Year of Occupation." Undated. National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

The prevalence of the black market economy challenged the image of a democratizing Japan, and lent credence to the notion that the same coterie of industrial and military leaders who led the country during the war indirectly controlled the economy. A Nippon Times article from April 26, 1948, titled, "Only Scratches Surface: Main Problem of Hoarded Goods Held Not Being Tackled in Official Probe," illustrates how prominently the issue of stolen or hoarded public goods figured into political debates, and at the same time, how little the government actually recovered of the goods.

> The hoarded goods investigation by the Diet committee is uncovering startling testimony about the use of huge sums by politicians but competent observers said that by emphasizing the political use of money from hoarded goods, the Diet committee is merely scratching the surface of the problem. The main problem, these people say, is to discover what happened to the hundreds of billions of yen worth of food, clothing, jewels, precious metals, cash, and industrial raw materials which the Japanese Army and Navy had at the time of surrender.
>
> This fabulous hoard was to have been turned over to the Japanese people through the government's Home Ministry—but was not.
>
> Part of it went to political leaders, according to information being uncovered by the Diet investigating committee. But a far greater part went to others…
>
> Occupation officials have charged, however, that the hidden goods are the basis for the blackmarket operations of Japan, and that the blackmarket operations are the basis for financing the "kuromaku" or "hidden government" that is still exercising control in Japan despite the purges and the democratization program.[31]

Members of the press, particularly the Nippon Times, Yomiuri Shinbun, and Asahi Shinbun, regularly exposed scandals concerning the activities of yakuza

[31] Howard Handleman, "Only Scratches Surface: Main Problem of Hoarded Goods Held Not Being Tackled in Official Probe." *Nippon Times*, April 26, 1948.

bosses and police corruption, often at the risk of their own physical well-being. Despite the press' spotlighting of the issue, the Diet committees were unable to recover more than a tiny fraction of the stolen goods and monies that government leaders had pilfered from state coffers. Christopher Aldous argues, "Throughout the Occupation the police were controlled by an alliance of politicians, bureaucrats and criminal elements…The natural inclination for the police to look to their traditional masters was reinforced by the latter's ties to prominent black marketeers…Those who appropriated the military's huge stockpiles of food, clothing, and other necessities controlled the police on both an individual and a corporate level." [Aldous 1997:213] The first Diet Committee to investigate the issue of hoarded and concealed goods, which did not convene until July 1947, estimated that roughly 300 billion yen worth of goods had been siphoned from the state into private hands. [Dower 1999:117]

Such circumstances directly contributed to the appeal of the Communist Party, which sought to remind people that mismanagement and corruption were the true causes of the postwar shortages. While it is difficult to measure the amount of food that the occupation and Japanese government officials stole, misallocated, or diverted into the black market, the Communist Party's accusations of high-level pilfering and mismanagement were obvious to anyone who observed the open operation of black markets in places such as Ueno's ame-yoko market. In addition to chewing gum, chocolate, cigarettes, and alcohol, the black market became an unloading point for diverted American wheat-flour imports, which vendors often served in the form of noodles.

U.S. Wheat Flour and Chinese Noodle-Soup

As the Americans imported sizeable amounts of lard and flour, which Japanese authorities regulated less stringently than rice, noodle soups became an easier food to come across than rice for most people. A notable increase in Chūka soba vending at small yatai carts occurred as a result of a swell in open-air food vending, despite a prohibition against all such activity between July 1, 1947 and February 15, 1950 stipulated by the Emergency Measures Ordinance for Eating and Drinking Establishments. Okumura Ayao notes that the Shina soba and gyōza dumplings sold at the yatai carts became increasingly popular in the immediate postwar period because of their perceived nutritional value in providing stamina:

> The war ended. Yet, the scarcity of food was even more pronounced than before, as returnees from the war zones increased the population beyond prewar levels, and outings to the countryside to procure food became common. Out of the ashes rose black markets, where people formed long lines for rice gruel and suiton (dumpling) soups. Anything was fine, as long as it would fill the people's stomachs sufficiently...
>
> In the cities, many returnees began operating yatai serving gyōza and Shina soba (which would eventually become Chūka soba), at which long lines of customers would form. The idea that the people above all needed to absorb more nutrition led to the popularity of these foods, which were relatively cheap and considered nutritious. The reason that Japanese gyōza dumplings are so garlicky is that garlic was thought to provide high levels stamina, which fit the early postwar era of empty stomachs.
>
> The soup in the Chūka soba of that time was not of the settled, attractive style found today, but contained floating shiny fat, gave off a strong odor of chicken bones, and the smell of the alkali-water and the body

> odor of the many people waiting would combine together to give anyone who ate a bowl an energized feeling. [Okumura 1998:175]

Okumura's argument that Chinese food became popular in the immediate postwar period because of its perceived high energy value illustrates the extent to which Yamada Masahira and the others discussed in chapter one had already succeeded in influencing the popular perception of Chinese food as nutritious and filling.

The Occupation propaganda concerning the superiority of wheat-flour and animal-derived protein also bolstered the perception of Chinese food. In short, the desperateness of the food situation added to the desirability of foods considered filling and nutritious such as Chūka soba, and the Occupation wheat flour made noodles as well as bread and dumplings a central part of the diet.

Okumura also explains why so many small business operators chose Chinese noodles as opposed to other ventures:

> In 1950, the government eliminated controls on the exchange of wheat-flour, which led to a sharp increase in the number of Chūka soba shops. These shops were also relatively easy to start up. Large corporations began to rent out yatai startup sets inclusive of noodles, soup base, hot water, toppings, bowls, and chopsticks, which operators would rent and walk around town blowing their charumera flute, keeping a given percentage of the sales. Even then, the hikiko (one who pulls a yatai cart around) earned plenty of money. This Chūka soba was made from surplus American wheat flour. [Okumura 1998:176]

As Okumura notes, postwar returnees also contributed to the initial revival of Chūka soba during the Occupation period. Many of the returnees, who repatriated from China and Taiwan, took up noodle-making, opening up small yatai operations of the kind described by Satomura Kinzō in Shina soba ya kaigyō ki, (chapter one). The relatively low cost of establishing a yatai stand, as well as the availability of flour and lard as compared with rice, made noodle-making a viable option for many returnees. The history of the dish as told from the standard perspective by institutions such as the Raumen Museum of Shin-Yokohama therefore accentuate the difficulties of Japanese returnees in reestablishing themselves in the home country after the war, and the refuge many took in the operation of a yatai business.

The largest portion of people serving Chūka soba in the black markets of Tokyo and other large cities, however, were Koreans and Chinese who worked for the underworld gangs as vendors. Records of arrests for unlicensed vendors reveal a high frequency of non-Japanese names among the arrestees selling food, particularly Chūka soba. For example, an Occupation record of arrested vendors dated September 18, 1948 reveals that of the 191 names registered, twenty were arrested solely for serving food, while the 171 others were arrested for serving some form of alcohol, usually kasutori or shōchū. Of these twenty, nine were detained for the sole offense of serving Shina soba (or Chūka soba), two for serving wantan, two for serving udon, two for serving soba, two for serving sushi, and three for serving "rice with dishes." All but one of the nine serving Shina soba had non-Japanese names. (Thirty of the 191 arrestees in this sample have non-Japanese names, and assuming that many of the Japanese names were also Koreans and Chinese who had changed names under pressure during the colonial era, it is evident that non-Japanese comprised a considerable portion of small vendors in the black market.)[32]

One point worth noting is that the established historical narrative concerning ramen as offered by the Ramen Museum, Nissin Foods Corporation, and food authors such as Okumura tends to emphasize the role of returnees in popularizing Chūka soba at the expense of mentioning Korean and Chinese laborers who were by far the largest group of noodle vendors. In this manner, the story concerning returnees opening yatai serving Chūka soba after the war has the effect of eliding the immense and underappreciated role of non-Japanese in popularizing the dish *after* the war. Instead, the established narrative confines the influence of foreigners to the earliest phase of the dish's introduction, conveniently omitting the untidy issues of colonialism, forced labor, and discrimination. Thus, the focus on the hardships and resilience of Japanese returnees from "war areas" (a term that displaces "colonies") actively overlooks the history of colonial subjugation and its ramifications, which were central to the popularization of Chūka soba.

Chūka Soba in Early Postwar Popular Culture

The increasingly frequent appearance of Chinese noodle-soup in early postwar popular culture illustrates the dish's ubiquity in relation to other foods as a result of U.S. Occupation policy, as well as its heightened symbolism as a food of the working-class, the young, the urban, and the masculine. At the same time, the

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[32] General Headquarters, Government Section, "Report on Arrest of Violators of Emergency Measures Ordinance for Eating and Drinking Business," September 18, 1948. (Declassified E.O. 12065 Section 3-402 NNDG #775009) National Diet Library U.S. Occupation Archives Microfilm (Tokyo).

dish's Chinese symbolism became increasingly thin, reflecting the invisibility of China in Japan's foreign imaginary overall as a result of the U.S.-imposed Pax Americana. To a large extent, however, in the early postwar period, ramen still predominantly served the purpose of an emergency food. The mass popularization of ramen in the media coincided with the high-growth period (1958-1973), when the release of instant ramen and television advertising, the baby boom generation's coming of age, and the increasing urbanization of the population greatly expanded noodle-intake levels and transformed the dish's imagery.

The postwar popularization of Chinese noodle soup also occasioned a modification of the dish's naming, which itself reflected the changed geopolitical relationship between Japan and China. The term Chūka soba came into popular use among noodle makers, and the term Shina soba went out of circulation during the early postwar years, coinciding with the shift away from the use of the word Shina, and its replacement with the word Chūgoku in mainstream politics. The discursive transition indicates a shift away from words tainted with the memory of imperialism and war, and an attempt to remake Japan through a remaking of its Others. Along with Chūka soba, the word ramen, which some shops had already begun using in the Taishō period, became the dominant signifying term for the dish after the war. Many in Japan, however, continued to use the term Shina soba, and the even more degrading term chan soba to refer to the ostensibly Chinese dish, as seen in early postwar films depicting the dish. (Chan chan and Chan koro are the most denigrating

Japanese terms to refer to Chinese, and were used commonly to dehumanize the Chinese enemy during both wars between China and Japan.)[33]

As Chūka soba consumption began to reappear as both a constitutive and reflective part of the planned industrial recovery of Japan's urban areas, one finds the beginning of the dish's frequent use in radio, film, and popular music. The dish often appeared as a way to represent various aspects of everyday life in early postwar Japan, such as the desperate food situation, the growing generation gap between the dietary habits of the young and old, and the marking of gender and class differences between certain characters.

One example of the use of ramen in popular culture can be found in the NHK radio program known as Tonchi kyōshitsu [Riddle Classroom], which began in 1949 and provided comic relief to listeners nationwide for two decades, often by using subtle social critique in the form of clever wordplay. In one of the segments of the program, Professor Aoki, the show's narrator, read poems from members of the audience that addressed a previously given theme while using syllables from a given word to begin each word of the poem. For example, in one early episode from 1949, Professor Aoki provided the word taue-uta (rice-planting song), to which the respondent composed a poem beginning with each of the syllables, "**ta**mago yaki, **u**nagi, katsuteki, **e**bi-furai, **u**nto **ta**kusan tada de tabetai" [I want to eat a bunch of omelet, fresh-water eel, pork cutlet, deep-fried shrimp for free.] [Aoki 1999:73]

In the first recording of the program, broadcast on January 4, 1949, the food shortage was the main theme. One poem discussed the availability of ramen in

[33] For example, see Sanma no Aji (dir. Ozu Yasujirō, Shōchiku, 1962), discussed in chapter 3.

relation to other foods, incorporating the syllables from the word rakugaki [graffiti] to relate the impact of food scarcity on young couples:

Eating nothing but ramen on a date.
Yesterday and today, my wallet is empty.
The rendezvous was pathetic.
Ramen bakkari kutteru deeto Gamaguchi sabishii kinō kyō
Aibiki mo wabishii mono datta. [Aoki 1999:75]

The verse drives home the frequency with which the writer appears to be consuming the dish, and the unromantic dinner setting afforded by the Chinese noodle-soup-serving establishment. The short poem reveals the ubiquity of ramen in relation to other foods, as well as the sense of poverty and inadequacy entailed by repeated consumption of the dish. The connotation is that ramen is a plain, unsubstantial emergency food that the author would not be consuming so regularly if other foods were more readily available, and that his inability to take his date anywhere else is a reflection of his powerlessness.

In addition to radio, film became a common venue in which ramen motifs began to appear frequently during the early postwar period, usually connoting youth, masculinity, or roughness. One of the earliest known uses of Chūka soba in film after Ozu Yasujirō's 1936 talkie Hitori musuko [Only Son] was Ozu's Ochazuke no Aji [The Taste of Tea-Rice]. Released in 1952, one of the main scenes focuses on two of the characters consuming a dish referred to as ramen. A young student, Okada Noboru (played by Tsuruta Kōji), introduces a young woman from a well-to-do family, Yamauchi Setsuko (played by Tsushima Keiko), to ramen, a food with which she is completely unfamiliar.

In the short scene, the two exchange a short dialogue concerning the dish which translates as follows:

Noboru: “It’s tasty, isn’t it?”

Setsuko: “Yeah, it is.”

Noboru: “The soup is what’s tasty about ramen. Food like this cannot just be tasty though. It has to be cheap too.”

Setsuko: “Is that so?”

Noboru “There are a lot of cheap and tasty places out there. On the opposite side of that guard is a yakitori shop. That place is tasty too. Let’s go next time.”

Setsuko: “Yeah, please take me.” [Ochazuke no aji]

The student’s familiarity with ramen and other working-class foods, and the well-to-do woman’s lack of awareness of the dish highlights the roughness of his character as opposed to the genteelness of hers. It also genders the food as masculine. Furthermore, the choice of ramen highlights the youth of the two characters.

Another example of the use of ramen in early postwar cinema is Naruse Mikio’s Bangiku [Late Chrysanthemums], released in 1954. One of the four main characters is a single mother who must part with her only daughter who is due to get married and move away. In one of the central scenes of the film, the daughter decides to treat her mother to a meal before she leaves, taking her to a Chinese food eatery. The mother, though appreciative, reminds her daughter that this is the first and only time that she has ever been treated to a meal by her. As the two silently eat Chūka soba together, the daughter's marked enthusiasm towards the dish, and the mother's disdain, symbolizes the generation gap between them. [Bangiku]

Chūka soba is also the theme of Misora Hibari's hit song from 1953, titled Charumera soba ya. Misora was the dominant postwar singer of the popular enka genre, and was also the first artist to record a hit song with Chinese noodles as its theme. The song identifies the dish as charumera soba, referring to the flute played by the roaming vendors of the food (discussed in chapter one), and its lyrics can be understood as an indication of the ubiquity of the dish in this era:

> Hello everyone, how about some noodles?
>
> Its your familiar charumera girl again.
>
> Going from town to town, despite my small size.
>
> I am the fun charumera noodle vendor.
>
> Old man had drinks and feels good.
>
> Watch out with that tipsy walk.
>
> OK, one up, slurp slurp slurp
>
> Thanks for your business. Thanks for waiting.
>
> Now, Tokyo's specialty is your familiar charumera girl.
>
> Shinjuku, Asakusa, Ueno, Shinbashi
>
> I rattle my flute.
>
> I am the charumera yatai noodle vendor. [Okuyama 2003:226-227]

The motifs associated with noodle vending are more or less consistent with the short story about the Shina soba yatai operator discussed in chapter one. The drunken customers, the working-class neighborhoods, and the charumera flute are all central in Satomura Kinzō's piece as well. Yet, the fact that it is a young woman who is vending makes the song's lyrics unconventional and may perhaps account for its appeal. Chūka soba, as seen from the Naruse and Ozu films, was clearly a food gendered as masculine, consumed most often by working-class men or students because of its cheapness and perceived heartiness. The hardiness of the female noodle-vendor's language and demeanor, despite her corporeal diminutiveness and femininity, thus forms the basis for the song's humorous and carefree tone.

Chapter Three

Ramen and High-Speed Economic Growth

Introduction

The third phase in the popularization of Chinese noodle-soup in Japan occurred during the era of high-speed economic growth, between 1958 and 1973. The rise in Chūka soba dining was part of a larger transformation in the eating habits, consumption practices, and everyday life customs of households in urban Japan during this period. Chinese noodle-soup consumption increased dramatically, following general patterns of wheat, meat, dairy, sugar, and fat consumption. The rise in Chūka soba and other flour-based foods mirrored a decline in demand for rice, yam, and beans that began in the early 1960s. The U.S. government's policy of inducing overseas allies to buy American agricultural exports, the spread of modern nutritional science in Japan advocating the consumption of more "nutritious" (i.e. American) foodstuffs, and a changing demographic consisting of more young, urban consumers with a taste for so-called American and Chinese foods, accounted for much of the change in eating habits.

Chūka soba consumption not only rose dramatically, but its image became more readily recognizable as a custom of urbanites, particularly at lunchtime for blue-collar workers, and at nighttime for white-collar workers (following post-work drinking routines). The release of numerous films, short stories, and magazine articles using Chinese noodle-soup as a motif characterizing the impoverished everyday life of the urban worker attests to its newfound symbolic importance in the realm of popular culture. I argue that the rising importance of Chinese noodle-soup as a ubiquitous commodity and symbol of postwar urban reconstruction together point to the greater recognition of the economic contributions and political involvement of the main consumers of the dish—urban industrial laborers—in the policy-making processes of Japan and all other industrialized capitalist countries during the Cold War.

Nutritional Surveys and High Growth

The data contained in the Japanese government's national nutritional surveys dating back to 1945 are an excellent source for studying not only the changes in food habits in Japan, but more importantly, changes in the government's way of measuring and categorizing the nutritional well being of the citizenry. Both of these changed significantly during the period of high growth and beyond.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare began conducting detailed surveys on the nutritional health of the population under orders from the U.S. military in 1945, calculating caloric intake for 6,000 families in Tokyo. The surveys were taken under the backdrop of malnutrition and scarcity, and thus focused on nutritional adequacy by counting calories and studying the composition of urban people's diets to determine the amount of food imports required from the U.S. In 1947, the government began collecting data on height and weight as well, coinciding with the U.S. reverse course and its newfound emphasis on providing food for workers in strategic industries. In 1948, the government completed the first detailed survey of the entire population, including the countryside. The new nationwide surveys were carried out around the same time that the U.S. decided to begin pursuing national economic recovery for Japan as its top priority there. In 1952, the last year of U.S. Occupation, the government enacted the Nutritional Improvement Act (eiyō kaizen hō), which legally mandated the Ministry of Health and Welfare to conduct periodic surveys on the nutritional and physical health of the population. [Kōseishō 1994: introduction]

After 1955, the report notes, dietary habits began changing rapidly, as seen in the immense growth of processed and "Western foods." The report specifically mentions the rise in the popularity of ramen and gyoza as emblematic changes of the period as well. While the report categorizes this period as one of "diversification" (tayōka) in terms of food habits due to the large-scale adoption of Western and Chinese foods, it was also one of increasing homogenization of eating practices across regions. In this way, the realization of a nationally recognizable Japanese diet based on a standard set of dishes (many of which were European or Chinese in origin) became ubiquitous throughout the country during the period of high economic growth, extending the pre-war diet of the urban masses to smaller cities and the increasingly suburban countryside. [Cwiertka 2006: 173]

The survey began incorporating data on variations in nutritional levels and dietary preferences by region and income level in 1961. In 1964, the government began measuring expenditures on food as a proportion of income, as well as expenditures on outdoor dining among households. The government's decision to pay more attention to intra-Japanese divisions coincided with national political upheavals of 1959-1960, in which deep divisions over the postwar settlements (between the U.S. and Japan, as well as within Japan itself) were exposed in the form of mass protests. The government's attempt to ameliorate these threats to the stability of (the capitalist) order took the form of Keynesian economics, which promoted low unemployment, low inflation, and high savings rates. The subsuming of intra-Japanese disparities in everyday life practices was an important manifestation of these policies.

The government policies promoting near full employment, high household savings rates, and mild inflation were based on the Keynesian political-economic formula of absorbing socialist elements into capitalism to minimize the threat of proletarian uprisings. These policies, in turn, helped spawn a mass consumer culture in Japan, where the uniformity of consumption practices produced a visible homogenization of everyday life across households. The spread of Chūka soba dining and the explosion of instant ramen were thus part of a concerted transformation in eating habits grounded in the logic of the Cold War at both the level of international trade (that is, U.S. exports of wheat-flour to Japan) and domestic politics (that is, pacification of industrial workers through their embourgeoisement).

The name of the dish also shifted again. Although most references to Chinese noodle-soup from the early to mid 1950s describe it as Chūka soba or even Shina soba, from the late 1950s, and particularly the 1960s onward, the term ramen became much more common. The modification was due mainly to the newfound popularity of the instant form, which the Nissin Foods Corporation and rivals all referred to as instant "ramen" rather than instant Chūka soba. The move away from the term Chūka soba toward the non-nation-specific term, ramen, was also emblematic of the general absence of mainland China in the foreign policy discourse and corresponding popular imaginary of postwar Japan. The lack of formal diplomatic relations with the mainland Chinese government until 1972 appreciably contributed to this situation.

U.S. Influence on Changing Staple Foods

The enormous rise in ramen consumption during the period of high economic growth is evidenced by government statistics measuring household consumption, which were initially put in place by the U.S. Occupation authorities. Household expenditure on Chinese noodle-soup (classified as Chūka soba in government surveys) increased by roughly 250% in this period. [Kawata 2003:22] Rising household expenditures on ramen are especially of note because they occurred as the portion of income spent on food in general decreased by over half. [Nakamura 1990: 91]

The rise in ramen eating was an emblematic part of a broad and drastic shift toward so-called Western foodstuffs (wheat, meat, and milk) among people in Japan. Statistics from a Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) publication from 1978, "Changing Dietary Lifestyles in Japan," indicate that between 1960 and 1975, average daily protein intake increased from 69.5 grams to 78.8 grams per person, of which milk, eggs, and meats increase from 7% to 22% of total protein. [JETRO 1978:6] The study also shows that during the same period, average meat intake increased from 16 to 64 grams per day, and wheat consumption increased from 60 to

90 grams per day. [JETRO 1978:8] The study cites U.S. cultural influence, the school lunch program, and a changing demographic consisting of more young urban consumers for the rise in demand for animal-derived proteins and wheat-based foods.

While the JETRO study *does* mention the elusive influence of "American culture" in shaping Japanese dietary practices, there were also clear political pressures exerted by American representatives of agribusiness toward Japanese government officials to absorb immense amounts of surplus U.S. wheat flour. The growth in ramen and other flour-based foods was largely the result of top U.S. policymakers' efforts to export Oregonian[34] wheat to Japan, and Japanese bureaucrats' efforts to absorb the wheat by spreading American nutritional science to Japanese housewives. Although scientific reinforcement of the notion that Western and Chinese foods were superior sources of nutrition and energy began in the 1920s with the establishment of the semi-public Institute for Nutritional Studies in Tokyo, the dietetic celebration of these foods truly took off in the late 1950s and 1960s under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Suzuki Takeo, a Japanese food historian, has written an extensive account of the U.S. government's dumping of surplus wheat flour onto the Japanese market, and the accommodation of American export interests by Japanese bureaucrats and nutritionists. In "'America's Wheat Flour Strategy' and Changes in the Japanese Dietary Lifestyle", Suzuki authoritatively documents the connections between U.S. commercial

[34] The wheat exported from the U.S. to Japan was grown primarily in the states of Oregon and Washington. Because U.S. demand along the Pacific coast was insufficient to match the high yields available through industrial farming, foreign outlets to absorb the surplus wheat such as Japan and other anti-communist allies of the U.S. in Asia became critical for the growth of U.S. agribusiness.

agricultural exports and the resultant shift in Japanese food habits in the two decades following the Occupation.

While U.S. forces in Japan imported large amounts of wheat flour as an emergency measure to quell the threat of rebellion during the Occupation, in the *post*-Occupation period, the U.S. under the Eisenhower administration decided to make the commercial export of U.S. agribusiness surpluses one of its top economic priorities with respect to Japan and other Asian allies. The U.S. government's decision to put more emphasis on the promotion of commercial exports of wheat flour was largely due to the recovery of Canadian and Australian production capacity in 1953, which caused world wheat prices to drop and U.S. surpluses to accumulate in government warehouses. [Suzuki 2003: 16]

Surplus wheat became an important tool of the U.S.'s Cold War strategy. The U.S. used free food (and low-interest-rate loans with deferred payment options in the form of food) as one of many enticements to convince a reluctant Japanese government led by Yoshida Shigeru to agree to substantially rebuild its armed forces. This policy was further solidified during the Ikeda-Robertson talks of early 1954. Japan agreed, under pressure from the U.S., to take on a greater military role in defending its political-economic interests in the region, and significantly expand the number of soldiers in its reconstituted military. One of the incentives for Japan was U.S. food aid worth $50 million, which included 600,000 tons of wheat. Of the $50 million raised from the sale of the food in Japan, the U.S. spent $40 million on economic and military aid for Japan, and handed over the remaining $10 million to the Japanese government, which it spent on domestic agricultural restoration and development. In addition to Japan, the governments of Italy and Yugoslavia received $6 million each, and Pakistan and Turkey received $3 million each from the U.S. in the form of food aid. [Suzuki 2003: 19-20] The fact that these countries received the most food aid reveals how significant their continued alliance with the U.S. (or non-alliance with the Soviet Union in the case of Yugoslavia) was from the point of view of U.S. foreign policymakers.

Shibata Shigeru, an economic historian of the postwar period, has found that the Japanese government relied on U.S. food aid to rebuild its defense aircraft industry. Citing the revised Japan-U.S. Mutual Security Act (MSA) of 1954 that resulted from the Ikeda-Robertson talks discussed above, he notes,

> The MSA is noteworthy for establishing a link between Japanese rearmament and the U.S. agricultural disposal program. Section 550, which required MSA aid recipients to take U.S. agricultural surpluses, was added to the MSA in 1953. As a result, Japan was required to sell surplus U.S. agricultural products on the domestic market and use the proceeds to finance its defense industry. The funds were mainly invested in equipment and technology for the aircraft industry. This type of aid was called 'defense support' economic assistance, being a form of assistance to countries that had military agreements with the U.S. but were unable to meet their military obligations. Since funds were created by selling U.S. agricultural surpluses in Japan, the MSA was beneficial to both U.S. agricultural exports and to the Japanese aircraft industry. [Shibata 2001: 169]

The U.S. wheat had far-reaching effects in transforming Japanese dietary habits. The wheat that Japan imported from the U.S. during the late 1950s became known as “MSA wheat” in Japanese newspapers, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare expended significant manpower and capital to propagate the merits of a bread-based diet. As Suzuki notes, the shift to a bread-based diet entailed much more than simply the consumption of bread, since it also led to changes in preferences for the foods accompanying the staple grain. (For example, he notes that bread does not fit with miso soup, grilled fish, and pickles.) Thus, a rise in dairy and meat consumption and a drop in rice consumption were prefigured in the mass importation of American wheat. According to Suzuki, the Americans aimed to transform Japanese dietary habits through the promotion of wheat-based foods as the staple grain, since it created a market for other food exports such as meat and powdered milk as well. As evidence, he cites the U.S. Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 (Public Law 480), which, in summary, stipulated four main points in relation to the export of U.S. food aid to allies: 1) countries are allowed to make payments for U.S. food in local currency, and may defer payments until later after consulting with the U.S.; 2) a portion of the capital raised from the sale of U.S. foodstuffs will be spent by the U.S. to develop that country's economy; 3) the U.S. reserves the right to use a share of its proceeds from the sale of food to develop the market for American agricultural products in that country; 4) the U.S. can direct the food for use in efforts to alleviate malnourishment or for school lunch programs.[35] [Suzuki 2003: 22-23]

Suzuki highlights the fact that while the first two conditions benefited the food-importing country's economic development, the third and fourth conditions actually hindered it by limiting the potential for endogenous agricultural development, and by changing dietary preferences in favor of U.S. foodstuffs.

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[35] Also see http://www.fas.usda.gov/excredits/FoodAid/pl480/pl480brief.html.

Japanese officials negotiating with the Americans at the Ikeda-Robertson talks recognized the economic harm to small Japanese farmers that the large-scale importation of American wheat posed. As a way to address the concerns of domestic farmers, the government decided to allocate most of the $10 million it kept from the sale of U.S. food to boost domestic agricultural production. Much of the money was spent on the Aichi waterworks project, which consisted of 1,242 km worth of construction, and ultimately delivered water from the Kiso River to rice farmers in perennially water-scarce areas in the Southwest Nōbi flatlands and the Chita Peninsula. Ironically, by the time construction was completed in 1961, the decline in rice consumption (stimulated by the availability of cheap wheat-flour based foods) made its production in the region no longer an attractive endeavor. [Suzuki 2003: 36]

U.S. wheat producers sent trade representatives to Japan to expand exports to the Japanese market, and persuaded Japanese officials in the Ministry of Health and Welfare to promote U.S. foodstuffs among Japanese housewives using public cooking seminars on roving "kitchen cars." Ministry of Health and Welfare officials obliged by hiring nutritionists such as Ogihara Yaeko and her students to drive around in these kitchen cars and hold cooking demonstrations of mostly Western and Chinese dishes using ingredients made from "MSA wheat," canned meat, eggs, and other imported foodstuffs. The U.S. government funded these activities using money it had raised from the sale of U.S. farm exports in Japan.

According to Sekiya Mako, the vice director of the Japan Dietary Life Association (Nihon Shokuseikatsu Kyōkai) at the time, the Americans provided more than enough funds for the twelve cars, the gas, the food, and the labor for the kitchen car operation. In referring to the funding, she stated, "There was no deliberate attempt to conceal [the U.S. funding for the kitchen cars]. However, how do I put this, there was an air of taboo surrounding the subject of U.S. funding." [Suzuki 2003: 56] In addition, according to Suzuki's account of an interview he conducted with Higashihata Asako, one of the most renowned nutritionists of Japan in the postwar period, she noted that the generous U.S. funding had been "something that everyone would like to hide." [Suzuki 2003: 99]. The U.S. government thus subsidized Japan's nutritionists to spread the scientific foundation for the widespread consumption of American agricultural exports, thereby contributing to the decline of Japan's own agricultural sector.

In the mid to late 1950s, most of Japan's top nutritionists promoted the benefits of bread consumption as a nutritious and convenient supplement, if not substitute, for rice. Most used their scientific authority to argue for the desirability of dietetic tendencies found in the "bread-eating cultures" of the West. Some of the most respected nutritional scholars and other scientists attributed deep cultural flaws to rice eating, and argued that food practices of Asian peoples were the underlying reason for their lack of competitiveness in terms of industrial productivity compared with Westerners. One such nutritionist was Ōiso Toshio, the first director of the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Nutrition Bureau, who held the post between 1953 and 1963. Ōiso, who had worked for the U.S. Occupation forces in the previous decade, wrote, "An Essay on Nutrition," [Eiyō Zuisō] published in 1959, in which he attributed the emergence of “reason” and “progress” in Europe to wheat-based food production.

> The character [seikaku] of rice-eating peoples and the character of wheat-eating peoples are naturally different, where the former believe that people eat because they exist, while the latter believe that people exist because they eat. Each of these are the result of the types of food that they eat, and while the former are resigned and passive, the latter are progressive and active…[Because of the tasty and satisfying nature of rice,] peoples who eat rice easily become accustomed to that way of living, and they lose their will to be active…[People who consume wheat] find that it alone does not taste good, which makes them desire more than what they already have, motivating them to become active and providing the initiative for them to achieve progress, where the result is that they move in the direction of wanting other types of foods…The need to turn the wheat into wheat flour, and then to combine it with other foods such as meat and dairy products has led to many innovations that together have produced the wheat-flour based food culture of today….The relative ease of the rice-based dietary lifestyle naturally leads people to move away from things such as reason [wake], thought [shikō], and contrivance [kōan]. Furthermore, things such as scientific experimentation and development do not advance. [Ōiso 1959, quoted in Suzuki 2003: 64-65]

In this manner, Ōiso, who was responsible for guiding the dietary habits of the population of Japan at the time, made strong public statements concerning the historically rooted lack of productivity of rice-consuming peoples as opposed to wheat-flour-consuming peoples. Ōiso and others under his direction thus laid much of the intellectual groundwork for the mass-scale adoption of U.S.-derived foods that occurred between the late 1950s and early 1970s.

Similarly, Hayashi Takashi, who was a professor of medicine at Keio University, published an influential book in 1958 titled, “The Brain” [Zunō], in which he argued that excessive rice eating hindered brain development. He wrote, “Parents who feed their children solely white rice are dooming them to a life of idiocy…When one eats rice, one's brain gets worse. When one compares Japanese to Westerners, one finds that the former has an approximately twenty percent weaker mind than the latter. This is evident from the fact that few Japanese have received the Nobel Prize…Japan ought to completely abolish its rice paddies and aim for a full bread diet." [Hayashi 1958, quoted in Suzuki 2003, 76] Hayashi's study subsequently became the basis for a pamphlet printed by the national wheat-flour foods producers' association titled, "Eating rice makes you stupid," which gained national media attention. [Suzuki 2003, 77]

Consumption levels of wheat, meat, and dairy grew rapidly during the period of high economic growth due to the combination of U.S. food exporters' success in penetrating the Japanese market and the growing perception in Japan that these foods were healthier and representative of social-economic progress. Yet, as Suzuki noted, the shift toward American foodstuffs also mirrored a decline in demand for rice. Thus, while daily rice consumption reached a high point of 391 grams per person in 1925, and a low point of 254 grams in 1946 due to scarcity, by 1962 it had come back up to a postwar high of 324 grams. Yet, beginning in 1962, amidst double-digit economic growth and an abundant supply of domestically grown rice, average daily rice intake per person began to precipitously decline. By 1978, it had fallen to 224 grams, below the 1946 low. [Miyazaki 1982: 35] These changes reveal that during the initial postwar period (a phase of industrial recovery), wheat flour supplemented the shortfall in rice production, but that dietary preferences reflected a desire for a return to prewar patterns. Consumption patterns post 1962 indicate, however, that dietary habits changed out of preference and not out of necessity in the period of high economic growth, as more people in Japan chose to consume more wheat-flour based foods despite the availability of rice. As Japanese households earned more disposable income, their food choices fell more in line with what nutritionists had been advocating, and what Americans were exporting, illustrating the far-reaching effect of bureaucratic guidance and U.S.-driven trade policy on food practices in postwar Japan.

The Japanese government reacted to this decline in rice consumption by promoting rice eating aggressively from the late 1960s. Specifically, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries began encouraging large food processing companies to develop more mass-consumer products using rice. For example, Nissin Foods' aborted attempt to launch the "Nissin Lunch" instant rice product line in 1967. Furthermore, in 1976, the government began directing municipalities to use rice in school lunches. [Ohnuki-Tierney 1993: 16-17] The government's channeling of rice, rather than U.S.-imposed wheat flour, into schools and instant food factories from the late 1960s onward illustrates how these two areas continued to function as important sites for absorbing surplus staple-grains in Japan. Despite these policies, however, daily rice consumption continued to decline through the late 1960s and 1970s.

Ramen and the Homogenization of Everyday Life Practices

The changing food habits seen in Japan during the era of high growth reflected not only the growth in trade with the U.S., but also the standardization of everyday life practices across households in Japan and other industrial capitalist countries due to the rise of the mass consumer society, which was also highly political and related to the Cold War. A vast majority of the Japanese population began identifying with a normative middle-class lifestyle defined more by the consumption of specific goods than the relationship to the means of production in this era. The newfound affordability of 1) electronic kitchen technologies, 2) foods previously considered luxury items such as bananas and shrimp, and 3) the practice of dining out with the family all became particularly salient ways to de-politicize working households through food by concretely reminding them of the beneficial impact that the rapid growth of the national economy had on their dietary lifestyles.

The mass-media-projected norms of male sacrifice at work and high levels of household savings through female restraint in consumption embodied an overall submersion of politics onto the realm of everyday life practices through the site of the family, reducing the ability of workers to politically contest the interests represented by the homogenization of these practices. Put differently, the culture of *being* Japanese, associated with the most common everyday practices, commodities, and ways of using them in Japan, effectively grounded the Nation in the realm of culture, and created a self-regulating social organization that reduced the potential of class-based political uprising. As Masao Miyoshi argues:

> By fabricating harmonious consensus, the privileged and empowered of Japanese society successfully manipulate the political process, concealing the actual existing differences and inequalities and substituting a monolithic appearance of unity and equality. A startlingly effective political control is in operation, in short, keeping itself invisible and passing for an unpolitical

cultural essence, both communal and permanent. This is why the reference of all statements in Japan has to be directed back to Japan, the addictive formula of 'we Japanese' and 'in Japan.' Japanese politics thus takes the form of culturalism. Japanese culture is of utmost importance, politically. [Miyoshi 2000: 19-20]

One of the central components in the fabrication of consensus found in postwar Japan was undoubtedly the commonality of dietary practices, which became noticeably more homogenized in the era of high-speed growth. The dynamic changes in the dietary habits of working Japanese households, such as increased wheat and meat consumption, and expansion in convenience food intake, were an integral part of the (highly political) culture of shared everyday life in the period of high economic growth. Furthermore, as foods previously considered luxury items (such as shrimp and bananas) became available on a mass scale, working people were able to see concrete changes in their everyday lives that indicated economic improvement.[36]

As the preparation of food and other fundamental duties of household maintenance became simplified through the massive proliferation of electric consumer goods (such as rice-cookers, refrigerators, gas ovens, stoves, washing machines, and vacuum cleaners), the time available for leisure activities previously reserved for the elite, such as flower arrangement, tea, calligraphy, and ironically, cooking lessons, expanded for working families as well. Thus, the practice of

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[36] These dietary "improvements" for people in Japan came at the cost of large-scale environmental degradation and labor exploitation in surrounding countries also under the U.S. Cold War umbrella such as Indonesia. [Murai 1982]

cooking gradually shifted from a chore of necessity to a hobby of pleasure, though the rate and degree of the shift tended to differ depending on income level and household preference of each family.

The newfound ability of wage laborers to enjoy so-called middle-class consumption patterns, and the general reformulation of output as consumption in Keynesian economics, became an important ideological tool in combating socialism among workers for the policy planners of Japan (and virtually all other industrialized states), during the Cold War. To this end, commodities such as televisions and washing machines, and services such as outdoor dining and recreational entertainment all fostered the idea of an organic productive community—based on a totalized “middle class”—that masked the class structure underpinning the economic system.

As Andrew Hurley argues in *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture*, institutions such as diners played an important role in allowing working families the experience of dining out, providing a sense of participation in the U.S. mass consumerist society of the 1950s and 1960s. As the preferred dining establishments of the less well to do, ramen eateries and Chinese food restaurants functioned in a similar capacity during the period of high economic growth in Japan, providing a venue for hurried workers and families looking to dine out on the cheap.

Ramen consumption first became a recognizable symbol of workers’ culture in television programs and movies in the 1960s. Because of its popularity among industrial workers as a cheap and filling source of nutrition, the ramen shop became tinged with a distinctly working-class symbolism during the period of high growth. The depiction of ramen in various films and television dramas in the 1960s highlights the imagery that the dish began having as a food of the industrial working class, and its ubiquity resulting from the surge in foods containing U.S.-imported wheat flour. Time and again, one finds the use of ramen in cinema to represent the earthy side of urban life, capturing the roughness of industrial working-class characters, or a "return-to-basics" motif in general.

Even as consumption practices generally became more homogenized (as Nakamura and Garon both note), food choices and eating practices became powerful vehicles for conveying the actual differences in everyday life practices between blue-collar and white-collar workers in Japanese popular culture during the period of high growth. Ozu Yasujirō, for example, titled many of his movies after the names of symbolic working-class dishes, and his sensitivity to the role of food in marking differences across generations and social-economic classes is apparent in all of his films. In Sanma no aji (literally, "the taste of saury fish," but renamed, "An Autumn Afternoon" in the U.S.), Ozu employs the ramen shop as a powerful symbol of meekness and economic hardship. In this film, it is clear that Ozu's ramen shop is an emblem of social-economic stagnation, highlighting the inability of some characters to shift to the material living conditions promised and propagated by the economic expansion of the period. Thus, ramen became a symbol for the pitiable situation of those who are unable to take advantage of the new prosperity, just as diners and trailer parks eventually do in the U.S.

Early in the film, the main character played by Ryū Chishū attends a secondary school reunion that includes his former teacher. The teacher drinks too much sake and begins feeling ill, whereby it becomes necessary for the protagonist to drive him home. When they get to the teacher's domicile, the protagonist finds out that post retirement, the teacher had been operating a run-down ramen shop with his daughter in a working-class neighborhood. The students take pity on the teacher at their next gathering, and pool together some money to give to him, which he appreciatively declines in a later scene. [Sanma no Aji: dir. Ozu Yasujirō, Shōchiku 1962]

Not only did ramen come to represent the everyday struggles of that segment of the population that was not enjoying the fruits of high GNP growth, it also came to represent the pathetic moments (and stifling conformity found in the overall structure of work, leisure, and family life) within the white-collar worker, or the sarariiman. An early example of the expression of white-collar dissatisfaction with the routines of everyday life using Chinese noodle-soup is the popular tune from 1962 entitled "Korega Otoko no Ikiru Michi" [This is the Road a Man Walks] sang by the comedian-variety group, Kurējii Kyattsu [Crazy Cats], described in Kawata's book. The lyrics of the song, which portray the discontentment and alienation marking the everyday of the white-collar man, can be translated roughly as follows:

The bonus-pay envelope that I finally got	Yatto moratta bōnasubukuro
Drinking, reveling, and eating ramen.	Nonde sawaide ramen kutte
When everyday is like this	Mainichi kōdato
It's sad enough to start weeping.	Korya naketekuru

Neither complaining nor whining	Guchi wa iumai kobosumai
This is the road a man walks.	Kore ga otoko no ikiru michi.
Aah, how pathetic.	Aa wabishii naa.

[Kawata 2003:10]

The song's lyrics are an eloquent example of the repetition and boredom produced in the realm of everyday life for white-collar workers. It is one of many possible examples from this period that point to the growing sense of alienation and overall dissatisfaction with the routines of everyday life felt by bourgeois salaried masses in Japan.

By the early 1970s, a phenomenon known as "Datsu-sara" (or escape from salaryman) gained attention in the popular press, referring to the growing number of white-collar company workers who left their successful careers to become farmers or self-employed peddlers such as ramen yatai operators. According to the social critic Yoshimoto Takaaki, the phenomenon grew out of a "continually increasing burden of a sensibility gripped with an amorphous sense of boredom, enjoying a bloated material life and a relatively improved standard of living, but an absolute impoverishment." [Quoted from, "The End of a Fictitious System" in Gordon 2003: 268]

The salaryman-targeted newsmagazine, *Shūkan Sankei*, for example, began running a weekly column titled, "Datsu-sara Report," featuring a successful escapee from the salaryman lifestyle. The January 22, 1976 edition of the magazine features a section on one such salaryman-turned-ramen chef who was grossing 1.5 million yen in sales per month running a small shop in Kagoshima. In explaining his decision to leave a successful career in banking, the chef, Motoyama Kenichi, states,

> I was in a strong position to do most of what I wanted to do [at the company], but there was something about being a middle manager at a small to mid-size firm that was just too "soft" (amai), and it just did not fit my personality. I could not help it if people thought that I was unstable—I just felt that I somehow needed to make a life for myself, and it was always paining me to feel this way…
>
> For the last three years, I have been running a ramen shop, which is work of the lowest social status, but for my spirit it is just the opposite, as I have gained a sense of the worth of human life. [*Shūkan sankei* 1976: 97]

As the example shows, ramen production became one of the potential sites of inventiveness that highlighted the ability of modern workers in Japan to make do within a repressive and normative cultural context. The fact that yatai cart and small-scale ramen shop owners operated with a degree of freedom and control over the product of their labor thus became recognized for its uniqueness within the hyper-rationalized environment of urban Japan. The romanticization of the small-scale producer's creativeness only grew as trends toward greater rationalization and atomization increased (discussed in Chapter Four). As Lefebvre makes clear in his description of everyday life in the modern world:

Life outside of high technicity becomes tinged with an impotent pride, the vain reflection of technicity and the powerlessness of fragmented labor faced with the objects it has produced…The result is that 'creation' becomes fetishized and degraded first to a cult of making things and having the know-how to make them, and then to a reverence for 'contraptions' and 'gadgets.' There is a trivial ideology surrounding the making of things, and an equally trivial attitude of reverential contemplation of them once they have been made…But one of the characteristics of the much-admired and sough-after cult of making things and having the know-how to make them is precisely that it differentiates itself from fragmented labor—in other words, from what everyone does in real terms in a praxis dominated by technicity. [Lefebvre 1995: 214-215]

The small-scale ramen chef fits neatly into this picture, for his non-participation as “fragmented labor” in the industrial production process serves both as a rejection of the rationalized routines of institutional work as well as a reinforcement of it by taking on the romanticized aura of creativeness that highlights the ubiquity and supposed normality of this rationalization.

Put briefly, during the era of high economic growth the practice of eating ramen for lunch became a recognizable custom particularly among the industrial working class. A recognizable layer of abstraction entered the representation of the dish, as ramen consumption became a category of government statistics on household food expenditures meant to measure general standards of living among the working masses. Not only did ramen consumption serve to highlight the growing opportunities for dining out among working families, it also began to be used as a representation of the underbelly of national economic success, as seen from the two examples above. Eating ramen thus became a formative part of the everyday routines marking the increasingly rationalized and commodity-defined lives of people in Japan during the high-growth period. At the same time, the small-scale production of ramen became tinged with an aura of creativity (or "an impotent pride"), as seen in the increasing number of white-collar workers embracing the idea, if not the actual lifestyle, of Datsu-sara. In this sense, the production of ramen became a possible site of escape and even critique for the regimentation found in Japan's corporate lifestyle.

Instant Food and Electric Kitchen Technologies

The incorporation of instant foods and beverages into everyday eating practices, and the subsequent obsolescence of inherited cooking knowledge, marked a significant change in dietary lifestyles for peoples in nearly all countries during the second half of the 20th century. Particularly in Japan, instant ramen, curry cubes, instant coffee, and frozen foods fundamentally altered eating habits during the period of high growth and beyond. For example, between 1965 and 1976, instant ramen consumption increased from 2.5 billion servings to 4.55 billion servings per year, while instant curry consumption jumped from 32,800 to 70,000 tons, and instant coffee consumption grew from 5,000 tons to 21,000 tons. [JETRO 1978:10] Each of these foods accompanied the diffusion of household kitchen machinery, such as electric refrigerators and freezers (owned by 97.9% by 1976), gas water heaters (81.3%), electric rice cookers (68.7%), and ovens (47.7%), which made their use possible and desirable to so many people. [JETRO 1978: 9] Marilyn Ivy states:

> Electric appliances standardized the image of the average household and what the average housewife should possess. Not only did they become the standard for middle-class status, but their presence and placement

> within Japanese dwellings (standardized in the form of housing projects, or *danchi*) also homogenized Japanese domestic space... [Ivy 1993:249]

The JETRO report mentioned above attributes these changes to a rise in disposable income among households, a growing population of young people born after the war, and the impact of “U.S. cultural influence.” The established narrative concerning the postwar “Westernization” of the Japanese diet often overlooks the fact that the Japanese consumed a great deal of their wheat flour and meat in the form of “Chinese food” such as ramen and gyoza, or as non-traditional Japanese food such as yakisoba and okonomiyaki.

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry, as well as the Ministry of Finance, facilitated the spread of household durables that promoted instant food consumption by directing preferential loans and much-needed foreign capital toward the industrial conglomerates that mass-produced these goods. The proliferation of new convenience foods, and the kitchen technologies that enabled their consumption, therefore, was central to the industrial planning that bureaucrats and businessmen honed in unison during the period of high economic growth. The rationalization and homogenization of everyday life that visibly sharpened as a result of the new commodities that flooded households must therefore be placed within the context of the government’s policies promoting near full employment, low inflation, high household savings rates, and uniform consumptive patterns, all of which offset the potential for class-based uprising. Nakamura Takafusa contends, “The equalization of income distribution produced among 95 percent of the people a sense that they were members of the middle class. As consumption patterns abruptly changed in favor of Westernization, they produced the lifestyle of contemporary Japan: people eat bread and meat, acquire household electrical appliances, own automobiles, enjoy their leisure, have a taste for travel, and are very fashion-conscious." [Nakamura 1981: 121]

The economic policies promoting near-full employment, relatively equal income distribution, high household savings, and mild inflation (based on the Keynesian formula for controlling worker uprisings) also had the effect of displacing much of the enforcement of the government's economic planning onto the realm of the family, where the role of the housewife became of utmost significance in de-politicizing the conceptualization of consumption. As Sheldon Garon argues, the Government's "New Life" campaigns of the late 1940s, which eventually materialized at the everyday level in the 1950s, promoted hard work and frugality, to be rewarded by higher living standards defined by very specific household technologies such as washing machines and electric rice-cookers. [Garon 1997:160-165] In this manner, the role of the housewife in managing household finances to keep the family on track with normative patterns of consumption carried a vital political purpose in that it implemented high-level economic planning while feminizing and outwardly de-politicizing the act of consumption.   Thus, these policies formed a self-regulating social organization that penetrated all aspects of everyday life (family, work, and leisure) during the period of high economic growth.

Chapter Four

Instant Ramen and the Nissin Foods Corporation

Introduction

The explosion of instant foods was a significant change in dietary patterns that accompanied the rapid transformations in the everyday life of people in Japan during the period of high growth. As the first instant food invented and popularized in Japan, the Nissin Foods Corporation's Chikin Ramen was a central part of the sweeping changes in food technologies, marketing strategies, and consumption practices that marked the era. Nissin Foods depended heavily on the transformations that were taking place in housing (mass tenement projects), vending (supermarkets), and the rationalization of everyday life in general for its popularization. Andō Momofuku, the company's founder, thus noted, "Nissin was a child of the times." [Nissin Foods 1992: 57] In turn, Nissin Foods and the instant foods industry fundamentally altered the relationship between people and their sustenance, both in Japan and worldwide, accelerating the move toward greater convenience and atomization in eating. The story of instant ramen during the high-growth era neatly brings together the aforementioned elements of U.S. wheat flour consumption (and decreased rice intake), the homogenization of certain normative food practices at the national level, and the ascent of a corporatized mass media with increasingly strong influence over food trends in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Story of Andō Momofuku

Andō Momofuku, the founder of Nissin Foods Corporation and the celebrated inventor of the first instant ramen and cupped ramen, released in 1958 and 1970, respectively, claimed that his experience of seeing long lines of customers of all ages forming in front of Shina soba yatai during the Occupation sparked his interest in developing instant forms of the dish. [Andō 1992:iii] Andō's life was a fascinating tale highlighting the continuity in economic concentration from the prewar to postwar years, and the big business opportunities created by the Occupation's effort to change Japanese dietary habits.

Despite the undeniable nature of Andō's achievement in popularizing instant noodles in Japan and much of the rest of the world, his self-proclaimed status as the "inventor" of instant ramen is not entirely credible. A much smaller company named Matsuda Sangyō had already released an identical product in 1955 called Aji tsuke Chūka men (Flavored Chinese noodles), three years before the release of Chikin Ramen, but had not secured a patent, and was forced to halt production after a few months due to weak sales. Although the company re-released its instant noodles in 1959 as Baby Ramen (later renamed Baby Star Ramen), a crunchy snack eaten without adding water, Andō's Nissin became recognized as the first maker of instant noodles. The infrequently cited alternate history of Matsuda Sangyō's invention of instant ramen nicely illustrates the ways in which the process of writing History itself is a political contest in which the writer creates, filters, and assembles "the facts" in a way that actively eliminates conflicting versions of the past.

Andō was born in the colony of Taiwan in 1910, and began his career apprenticing for a well-established uncle in the textile business in Osaka. Through his family's business ties, he befriended top government and financial leaders, the most notable being Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi. [Andō 1992:18]

With his industrial-military connections in order, Andō started his own multi-factory textile business in Taiwan with a ¥190,000 inheritance from his father at the age of 22. He notes:

> I wonder whether I would have developed instant noodles had the times continued peacefully. However, conditions took a turn for the worse. In 1938, the National Mobilization Law was proclaimed, followed in 1939 by the National Service Draft Ordinance, and in 1941 by the National Commodity Control Ordinance. One could no longer operate freely in the textile industry...The textile business had become difficult, but my enthusiasm for business went on unabated. I continued my pursuit of knowledge, trying my hand at various businesses that were suited for the times. As I have already said, if one can seize the trends of the day, there will always be opportunities for research, development, and business ventures.
>
> I started manufacturing stereoscopic projectors, and later, when air raids grew fierce, I bought 25 hectares of land on a mountain in Hyogo Prefecture, and began producing charcoal. I converted the entire mountain into charcoal, which I brought back to Osaka after the war, where it stood me in good stead. I was also involved in the joint manufacture and sale of barracks in Hyogo Prefecture. This venture may have been a forerunner of the now booming prefabricated house industry. Other experiences included precision machinery and aircraft-related parts, as well as many others too numerous to recount here. [Andō 1992:19]

Andō's involvement in various profitable ventures during the war is indicative of his close ties to both the military and industrial leaders of the time. Andō was also able to receive a large sum of money from an insurance company in the aftermath of the war, when most others were scraping by on an existence of hardtack and dumplings. The insurance money did not immediately translate into a successful venture, however, as Andō actually lost his fortune once before making it back through instant ramen in the period of high growth.

> Through the destruction of the war, I had lost all my textile, precision machinery and optical instrument ventures, but fortunately several tens of millions of yen of insurance money came my way. If converted into today's money, this money would represent a fabulous sum. I lost almost all of it later through other ventures, simply due to the fact that timing is everything. [Andō 1992:25]

While Andō's most significant contribution to Japanese industry and food culture was undoubtedly his popularization of instant ramen, which his company launched in 1958, he was also deeply involved in many other aspects of commerce, including food trading and wholesaling.

> The first seed that led to the birth of Nissin was sown in September 1948. I founded a company, Chūkōsōsha, in Izumiotsu with ¥5 million in capital. I was told that this was the largest amount of capital in any joint-stock company founded after the war. In 1949, I changed the company's name to Sanshi Industries and relocated it in Osaka. The company conducted a broad range of activities, from food trading to wholesaling. During a lull in 1958 I developed Chicken Ramen, and when sales of the product began I changed the company name to Nissin Food Products. [Andō 1992:28]

The progression of Andō's methods of capital accumulation from textile ventures in Taiwan before the war to munitions and energy during the war, and eventually to large-scale food processing afterwards reflects the shifting business opportunities created for owners of large capital as a result of colonialism, war, and food shortages, respectively. In this way, the Occupation preserved and reinforced the privileges of big capital owners such as Andō as part of its efforts to boost economic production to fight Soviet influence, despite some initial gestures toward de-concentration. Schaller recounts an episode at the time of surrender driving home the extent to which Japanese leaders portended this long-term outcome:

> Fujiyama Aiichiro, a business leader who later served as foreign minister, recalled that "when it was learned that the occupying power would be the U.S.…many industrialists uncorked their champagne bottles and toasted the coming of a new industrialists era." [Schaller 1985:4]

The food aid that arrived from the U.S. created an opportunity for business leaders such as Andō to tap into their strong government ties and market the food through specific channels to assure high rates of return due to the low cost of production. Andō states that his mission to create an instant form of ramen resulted in part from his meetings with bureaucrats from the Ministries of Agriculture and Health and Welfare during this period, who were looking for ways to make use of the U.S.-imported flour for foods other than the bread and biscuits already being served in school lunches. He writes:

> Before I discuss the development of Chicken Ramen, the world's first instant noodles, I would like to relate an episode to provide some background.
>
> Back in the days when I manufactured and marketed the nutritional supplement Becycle, I had several work-related opportunities to visit the Ministry of Health and Welfare. During the American Occupation, Japan relied on aid from the U.S. Food was barely sufficient. The Japanese had to eat wheat, corn—anything just to stay alive. One of the Ministry's jobs was to encourage the consumption of American wheat among the Japanese who were unfamiliar with grain flour. The Ministry sent several PR trucks out to roam the streets, urging passersby to eat bread.

> Every time I saw one of the PR trucks, a thought ran through my mind. I was dissatisfied with the idea that grain flour should be used solely for bread. At the time, bread was also a staple in school lunches.
>
> I have already stated my belief that food forms the basis for culture, art and civilization. This means that if you change your diet, you are in effect throwing away your traditions and cultural heritage. I believed that to adapt to a bread diet was tantamount to adapting Western culture. I confronted a Ministry representative with this argument.
>
> "Why aren't you also encouraging the consumption of traditional Asian noodles?" I asked. The Ministry representative nodded as he heard this. At the time, however, ramen and Japanese udon were solely the domain of small-scale businesses. There was no pipeline connecting U.S. flour surpluses with the structures necessary to produce and distribute noodles. The lack of adequate manufacturing facilities amounted to a bottleneck.
>
> The Ministry representative recommended that if I was so keen on the idea, I should do the research myself. This suggestion was to later become one of my incentives. [Andō 1992:35]

As noted above, Andō's incentive for creating an instant form of ramen was the abundant availability of American wheat flour. Andō was also interested in channeling the inexpensively obtainable food supplies from the U.S. into supermarkets after its conversion into instant noodles. Another potential unloading point for instant noodles was the school lunch system, which had been designed by the Occupation forces to resemble the American school lunch program, particularly in terms of its nutritional guidelines. For this reason, large-scale food suppliers such as Andō often targeted the school lunch program as a way to distribute instant food en masse. The plan to do so, however, never became a reality. [Andō 1992: 36] Andō's idea to create an instant form of ramen available on a mass scale developed from the popularity of the dish in the Occupation period as one of the few foods widely available on the black market. [Andō 1992:37]

Andō's story illustrates the deep connections between U.S. wheat-flour imports during the Occupation, the Japanese government's efforts to utilize the flour, and the subsequent invention of instant ramen. Andō's attempt to distribute ramen through the school lunch program is also indicative of how profitable that outlet became for large-scale food processors, and how indispensable intimate government connections were to establishing such distribution channels. In sum, one can understand the popularization of instant ramen during the high–growth period as a phenomenon rooted in U.S. and Japanese government efforts to alter Japanese dietary patterns to resemble American food practices. Concretely, this consisted of an increase in the intake of American food staples such as meat, wheat, and dairy, due to their perceived superiority in nutritional value to fish, rice, and soy products.

Andō also asserts that the invention of instant ramen contributed to the preservation of Japanese food culture by allowing wheat-flour imports to be used for noodles rather than bread. Andō repeats this argument throughout his autobiography, and the point is also advertised at the Nissin Corporation's food library's permanent exhibit, located at its Tokyo headquarters in Shinjuku. The framing of the instant ramen invention narrative as resistance to Western hegemony for the purpose of safeguarding Asian cultural autonomy echoes the conventional rationalization for Japanese imperialism, and highlights the persistence of that narrative's basic appeal well after the war.

The Success of Chikin Ramen

Andō Momofuku entered the food-processing industry in September 1948, purportedly for the aim of providing sustenance for the desperately malnourished masses. The company began with a desalinization plant, and expanded to include a furikake factory (dried-fish flake condiment), and an animal protein extraction operation. The protein extract, named "becycle," was derived from the bone marrow of cows and pigs, and sold to hospitals for use by patients needing nutritional supplements. Similarly, the dried fish flakes were manufactured from leftover fish parts, and marketed as a good source of protein and calcium. At one point, Andō's experimentation with nutritional supplements also led him to attempt to create food from extracts of boiled frogs. [Nissin Foods 1992: 47-48]

Andō's food processing ventures brought him in close contact with officials from the Ministry of Health and Welfare, who were enthusiastic supporters of his attempts to create alimentary matter from waste. The business model for all of Andō's ventures in the food industry were thus based on the idea of processing ultra low-cost or free ingredients from unused or discarded parts of items previously considered inedible to churn out food products sold through government channels that would be marketed as nutritious.   Each of the foods his factories produced relied upon low-cost inputs that were easily available, which were then packaged as economical sources of stamina for the masses.

The same trajectory essentially led to the development of instant ramen, as the availability of surplus U.S. wheat flour (and uneaten parts of chicken), combined with Nissin's ability to market the product as health food to the masses using connections in big business and government, proved to be a lucrative formula for

Andō. While the novelty of the “Magic Ramen,” as Andō referred to it, lay in its instantaneity, Nissin’s initial marketing strategy emphasized Chikin Ramen’s nutritious qualities more than its convenience. The original packaging of the product boldly asserted, “Builds strength” and, “A full meal boasting the highest nutrition and great taste.” [Nissin Foods 1992: 210] The appeal of Nissin’s claims must be placed within the historical context of high-growth Japan, when nutritionists were touting the fortifying qualities of wheat flour (noodles) and meat (chicken essence) as the reason behind the supposed physical strength and mental capabilities of Americans relative to Japanese.

In April 1960, Nissin received permission to market Chikin Ramen as a government-certified “special health food” after agreeing to enrich the noodles with vitamin B1 and B2 additives. Furthermore, in August 1967, the company began adding a protein supplement, Lysine, to its products in order to improve its nutritional qualities. As the corporate history explains, the protein supplement was added because, “It was said at the time that the Japanese diet was too heavily weighted towards plant matter.” Such perceptions, again, were heavily shaped by the efforts of Japanese nutritionists and U.S. agricultural export representatives to spread the gospel about the superiority of wheat, meat, and dairy. In June 1975, however, the company ceased adding the nutrients “due to improvements in the population’s nutritional state.” [Nissin Foods 1992: 108-109] This suggests that either the appeal of nutritional additives in enriched processed foods had declined to such a degree that it no longer merited the additional cost, or that a heightened public concern with the potentially hazardous health effects of artificial ingredients made it more of a marketing liability than an asset.

The story of Nissin Foods is remarkable in terms of the scale of its growth and the uniqueness of its product, but it is also quite similar to most other successful large companies in Japan during the period of high growth. Nissin can therefore be understood as a representative example of how the Japanese economy changed in terms of corporate structure, production methods, inter-company cooperation, advertising, and expansion into foreign markets. Andō's company, Sanshii Shokusan (the predecessor to Nissin Foods Corporation), conducted a test launch of its product, Chikin Ramen, at the Hankyū Department store in June of 1956 to great publicity and fanfare. Chikin Ramen, which the company advertised as a healthy, nutritious, and complete meal that only took two minutes to prepare, became known as the first instant food invented and developed in Japan due to a rival company's failure to mass-market a similar product two years earlier (see chapter two). On August 25, 1958, Andō personally began pitching boxes of Chikin Ramen to distributors at the Osaka wholesale market. The day subsequently became celebrated as "Ramen Day" in the 1980s, by which time the company had become a global player in the mass food production business.

According to the company history of Nissin Foods corporation, Andō changed the firm's name from *Sanshii Shokusan* to Nissin Foods（日清食品）in 1958 to symbolize his desire to "purely make a rich flavor everyday" (Hibi kiyoraka ni yutaka na aji o tsukuru—日々清らかに豊かな味をつくる). [Nissin Foods 1992, 60] However, the motto out of which Andō supposedly derived the company's name has a forced quality, and gives a sense that it was fabricated later to mask the initial reasoning behind the name change. One possible reason for the change to Nissin Foods was that the largest wheat processor in Japan was already named Nisshin, using the same characters, and that Andō simply wanted to confuse consumers into associating the two brands with one another to establish instant trust and recognition towards his small company.

Another possible explanation is that the term Nissin (日清) connotes "Japan-China," as in Nisshin sensō 日清戦争 (Sino-Japanese War), with the first character representing Japan and the second representing China under the Qing dynasty. Andō's decision to create a story about the naming of the company that omitted the possible connection to China fits in line with his decision to exclude references to his own Chinese ancestry in his autobiography. These omissions appear related to the larger issue of how postwar Japan became conceived (both within and outside of Japan) as an ethnically homogeneous nation, ignoring the heterogeneity of the Japanese Empire not only in the prewar period, but also as a legacy of de-colonization in the postwar period. [Oguma 2002] Andō, therefore, was not unique in his desire to cloak his non-Japanese ethnicity, as many Japanese businessmen with Taiwanese and Korean backgrounds did the same in postwar Japan to avoid discrimination.

In 1959, Nissin Foods began a partnership with Mitsubishi Trading, Japan's largest trading house, to distribute Chikin Ramen more widely. Although Mitsubishi executives were reluctant to become involved in what they considered a low-end market such as instant ramen with limited profit potential, Andō was able to convince a senior executive, Sanan Shōji, to persuade his colleagues of its value as a way to absorb surplus U.S. wheat flour. According to Andō, Sanan convinced Mitsubishi Trading executives to distribute Chikin ramen because "it will create a distribution channel for wheat flour. As a result, trade with the wheat-flour producing countries will increase." [Nissin Foods 1992: 63] The statement illustrates the strong connection between Mitsubishi's desire to increase trade with U.S. companies, and its decision to become involved in the instant ramen business.

Soon after Mitsubishi began working with Nissin Foods, it coined the motto, "From ramen to missiles," to refer to the breadth of products and services the company dealt in. The slogan points to the larger connection between food-processing and the missile-producing sector of the economy, as the same companies dominated both. Japan's ten large trading houses (sōgō shōsha), such as Mitsui, Mitsubishi, and Sumitomo, controlled nearly all large-scale economic activity until the mid 1970s, and became notable worldwide for their scale and breadth of activities, including import-export, financing, transportation, insurance, distribution, and marketing. Thus, the slogan, "From ramen to missiles" became a way to convey the uniquely dominant position of Japanese trading companies within the national economy, the continued engagement of Japanese companies in weapons production despite the prohibition on such activities by the so-called Peace Constitution, and the continuity of the concentration of capital in the same companies from the prewar to the postwar.

Labor at Nissin Foods

Labor practices at Nissin Foods during the high-growth era tended to follow general trends in Japan, with managers successfully gearing workers' interests towards increases in productivity, and limiting the potential for collective action that threatened the stability of the systematic extraction of surplus labor value. Specifically, the ability of management to set the terms of acceptable debate concerning the demands of workers limited the range of options for factory workers at companies such as Nissin Foods. In discussing the triumph of management over labor at large Japanese companies during the era of high growth, Andrew Gordon notes, "The men who led almost all Japanese unions defended these workers with little vigor for two reasons: they recognized that their own relative security would be threatened by a more inclusive movement, and they viewed the women as essentially supplementary wage earners for whom second-class status was reasonable. [Gordon 1993:391-392] Nissin Foods closely followed the pattern described above, as a majority of workers at the factory level were "supplementary wage earners," or young female employees from the countryside, who did not enjoy the benefits and protections of full (company-based) union membership.

Nissin Foods' production of Chikin ramen began as a labor-intensive operation consisting of only twenty employees, in addition to Andō, his wife, and son, Koki, who would later inherit the company. The workers plucked the chickens before boiling them to create the chicken essence, then deep fried the noodles, and packaged the final product all by hand. Improvements in meat processing and greater access to deep-frying technology in the first year, however, greatly reduced the human involvement needed in the manufacturing process, and Nissin was producing roughly 6,000 units per day after only eight months of operation. By 1960, two years after starting operations, Nissin Foods was producing 1.2 million units per day. [Nissin Foods 1992: 62;72]

The growing demand for labor at Nissin Foods and other large companies from the late 1950s to the early 1970s led to fierce competition over workers in the Japanese economy as a whole. The corporate history of Nissin Foods describes instances in the 1960s when other instant ramen producers sent representatives to Nissin factories to clandestinely hire away much-needed laborers, ranging from plant managers to conveyor line employees. The change at Nissin Foods was part of larger labor trends in Japan. The proportion of family workers in the labor force dropped from two-thirds of all in the late 1950s to under half by the end of the 1960s. [Gordon 2003: 256] Companies such as Nissin thus made every effort to attract and keep workers as a result of the high demand for labor created by the economic policies of the period.

As the scale of production grew, the company adopted a rationalized structure with an increasing number of salaried workers involved in marketing, research, planning, accounting, and other non-production-related aspects of revenue creation. At the same time, the factory workers formed a company-based union in 1960, following the trend of most other workers of large companies in Japan. Nissin's corporate history asserts, "Even after the establishment of the workers' union, not once did the laborers and managers engage in conflict." [Nissin Foods 1992: 68] Despite the fact that the corporation's own history was written from the perspective of the managers, and thus constitutes only one-half of the story, the absence of conflict between labor and management was the norm at most large corporations during the period of high growth, owing to steady increases in wages based on the previous year's profits, and the skillful alignment of workers' aims with company goals by management. This was done by rewarding workers who recorded the most overtime, recognizing worker-derived improvements in production, and holding frequent company-wide festivals, trips, and events. Nissin's history mentions the annual Christmas party in particular, where factory workers—a majority of whom were young women from the countryside—were given a small taste of luxury items such as Champagne and hors d'oeuvres, often for the first time in their lives, implanting the idea that theirs was a generous, fun, and prestigious firm.

Even more important in aligning workers' aims with those of management, however, were the physical limitations on their activities as a result of the company-centered dorms in which they lived. Workers were housed together in company dorms, and conducted their everyday activities at shops owned and operated by the company. Nissin, for example, owned and operated general stores, beauty parlors, cafeterias[37], and dorms around its factories, which provided subsidized goods and services to its workers. These institutions, in turn, put the company at the center of all social and economic activity for its workers, and reinforced the notion that the interests of the company's owners and those of its lowest-paid workers were

[37] According to Nissin's corporate history, the invention of instant yakisoba developed from a company worker's idea of turning scraps of broken Chikin Ramen, which were provided to employees as a free snack in the cafeteria, into another form of instant noodles. [Nissin Foods 1992: 100]

ultimately one and the same. From the perspective of workers, however, a company that provided these benefits was a better place to be employed than one that did not for clear economic reasons, and the strong demand for labor at all levels during the high-growth era made it imperative for Nissin to provide such amenities.

Like most other large Japanese manufacturing firms, Nissin Foods relied heavily upon scientific management techniques utilizing statistical procedural analysis to continuously improve the efficiency of its production methods. Nissin Foods stringently employed the same Quality Control (QC) circles, Total Quality Management (TQM) teams, and Zero Defect (ZD) techniques originated by U.S. managers and developed further by Japanese statisticians in the 1960s, for which firms such as Toyota became famous internationally in the early 1970s. The Quality Control circles were small groups consisting of employees from all levels of the company gathered to suggest and see through potential advances in the production process. The frequent rotation of managers across various company posts, and the eagerness of management to incorporate (and take credit for) suggestions from blue-collar workers, were innovations that together became recognized as a uniquely Japanese style of management in the business literature of the U.S.

Market Share Consolidation via Patent Litigation

The rise of Nissin Foods as the dominant maker of instant noodles in Japan was tightly linked with the failure of hundreds of small-scale producers, many of them driven out of business by lawsuits initiated by Nissin. One of the main sources of Nissin Foods' success therefore was its ability to eliminate competitors through patent litigation and other legal maneuvering. According to its own company history, Nissin used patent violation lawsuits against a number of rival companies in order to "defend the company's interests." [Nissin Foods 1992: 76]

Nissin Foods filed its first patent infringement lawsuit in February 1960, suing a major rival in the instant noodle business, Star Macaroni, over its use of the name "Chikin Ramen." The Osaka District Court sided with Nissin in its verdict on March 5, 1960, and soon afterward, Nissin obtained sole proprietary rights to the name "Chikin Ramen," which thirteen other companies had been using. [Nissin Foods 1992: 76]

Much more important, however, was Nissin Foods' securing of patent rights over the manufacturing process of instant noodles as a way to put rivals out of business. The patent rights that Nissin Foods used against its rivals were actually acquired from another company, *Tōmei Shōkō*, which had filed the paperwork first. Nissin Foods persuaded the executives of *Tōmei Shōkō*, as well as nine other smaller instant noodle manufacturers, to form a producers' conglomeration and share the patent and in some cases, equipment. The collection of companies headed by Nissin Foods, named the Kantō Instant Ramen Manufacturing Cooperative, was launched on August 26, 1961. At the same time, two other instant noodle producers' unions were formed around two rival companies, Ace Cook and Shimadaya Foods. [Nissin Foods 1992: 77-78]

On May 8 and June 12, 1962, Nissin acquired full patent rights over "flavored dry noodle production" and "instant ramen production" respectively. Asked about the company's intentions in securing these patents by newspaper reporters, Andō explained, “I am not thinking about monopolizing the instant ramen business. I want to authorize the use of the patent by companies with excellent facilities and technology. If it can be used to prevent surplus production and sharp price drops, I believe that the industry can be stabilized.” [Nissin Foods 1992: 78] The notion that the industry would regulate itself through managed competition in order to prevent the extremes of both monopoly and price warfare was representative of how capitalism operated in Japan (and continental Europe) during the welfare-state era. [Schaede 2000]

Despite Andō’s statement, on June 1, 1962, Nissin began notifying all other instant noodle makers in Japan of their need to receive explicit written authorization from Nissin Foods to continue operating, or else face patent violation lawsuits. Over the course of the next year, Nissin Foods reached agreement with twenty large instant ramen manufacturers over the sharing of patent rights, in which each company agreed to hand over a portion of its revenues in return for the right to operate. In response, rival company Ace Cook and six of its smaller allies challenged Nissin Foods’ patent in court. Although the Osaka District Court sided with Nissin Foods in a decision reached on June 25, 1962, the Patent Office in Tokyo released its own opinion on the matter soon after, stating that Ace Cook was not in violation of patent law. A drawn-out public relations battle between the two firms and their respective allies in the industry ensued for two years, ending only after bureaucrats representing the Food Agency (a division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries) prompted conciliation between them. [Nissin Foods 1992: 80]

The government’s involvement in preventing Nissin from dictating the terms of entry into the instant ramen market by itself (i.e. the Patent Office decision), as well as its intervention in creating harmony between Nissin Foods and Ace Cook (i.e. the Food Agency action), were again representative of its approach in guiding capitalism in Japan to prevent both extremes of monopolistic power and unregulated competition. The result was a type of state-supported cartelism for which Japan became famous, where a handful of large companies restricted market entry and exit by smaller firms, and competed with each other for market share through quality, innovation, and marketing, rather than through price. [Schaede 2000]

After five years of bitter intra-industry conflict over product naming and patent rights, state bureaucrats compelled the remaining 56 instant ramen makers to unify under one national umbrella group in 1965, creating the Instant Ramen Manufacturer’s Association. In its charter proclamation, the Association announced, “Although the patent issue has bred some suspicion among the companies to this point, this association has nothing to do with patents, and instead has been established with the aims to working cooperatively to achieve the purpose of improving the benefits [of instant ramen] to the general public, enhancing product quality, providing a space for intra-industry conversation, and starting with the right attitude overall.” The reason for the government’s administrative guidance, according to Nissin Foods, was its growing influence on Japan’s nutrition, international trade, and food prices overall. [Nissin Foods 1992: 82]

Nissin Foods Advertising

Nissin Foods' sales of Chikin Ramen greatly benefited from the expansion of mass media marketing audiences through the surge in weekly magazine readers and television viewers in the era of high growth. The segmentation of the mass media market into various consumer groups greatly aided Nissin's ability to focus on its core target audience of young housewives, unmarried men, and children. Nissin Foods' effective use of newspaper, magazine, radio, and most importantly, television advertising through the use of popular young celebrities, original theme songs, quiz shows, cash giveaways, travel prizes to Europe, and a host of other promotional campaign goods made it a nationally recognized innovator in the sphere of youth-targeted marketing. After focusing its advertising energies on nationwide newspapers for the first two years, Nissin Foods moved into the television market in 1960 with its sponsorship of the youth-oriented programs, Igaguri-kun and Biibaa-chan. According to the company history, the first set of advertisements aimed to drive home to consumers "how convenient life could be with Chikin Ramen," as well as its "healthfulness, purity, novelty, and vitality." [Nissin Foods 1992: 72]

In 1962, Nissin Foods launched its own television program—a quiz show titled, "World's Greatest Quiz," in which one hundred contestants competed for one million yen.[38] The quiz show quickly became one of the highest-rated programs nationwide, and continued as such until its termination in May 1965. Before its cancellation, the Osaka Housewives' Association recognized the show as the "Best

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[38] The Nissin-Foods-sponsored program, "World's Greatest Quiz Show," replicated the format of the popular American quiz program, $64,000 Question, which ran on CBS between 1955 and 1958.

Youth-Oriented Program" on television, highlighting Nissin Foods' ability to gain approval as a good corporate citizen from its most important consumer base, young urban mothers. [Nissin Foods 1992: 74]

Another pioneering step in marketing by Nissin Foods was the composition of an original musical tune for the purpose of radio advertising. Sung by the minor celebrity, Shibakura Mariko, "The Chikin Ramen Song" began running on the popular radio program, "Let's Sing Tonight" in 1962, and continued unabated for five years. During that time, the song gained wide currency among students and young people, elevating Shibakura's career to unforeseen heights. [Nissin Foods 1992: 74] A 1967 article from the tabloid magazine *Sunday Mainichi* concerning the ten-year anniversary of the product release of instant ramen notes the fluency with which young people had become able to recite lines and songs from instant ramen commercials:

> This year marks the tenth year since the birth of instant ramen. Sales have grown by an average of twenty-fold annually since its introduction in Osaka in 1958. Even the Japanese economy has not matched such high economic growth. "My Name is Ramen Taro." "This is what I like." "I have eaten a whole range of them, but after all." When hearing these lines pop out so effortlessly from the mouths of children…Yes, the annualized twenty-fold growth figures apply not only to instant ramen but also to the dissemination of television waves as well. [*Sunday mainichi* 1967: 44]

Companies such as Nissin Foods embedded carefully researched advertising jingles promoting instant foods into the minds of children to the extent that they became established as part of the national popular cultural milieu in the period of high economic growth. In this manner, Nissin Foods effectively exploited new media forms to associate itself with, and at times even define, the burgeoning youth consumer culture of the high growth period.

Another important component of the effort to promote instant ramen to children was the introduction of an original trademark character for consumers to associate with Chikin Ramen. The story behind Nissin Foods' development of the character, "Chibikko" (a term for small child in Japanese), is instructive of the growing importance of marketing, particularly to young people, and the vast resources spent researching their pernickety preferences in the period of high growth. The company history notes the heavy investment in market research made before the character's official introduction in 1965.

Nissin Foods had already created two original trademark characters named "Chi-chan" and "Kin-bo" soon after its founding (which combined to form the word "Chikin"), but decided to scrap them in 1964 as the heightened need for attention to youth-oriented mass marketing became clear. Although the company's initial plans were to use "a chicken motif," one of its rivals outpaced Nissin Foods, forcing it back to the drawing board. Planners then began discussing the possibility of an elephant or a giraffe, but upon conducting more diligent market research, settled upon "a healthy, happy, and mischievous child" as the symbol of the company. [Nissin Foods 1992: 129] The intensified attention paid to children as an abstract category, seen in the construction of the first National Children's hospital in Tokyo, and the "Children's Country" theme park in Yokohama, both in 1965, strongly influenced the company's choice of an animated child to represent it. [Nissin Foods 1992: 130] The company history explains that the character of Chibikko was drawn with “wheat-flour colored complexion, a round nose, large eyes, and freckles, representing the image of health itself.” [Nissin Foods 1992: 130] Interestingly, this “image of health itself” appears with light blonde hair, freckles, and a baseball cap turned sideways, and behaves as a “healthy, happy, and mischievous child.” [Nissin Foods 1992: 130] The blonde hair, freckles, and baseball cap on Chibikko all suggest that the character was drawn as an idealized popular image of the white American child, who epitomized health, wealth, and mischievous happiness.

Nissin Foods began a cash giveaway promotional campaign in 1965, handing out 1,000-yen notes to 500 people daily for three months between February and May. The promotion was wildly successful, drawing over 1.6 million entries and (re)acquainting households across Japan with the Nissin Foods brand name. One point worthy of mention with respect to this specific promotion was Nissin Foods' straightforward explanation of its purpose at the time, stating in campaign posters, “In the highly competitive instant foods market of today, we at Nissin Foods are engaged in every effort to win greater market share. In keeping with that effort, we would like to offer our valued consumers a gift of 1,000 yen as a way of expressing our appreciation, and also of increasing our share of the instant foods market.” [Nissin Foods 1992: 127] Following the success of the cash giveaway promotion, Nissin Foods began holding sweepstakes for travel tours to Europe and color televisions. [Nissin Foods 1992: 131]

The shifts in Nissin Foods' product names and marketing themes over the course of the high growth period are a valuable source for studying the concerns of consumers in the context of rapid social-economic change. For example, Nissin

Foods stopped using Roman letters on the packaging, and stopped describing the nutritious benefits of most of its products after 1966. These modifications suggest a slight decline in the general appeal of American-themed marketing imagery, as well as a general recognition among consumers that instant ramen was not a healthy food, notwithstanding all of the adamant advertisements to the contrary. In addition, the company released “Japanese-style Chikin Ramen” in 1966, and “Demae Itcho” in 1968, both emphasizing the Japanese qualities of the soy sauce-based soups, and the latter using the Chibikko character dressed in Edo period worker’s clothing. These names and marketing themes are indicative of a growing trend towards the marketing of goods and services as distinctly *Japanese* in the late 1960s. Furthermore, Nissin Foods released “Inaka soba” (Country buckwheat noodle-soup) and “Ramen Kazoku” (Ramen Family), both in 1970, which can both be understood as testaments to the depopulation of the countryside and the decline of extended kinship ties in Japan during the same period. Nissin Foods’ ability to create entirely different images around its product lines based on the continual regeneration of marketing themes (despite the fact that they were all essentially composed of the same ingredients—wheat flour, oil, and salt—with a slight degree of variation in the flavoring), illustrates the company’s sensitivity to the issues of concern to the public at each time, such as poor nutrition, cultural inferiority to America, loss of tradition, decline of country life, and weakening family ties. Like other successful marketing campaigns, the company’s advertising genius lay in its ability to promote the idea that the consumption of instant noodles healed rather than exasperated each of these problems.

Nissin Foods' television advertisements are another useful source for examining the rapidly changing social trends in high-growth era Japan. Television broadcast in Japan began in 1953, but the mass consumption of television sets did not occur until 1959, when the crown prince's wedding to Shōda Michiko of the Nisshin flour milling company, unrelated to the instant noodle maker, set off a buying frenzy. Between 1956 and 1960, the percentage of Japanese households possessing a television set increased from one percent to almost 50%. [Ivy 1993:248]

One of Nissin Foods Corporation's first television advertisements, aired in 1963, features a young boy and his mother, who is dressed in a high-quality kimono and appears refined by all indications, giggling together while holding a package of instant ramen. The ad also displays the word "Lysine" prominently across the screen along with the name of the product. The implication is that well-to-do mothers feed their children protein-enriched instant noodles to keep them happy and healthy. [Nissin Foods 1992, 218] The commercial's core message is thus the healthful nature of instant ramen consumption. In response to the ad and others like it, some reactionary social critics began writing magazine editorials disparaging the widespread reliance on instant foods by young mothers as a sign of their laziness, decadence, and over-Americanization.

The company's next major commercial featured a young man wearing a white tank top sitting in a small apartment by himself, getting ready to enjoy his instant noodles. It is titled, "The Bachelor" (Dokushinsha), and straightforwardly reveals the second main target group for Nissin Foods' products besides children—

unmarried men. [Nissin Foods 1992, 218] This commercial and others like it (such as a 1973 ad for Nissin's Yakisoba titled, "Bachelor's Dorm" or literally, "Man's Room" (Otoko no heya)) reinforced the normative gendering of labor, in which men were expected to engage solely in remunerated labor or training for it, and to rely upon female labor (or instant food in the absence of females) for nourishment. Advertisements such as "The Bachelor" that targeted young males tended to emphasize the convenience rather than the nutritious qualities of the food.

A 1966 commercial titled, "My Grandchild Loves It," reveals another important target group for instant ramen manufacturers—the elderly. The commercial shows an old grandmother with her son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren all enjoying instant ramen together. The spot may be understood as an attempt to provide an excuse for elderly urban consumers (who were becoming increasingly detached from the urban nuclear families of their children) to buy instant foods without having to admit to eating them. Thus, "My Grandchild Loves It" may have been just the line that elderly consumers, who were growing more dependent upon instant foods for everyday nourishment, needed to maintain a sense of dignity when buying Chikin Ramen for themselves.

Nissin Foods' advertisements for its Demae Iccho line, which began in 1968, usually portrayed young kimono-clad men discussing the dish in relation to the uniqueness of Japanese culture, representing a turn in the company's marketing emphasis. Commercials such as "Japanese Common Sense" (Nihon no jōshiki) from 1972, or "Soy Sauce—Japanese people, Soy Sauce—Sale" (Shōyu Nihonjin, Shōyu seeru) from 1975, illustrate the newfound marketability of “Japanese culture” as a commodity marker.

The introduction of Japanese-style (Wafū) Chikin Ramen and the Demae Iccho line in 1966 and 1968, respectively, represented a new emphasis on Japanese-themed brand marketing, which drew heavily upon Edo imagery of merchant culture, as well as ancient myths and legends.

The emergent association between the consumption of instant ramen and the condition of being Japanese was put forward not only by advertisers, but also by writers of popular tabloid magazines with mass circulation. One of the earliest mentions of such an association can be found in the October 28, 1971 issue of the salaryman-targeted weekly, *Shūkan gendai*, which interviewed twenty of the most prominent instant ramen lovers of Japan on their favorite add-on recipes, and the significance of instant ramen for them. The piece begins with a quote from then Foreign Minister (and later Prime Minister) Fukuda Takeo, “It is one of my favorite foods. I eat it all the time. The best part is that it is simple, but if you add vegetables or meat, it tastes even better.” [*Shūkan gendai* October 28, 1971: 42] The Foreign Minister’s claim to regularly eat instant ramen was a clear signal that he wanted to be viewed as a man of the masses, but also served as a strong endorsement for instant ramen from one of the most elite politicians in the country.

Next, the well-known essayist Kita Morio admits, “I am addicted to instant ramen…These days I eat it only twice per day at one and three a.m., but for a while I was eating it as if I was mad.” [*Shūkan gendai* October 28, 1971: 42] The most noteworthy quote, however, is from the famous medical doctor and mountain climber, Imai Michiko, who expounds on the virtues of instant ramen, and its role in reminding her of her own Japanese-ness. "When I go to the mountains, instant ramen is indispensable. No other food impresses everyone as much as this. Ultimately, it makes me feel more and more strongly that instant ramen is purely a Japanese food, and that I am Japanese." [*Shūkan gendai* October 28, 1971: 42] Imai's assertion concerning the connection between her pride in being Japanese, and her enjoyment of instant noodles, would gain wide circulation in the coming decade and a half, just as instant ramen was becoming more of a global product in terms of production and circulation.

The turn toward Japanese-themed advertising and a reckoning of instant-ramen eating as a distinctly Japanese cultural habit coincided with a broad turn toward the study of Japanese uniqueness among journalists and academics within and outside of Japan, focusing on the root causes for Japan's successful development as a modern, non-European, non-Christian capitalist nation. The theories and debates concerning the essential parts of Japanese culture that made the nation so uniquely capable of capitalist development (unlike all other non-Europeans) tended to discuss Japan in terms of homogeneity and uniqueness in relation to a normative, progressive "West" as represented by the U.S. From a more general perspective, the debates confined the basic unit of analysis to national culture, and buttressed the idea that ahistorically construed national cultural inclinations can explain disparities in national wealth. Although writers debated which part of Japanese culture was responsible for the country's success, the framework for the debate ignored issues such as Japan's highly advantageous position as America's most valuable strategic ally outside of Europe due to the Cold War, the bifurcated labor market structure underpinning the national economic growth, or the ethnic and regional variations within Japan itself.

The U.S. provided concrete economic advantages to Japan such as a fixed exchange rate undervaluing the yen, openness in technology transfers, and other favorable terms of trade as a way to firmly ground its strategic Cold War alliance. Japan's rapid national economic growth, in turn, allowed U.S. academics to tout it as a model of non-Western capitalist development for all other non-Western countries, often using government-derived funding. American modernization historians of Japan tended to limit the terms of analysis to the identification of preexisting national cultural traits that set the groundwork for "successful" development under capitalism. The modernization historiography therefore tended to designate Japan as a unique case study of successful non-Western development, attributing Japan's political processes, economic practices, and social organization to cultural values supposedly undergirding the nation, rather than seriously examining the interconnectedness of global processes rooted in the logic of capital accumulation. As a result, this mode of analysis tended to consider the rise of capitalism as a natural outcome resulting simply from the passing of time, rather than a globally integrated political and economic system of human design. The historicity of the nation-state and corresponding notions of national culture are thus overlooked, naturalizing the unit of the nation as an ahistorical category without carefully considering it as a correlated part of the rise in global capitalism. Thus, "Japanese culture" was depicted as a timeless, unified essence, and the analysis avoided consideration of the historicity of the category itself, the ethnic and class divisions that its abstract unity masked, or its relation to more global forces of historical change. It also overlooked the commonness of modern forms of rationalization across industrialized spaces.

Reactions to the Explosion of Instant Foods

A defining part of the mass culture that flourished in the high-growth era was the explosion of weekly newsmagazines targeting different segments of the population such as young women, young men, housewives, and adult men. Marilyn Ivy notes:

> There was a tremendous upsurge in publishing activity, with new weekly magazines (shūkanshi) dominating the market. Many of the most popular and widely circulated current magazines in Japan today had their origins in the mid-1950s; they were particularly influential in the period before television. These new mass-market magazines and (later) television, along with the older media of radio and newspapers, showed the consumers what they should be, what they should aspire to, what they should consume in order to confirm their middle-class status. [Ivy 1999:247]

Women's magazines generally celebrated the convenience and supposed nutrition of instant foods as a manifestation of scientific progress, and suggested improvements on recipes with possible add-ons. One example can be found in the December 4, 1972 issue of *Young lady*, which notes 20 different ways to make use of instant ramen, such as adding ketchup, canned tomato soup, garlic, hamburger meat, spaghetti sauce, bacon, or frozen fried rice. After listing the wide range of instant and frozen foods available on the market at the time, the article jovially observes, "The world sure has become a lot more convenient." [*Young lady* 1972, 130] The article also provides a recipe for suiton[39] stew, suggesting how one of the other most widely consumed postwar emergency foods besides Shina soba was becoming popular among young people in its instant form, to the surprise of those with personal memories of surviving on it. [*Young lady* 1972, 130]

Editorials in salaryman-targeted magazines, on the other hand, often expressed concerns about the social changes entailed by the explosion of such foods, particularly the perceived oversimplification of domestic labor. While there was no disagreement over the idea that the proliferation of household kitchen technologies and scientifically-preserved foods among working households was a sign of national economic achievement (i.e. "catching up" with the oft-touted "American" standard of living), the reduction in time required to cook became a matter of controversy for male-targeted magazine writers, who stoked fears that the "American" model of the housewife, with its implications of laziness and non-femininity, had also been imported into Japan. An article from the December 1955 edition of the literary journal *Shōsetsu kōen* nicely illustrates this tension by addressing the advent of frozen food, its impact on gender relations, and the differences between the use of household durables in Japan and the U.S.

The anonymous author begins by mentioning that the largest news story of the year was the record number of sales of washing machines, refrigerators, and televisions, but rather than being a cause of celebration, it only revealed how

[39] Suiton are flour-based dumplings with no taste that are consumed in a stew with vegetables, and along with udon, Shina soba, and bread, formed one of the staple foods consumed during the Occupation making use of U.S. wheat flour in lieu of the shortage of rice.

relatively poor and inconvenient everyday life in Japan had been until that point. He argues, "In America, ownership of dishwashers (let alone washing machines) is so common that it does not even generate any interest. Now on top of that we have 'frozen food.' After being liberated from the duties of cleaning and laundering, housewives are now being freed from even the duty of cooking." [*Shōsetsu kōen* 1955: 84]

After describing what frozen food is, and how it is prepared, he continues, "People's first thought may be that such an item cannot possibly taste good, but that is because they are thinking of the frozen foods they already know, such as hokke or tara[40] fish. But the frozen foods being sold today have been developed and improved significantly over the last ten years. It is not an exaggeration to say that they are significantly better than the foods that Japanese people are accustomed to eating on a daily basis." [*Shōsetsu kōen* 1955: 84]

The author then projects frozen food sales in Japan over the next decade, and predicts robust growth for the industry as long as prices continue to decrease. He concludes, "The result of these trends will be the complete liberation of women from the kitchen, leaving them with only the task of giving birth. One would expect that such a situation would lead men to complain about the unequal division of labor, but in America they do not complain. This is what makes Americans who they are. If it was a Japanese man, he would probably have to make at least one complaint." [*Shōsetsu kōen* 1955: 84] The article makes clear that changing practices of domestic labor were producing much anxiety for social critics such as the author.

[40] Both are varieties of codfish

Specifically, the decreased amount of time spent on food preparation by female household managers became viewed as a turn away from the very duties that defined motherhood and femininity. Thus, the type of apprehension voiced by such critics became a common theme in newspapers and magazine editorials in Japan as instant food became increasingly popular.

An article that captures the problematic of improved convenience at the cost of greater atomization can be found in the November 13, 1960 issue of *Shūkan asahi*, titled, "It is the Instant Era: Food, Clothing, and Shelter, Everything Instant," which explores the novel dietary lifestyle associated with instant-food-dependent bachelors. By 1960, it became possible to substitute a day's worth of meals and drinks with instant foods, giving rise to the notion of "the instant man" who lived solely off of these products. The article depicts "the instant man" as an unmarried twenty-five year-old salary-man living in the Yūrakuchō district of Tokyo. It then highlights the plethora of new technologies, particularly with respect to food, that urban company workers were enjoying while also pointing out some older everyday practices that were being lost in the process.

> The instant man's day begins with a bowl of instant soup, some instant ramen, and a cup of instant coffee. After eating lunch at a self-service cafeteria at work, he buys his ingredients for dinner. These include instant "alpha rice" and some powdered "flavoring for fried rice mix." He comes across a new line of canned goods at the store as well, which includes eel, lamb, and even chawanmushi custard, and decides to buy them all as he will surely consume them at some unknown time in the future. As he consumes his dinner of instant fried rice mix and canned meat, and he prepares a dessert of instant red-bean soup, he thinks to himself,
>
> "What has become of this world? Back when I was a student, on winter nights, I would hold my hungry stomach patiently waiting for the sound

> of the charumera flute played by the ramen yatai operator. Otherwise, I would spend an hour boiling rice in an enormous pot, which I would eat with miso soup and salted cucumbers that I made myself every week. Remembering those days, I take a look at the cupboard, but there are no knives, pots, or cutting boards. All I have are a bottle opener and a frying pan. When people ask, 'what about the taste of the food?' I must admit, it is not that good. But it is something that I should be able to put up with until I get married at least. [*Shūkan asahi* 1960: 6]

In addition to relating the atomization generated by instant-food dependency, the article also reinforces the notion that the socially appropriate consumer group for instant foods is young unmarried men. The expectation that the instant man would no longer need to "put up with" such foods so regularly once married again points to the taboo on over-reliance on instant foods by housewives. Thus, while instant food makers and kitchen technology producers directly targeted young housewives in advertisements and encouraged the rationalization of everyday life through the use of their products, critical editorial writers for salary-man-oriented newsmagazines discouraged their use as unfeminine and not motherly.

Some women writers—often with home economics backgrounds—also bemoaned the decline of home cooking and the advent of "too much time for leisure" as a result of the lifestyle afforded by instant foods. For example, the same *Shūkan asahi* article also quotes travel writer and food expert Totsuka Fumiko on the degeneration of culture entailed in the wholesale adoption of instant foods.

> If the instant [lifestyle] goes to the extreme, humans become psychologically mechanized too, which brings about the destruction of the mental structure….There is a trend among American housewives to knit or take dogs for walks….This is the very sight of humans overcome by the instant lifestyle. Many [American] men have even taken to Eastern philosophy and Zen Buddhism. [*Shūkan asahi* 1960: 11]

Totsuka's evidence for the decadence of American culture is none other than a growing curiosity in Eastern philosophy. In her rendering, therefore, the American interest in the category of knowledge understood as Oriental thought was a reaction to the excessive pursuit of practical and scientific advancement that defined Western thought. She then notes how "Europeans are more balanced," and discourages Japanese from excessively espousing the instant lifestyle (i.e., American way of life) afforded by household technologies. [*Shūkan asahi* 1960: 11]

Less critical, more celebratory editorials on instant foods from magazines targeting agricultural workers can also be found, which usually noted the nutritional benefits of instant food consumption, bolstering advertising claims by Nissin Foods and other producers. One example is a February 1961 editorial in the magazine *Chijō*, an agricultural journal, which provides a glimpse into the popularity of instant ramen given its novelty and scientific claims to superior nutrition in the early 1960s. After explaining what instant ramen is and how it is prepared, the author exclaims, "it is full of healthy nutrients such as protein, fat, vitamin B1, vitamin B2, and calcium, and contains 512 calories per 100 grams. The price is 85 yen for a pack of two servings, which is actually cheaper than the 50 yen-per-bowl charged at Chūka soba shops or at yatai stands." [*Chijō* 1961: 130] The same article also touts the merits of instant shiruko (sweet red bean soup), noting that it too contains vitamin B1 additives, and can be purchased for about one-third the cost of the store-served version. In addition, the anonymous author suggests instant coffee to farmers as a way for them to quickly regain the energy to work hard in the field without wasting time actually brewing the drink. The author's argument that the instant versions of ramen, shiruko, and coffee were actually superior to the handmade ones served in eateries due to their price and nourishing ingredients conveys how the belief in better nutrition through chemical additives was spread to both urban and rural laborers not only through company advertising, but also by enthusiastic editorial writers who did so on a voluntary basis. Such articles point to a more general faith in the promise of scientific improvements in everyday life materials and processes.

Two other themes common to many editorials critiquing the explosion of instant foods were the poor flavor and safety records of some of the products. One article from the March 13, 1961 volume of *Shūkan shinchō*, one of Japan's two leading weekly newsmagazines, titled, "An Evaluation of Instant Foods," raises both of these concerns. The subheading to the article notes, "Too many products taste 'just good enough.'" According to one Japanese food scientist quoted in the article, "The main concern for the industry at this point is to improve taste…Once the most essential aspects of the product—taste and aroma—are improved, and once lifestyles are rationalized more in Japan, we will see the industry truly takeoff." [*Shūkan shinchō* 1961: 23] The rationalization of lifestyles to which the scientist refers specifically entailed a greater reliance on convenience foods purchased from supermarkets and prepared using electric cooking appliances.

The next issue with respect to instant ramen in the article is that of safety, which became a widespread concern as reports of people falling seriously ill after consuming Chikin ramen and other brands began appearing in the news in March 1961. The author notes, "The Ministry of Health and Welfare released a statement on February 20 stating that with respect to instant foods, some have been found to be flawed on sanitary grounds, and that it has informed the country's governors of the need to closely monitor the situation…In any case, there are many issues that need to be resolved in the instant foods industry." [*Shūkan shinchō* 1961: 23]

Investigations revealed that production on poorly maintained equipment, as well as a lack of clear information regarding expiration dates for consumers, were to blame for the outbreak of food-borne illnesses. The introduction of expiration dates on products, and the establishment of a unified trade association at the government's urging were both outcomes of the safety problems raised in this article and many others.

By the second half of the 1960s, more editorial writers began criticizing the explosion of instant foods as concerns with the social changes entailed in their popularization became more apparent. One particularly critical article can be found in the April 1966 edition of *Ushio*, a magazine published by the lay Buddhist organization, Sōkagakkai. Penned by the social critic and sake historian, Murashima Kenichi, the article delves into a wide range of the sweeping social changes related to the popularization of instant foods.

Murashima begins the piece by discussing the fad of adding the word "instant" to other words in Japanese to create new terms, and how much it bothers his linguistic sensibilities. He lists terms he has recently encountered in conversations, such as "insutanto miai" (arranged introduction for possible marriage), "insutanto manee biru" (money for pawned goods), or "insutanto ka" (referring to an expedited educational certification program), and bemoans that even the major publishers' dictionaries (Iwanami Shoten, Shinchōsha, and Ōbunsha) treat the word "instant" as part of standard Japanese. [Murashima 1966: 286] The rapid transformation of linguistic norms is thus taken as an indication of cultural degradation through excessive incorporation of the foreign and the novel.

Murashima attributes the linguistic changes primarily to shifting dietary habits, and specifically, to the mass consumption of instant ramen. He notes, "During the cold months between October and March, Japanese households consume two servings of instant ramen every five days on average, which amounts to 10 million servings per day." [Murashima 1966: 286] Despite Murashima's alarm at the high rate of consumption in 1966, instant ramen consumption grew even further to reach a rate of 45 servings annually per person over the next decade.

Murashima then examines the reasoning behind the popularization of what he calls "emergency foods" (instant foods) despite the lack of an emergency. He states that the two key aspects to the success of instant foods are their ability to be preserved for an extended period of time after production, and the short period of time needed to reconstitute them when eating. He then raises the poignant question of what makes these two conditions, which are usually associated with military readiness, so desirable to Japanese society at a time of supposed peace. He states,

> On the war front, it is always difficult to know when one will be re-supplied with basic goods. Raw foodstuffs are hard to obtain. Especially when conflict does break out, there is no time to cook. In this situation, it becomes necessary to have foods that can be preserved and prepared quickly.
>
> Yet, current conditions in society are completely different. There are no inconveniences in everyday life. There is more than enough time, and there are more than enough goods. What, then, is the reason behind the high value attached to foods that can be lengthily preserved and shortly reconstituted? [Murashima 1966: 288]

Murashima's salient observation regarding the application of advancements in military technology to everyday life practices in times of so-called peace calls attention to the continuities between wartime and postwar Japan in terms of the rationalization of everyday life practices. He thus traces the social transformations of the high growth period to processes rooted in the logic of total war mobilization, which economist Nakamura Takafusa contends as well (discussed in Chapter Two). For Murashima, however, the psychology of the consumer who eats emergency foods despite an absence of scarcity is most puzzling, and for him, provides an apt illustration of the pathology associated with the way in which Japanese society developed in order to achieve national economic prosperity.

Next, Murashima differentiates between appropriate and inappropriate uses (or users) of instant foods, for which he provides explicit examples, based on a normatively construed gendering of labor. Similar to the author of the *Shōsetsu kōen* article discussed above, one of Murashima's main qualms with the advent of instant foods is the reduction in cooking time it affords to housewives. In first clarifying who *is* capable of eating instant ramen without offending his sense of propriety, he states:

> I know three people who are close to me and are avid consumers of instant ramen. One is a college student. He lives in a dorm without board. When he is up late at night studying, he fills his empty stomach with it.
>
> Another one is a lawyer. Again, late at night, he is often facing his desk. Since his family is already sleeping, he eats it for a late-night snack.
>
> The last is an entertainer. He is busy. Even in the morning, he has no time to sit down and eat. He makes [his food] quickly and finishes it in

> a jiff…I believe that these are examples of the legitimate (matomo) use of instant ramen. [Murashima 1966: 290]

Each of his examples of acceptable use consists of a man working hard during unusal hours. The independent, self-sacrificing, ambitious young man requiring irregular infusions of calories is thus the only acceptable type of ramen consumer for Murashima. In other words, instant ramen may be used practically and effectively as a way to boost male productivity. The trouble with instant ramen for him, however, is its use as a means to reduce labor for housewives. He writes:

> What could be the cause [for such high sales of instant ramen]? It can be no reason other than that it has become a staple meal for households…
>
> The [instant ramen manufacturers'] industry has claimed it to be "a product of the rationalization of life" or "an accompaniment to the innovative lifestyle," but that may be going a little too far.
>
> An important part of a housewife's job is to provide nutritious foods to her husband and child. Am I so old fashioned? I refuse to consider the shirking of duties by housewives to be a sign of rationalization or innovation. [Murashima 1966: 292]

He next raises what he considers to be the problematic outcome of the extra time afforded to housewives via the "rationalized lifestyle," namely, their intent focus upon their children's educational activities. He writes,

> What are housewives doing with all the extra time and labor? Are they cultivating [kyōyō] themselves? I hear nothing of the sort. Are they becoming engrossed in leisure pursuits? If so, I would be happy for them. But the reality is far from that…
>
> Could television viewing really account for all the extra time housewives now had? My friend, who is a doctor, told me, "Not necessarily. There are also a lot of 'education mothers' [kyōiku mama]." [Murashima 1966: 293]

Murashima concludes by criticizing young fathers in Japan for allowing their wives to become education-obsessed mothers who cook instant food instead of more nutritious, slower-cooked foods. [Murashima 1966: 293]

Murashima's resentment is not directed at the manufacturers of instant ramen, nor its unmarried male consumers, but only at urban housewives who were simply being lazy in his estimation. His bewilderment at the changing practices of domestic labor resulting from advances in food preservation technology illustrates how central the issue of gender were to the debates about instant foods in this era. The advent of the instant-foods-reliant mother was thus a menacing social disruption for boundary-enforcers of established household labor practices based on sex, such as the author.

Murashima's piece neatly ties together many of the disparate themes arising from the foregoing consideration of changes in food, labor, and everyday life in high growth-era Japan through the vantage point of ramen. The continuation of policies originally meant to address the emergency conditions of the Fifteen Year War, and its connection to the rationalization of everyday life in times of so-called peace, are salient observations made by the sake expert. In addition, the paramount importance of maintaining the normative gendering of labor for the author, and the accompanying attempts at boundary enforcement, point to an understanding of the indispensability of the differentiation of labor based on sex to the operation of the postwar economy and social organization at a more general level.

Postscript on Instant Ramen

The 500 billion yen instant noodle industry remains an important source of export revenue for Japanese companies. The industry is dominated by five companies, which together account for nearly 90% of instant noodle sales: Nissin (41% market share), Toyo Suisan (18%), Sanyo Foods (14%), Myojo Foods (10%), and Ace Cook (6%).[41] Consumers in China, Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand, and the U.S. compose the bulk of the non-Japanese ramen export market. The growth of the instant ramen market has been particularly strong in Africa and South America in the last decade, where companies such as Nissin Foods have begun distributing the noodles as food aid. The effects have been the displacement of inherited cooking practices and the laying of the groundwork for future generations of consumers to become reliant on the convenience of instant cooking, similar to the way that U.S. wheat flour shifted people in Japan toward bread and noodles, and away from rice and beans.

[41] Nikkei News Interactive, "Share Survey: Instant Noodles." August 7, 2005. http://www.nni.nikkei.co.jp/AC/TNKS/Search/Nni20040807D06MS301.htm

Chapter Five

Regional Ramen and The Bubble Economy

Introduction

This chapter explores the simultaneous rise of media productions devoted to the appreciation of independently handcrafted ramen and the gradual fading of pushcarts and small local eateries serving the dish in Japanese cities during the 1980s and 1990s. Goods and services such as high-end instant ramen, ramen tourism, ramen history books, and ramen videogames began to appear in the 1980s as the share of disposable income spent on entertainment, leisure, and luxury items expanded. The overall transformation of eating into a form of entertainment with fetishistic undertones (known as the "gourmet boom") was a manifestation of the growth of the service-sector and the decline of the manufacturing sector in the Japanese economy. The film Tampopo satirically conveys the rise of ramen-eating as a celebrated practice in popular culture against the backdrop of an elevated appreciation for fine dining in 1980s Japan, and will thus be considered at length.

The advent of ramen tourism in this period coincided with a general rise in domestic tourism, and highlighted the new forms of leisure and increased levels of capital available particularly to young people in urban Japan. Government policies designed to stimulate economic activity in less affluent non-metropolitan areas were another driving force behind the advent of ramen tourism. The cities that became known for traditional, regionally distinct ramen around this period such as Kitakata, Sano, and Asahikawa were the same small cities that had thrived during the first wave of industrialization yet had problems creating stable employment in the post industrial economy. The newfound appreciation of the emblematic food of the industrial Japanese workforce was thus intricately tied to the growing obsolescence of the social and economic context in which the dish was initially popularized, namely the process of high-speed reindustrialization after the war. The boom in publicity surrounding Chinese noodle-soup epitomized the transformation of ramen-eating from an instrumental practice rooted in the reproduction of labor power into a fashionable object of trendy youthful consumerism.

The mass media's celebration of independently-crafted ramen in the Bubble era resulted from an overall tiring of the rationalization and predictability of everyday life routines generated by the mass-scale production and widespread ingestion of instant, canned, and frozen foods, as well as the standardized servicing of meals found in impersonal and predictable "family restaurants" or other chain operations by the mid 1980s. For example, during this period it became common for avid ramen devotees to drive an entire day simply to taste a local ramen made famous by a television show or magazine dedicated to gourmet dining, the types of which increased significantly around this time owing again to the shift to a service-oriented economy. The term "ramen gyōretsu" (a procession of people waiting to eat ramen) came into popular use during this period, referring to dedicated customers who often waited two to three hours in line before being served. While the elevation of ramen consumption to such a celebrated form of entertainment revealed the well-documented power of the mass media to guide and induce commercial trends among the masses (as well as level of boredom permeating everyday life for so many) it also implied a critique of the lifestyle associated with the consumption of homogenized food and the mass-production process in general. This chapter examines the process by which an everyday practice, emptied of its original political-economic purpose of reindustrialization, became codified with new meaning to serve different purposes given the altered context of a post-industrial era.

The Bubble Economy and Ramen Tourism

The surplus capital that produced the stock and real estate bubbles of the 1980s can be understood as a story of uneven, or separate, deregulation of the savings and loans markets. During the period of high economic growth, the Japanese government channeled household savings into public or semi-public financial institutions, which then converted the money into preferential loans for large corporations. As the Japanese Government deregulated the loan market from the mid-1970s onward, however, large corporations found themselves able to borrow money from foreign financial institutions, while savings options remained limited to the same semi-public institutions. Therefore, the accumulated savings went into loans supporting real estate and stock speculation rather than export-driven corporate financing, as it had during the high-growth period. The banks and semi-public financial institutions invested a large portion of the accumulated deposits in grand projects promoting domestic tourism to Japan's smaller cities. [Leheny 2003]

The efforts to promote tourism to Japan's smaller cities had another purpose of reducing the burden of the export sector on the overall health of the economy. One of the main solutions that the Liberal Democratic Party's leaders devised to perennial American concerns (and threats of trade sanctions) over Japan's heavy reliance on exports to the U.S. was thus the promotion of domestic tourism specifically through campaigns of "town-vitalization movements" [machiokoshi undō]. [Okuyama 2000: 81-82] The purposes of these town-revitalization campaigns were therefore to show off the distinctiveness of Japan's local cultures, to infuse rural areas with surplus capital, and reduce the reliance on export-led growth. To that end, local business groups designed elaborate and sometimes-extravagant cultural exposition centers, festivals, and revitalized commercial districts across suburban and rural Japan. In many of these cases, the uniqueness of the locality's ramen style became a focal point of tourism in each area, owing to the persistent promotional endeavors of the local business groups and the national media. The press, in turn, began a fetishistic fervor around some of the most popular stores.

Japan's shift away from an economy concentrated on manufacturing, mass-production, and export towards one driven by information, imagery, and fashion focused more on the domestic market can be understood as part of a larger process of "post-Fordist" accumulation and the diminution of productive investment outlets that affected all of the advanced capitalist countries beginning in the mid 1970s. [Harvey 1990] In his short piece, "The Long Stagnation and the Class Struggle," John Bellamy Foster provides a systemic analysis of the slowed rate of growth found in the industrialized capitalist countries of the North after the early 1970s. Foster begins by noting, "For more than a quarter-century, the advanced capitalist economies have been mired in a condition of economic stagnation, characterized by slow growth, sluggish investment, and high levels of unemployment and excess capacity." [Foster 1997:447] He argues:

> In the view of Harry Magdoff and Paul Sweezy, the giant corporations that dominate the modern economy have a vast capacity to generate economic surplus, arising out of monopolization of the main benefits of scientific-technological progress as manifested in increasing labor productivity. Under these circumstances, rapid growth will occur only to the extent that investment outlets of an equally massive kind are available. Yet there is nothing within the logic of the system that ensures that investment outlets on the scale necessary will materialize. The dominant reality of the last quarter century has been one in which the potential supply of investment has exceeded its demand.
>
> This shortage of profitable investment outlets, these theorists argue, in a manner reminiscent of Hansen, can be traced in large part to the maturation of the economy—a historical process that tends to dampen the demand for investment as the system ages. All of the advanced industrial countries have well-developed capital goods industries that normally operate at less than full capacity and that are generally able to satisfy effective demand even in times of prosperity, as long as the upkeep and modernization of the means of production (easily funded out of depreciation allowances) occurs. [Foster 1997:447]

The macroeconomic situation described above by John Bellamy Foster can also help explain, to a large extent, the shifting function of ramen in Japan during the Bubble-economy era from a ubiquitously available high-energy food for industrial workers to the exalted emblem of a fading culture of dining out on-the-cheap associated with past reindustrialization efforts in the high-growth era. Building on the work of Arjun Appadurai, Anne Allison describes Japan in the era of flexible accumulation as follows:

> In an economy of continual downsizing, outsourcing, roboticization, and flexible accumulation, people are constantly driven, out of need or desire, to move and remake their jobs, identities, relationships, and communities. Ruptures to self and social networks occur frequently,

> and distance and alienation are commonplaces of everyday life. [Allison 2006:178]

The rise of the ramen-appreciation industry in the 1980s is therefore emblematic of a larger shift in political economy and social organization as described above. Whether measured through the proliferation of magazines and television shows dedicated to guiding consumers to the most popular ramen-serving establishments, or the increase in television dramas, comic books, and movies using ramen shops as a backdrop, the clamor surrounding the dish became increasingly perceptible in the mid 1980s. Kawata Tsuyoshi, a social-economic historian who has studied the explosion in ramen-related press from the mid 1980s onward, concluded that the number of magazine articles discussing the food, usually in the form of a guide to the best shops, quadrupled in 1986 alone, and remained at that level until 1994, when the opening of the Raumen Museum spurred another wave of publicity. [Kawata 2003:19] Kawata's study is based on an analysis of all magazine articles published in Japan between 1974 and 2000.

Despite all the attention on ramen, however, the actual number of *ramen* shops did not expand significantly during the 1980s, and average household expenditures on *ramen* remained relatively flat as well. [Kawata 2003: 21-29] In fact, ramen expenditures, after increasing consistently from 1960 onward, began to level off around 1982. Therefore, the actual peak in ramen consumption in Japan occurred around 1982, if Kawata's numbers, taken from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Bureau of Statistics, are correct. The explosion in publicity, therefore, cannot be reconciled with any verifiable expansion in consumption. Instead, it must be understood against the background of a macroeconomic shift away from manufacturing and toward services that depended heavily on the consumption of leisure services and luxury goods, which required a stronger emphasis on marketing.

In discussing the reactions of intellectuals to the above-noted phenomenon of market differentiation and luxury-brand-image image production in the post-industrial economy of the 1980s, Marilyn Ivy writes:

> What consumer-culture theorists take as their point of departure is the scaling down of consumption levels after the period of high growth. To stimulate consumer demand, producers have been compelled to appeal to (and create) highly targeted, diversified, and nuanced types of consumer desire. The presentation and dissemination of information has become paramount. Consumers demand more information in order to make well-considered choices about objects of consumption, including a greater selection of cultural commodities. Alongside the widely circulated mass magazines a new sort of "catalogue information magazine" (*katarogu jyōhō zasshi*) has developed, with serial displays and comparisons of goods and services. [Ivy 1993:254]

Indeed, one of the most common types of catalogue information magazines that began appearing with greater frequency in the Bubble economy era was the ramen-shop guidebook. The growth of ramen-shop guidebook publishing was a small example of the explosion of the ramen-appreciation industry as a whole. As Ivy contends, the success of these catalogues comparing goods and services was the outgrowth of the economic shift toward the selling of information and images rather than manufactured goods and services, as had been the case in the high-growth period.

A concrete example of how this process unfolded can be seen in the locale of Kitakata, Fukushima Prefecture, where ramen tourism developed into a sizeable part of the local economy in the 1980s. As part of the government-sponsored efforts to promote local tourism to the area, Kitakata city business leaders decided to market the distinctive style of ramen made in that area as one of the attractions of visiting. To that end, they joined efforts with tour companies, advertising agencies, and even enlisted the help of the national broadcasting network (NHK) to encourage tourists to visit one of the 80 “authentic” ramen shops while in that locale of roughly 40,000 people (a high concentration relative to other areas of Japan). [Iidabashi Ramen Kenkyūkai 1997: 76] After an NHK special focusing solely on the distinctiveness of the locale’s ramen aired in November 1982, entitled “Kitakata no Men,” the Kitakata ramen boom began in earnest. In 1985, a television program again on NHK, “Pursuing the [Old Castle] Warehouse Town with the Drifting Ramen Scent” (Tsuiseki: Ramen no Kaori Tadayou Kura no Machi), highlighted the fact that tour companies had begun forming large bus tours from Tokyo to Kitakata based primarily on the activity of sampling the vicinity’s ramen (known as The Kitakata Ramen-Eating Tour.) That city managers felt the need to draw up contingency plans for a possible future slump in ramen tourism in 1988 indicates just how significant a part of the local economy’s well-being the consumption of ramen had become in just a few years. [Okuyama 2000:92]

Many cities followed Kitakata in promoting their distinct style of ramen hoping to garner national media attention and generate revenues through tourism. While the formula worked for many locales during the 1980s and 1990s, by the year 2000, new regional ramen launched by the media were not achieving the same degree of popularity. The best examples may be the cases of Wakayama and

Tokushima ramen, which never achieved quite the national recognition of cities that launched their specialty ramen in the 1980s, such as Ogikubo and Ebisu in Tokyo, or Hakata in Kyushu. As one ramen connoisseur, Ōshima Akihiko noted, "The image I have of Tokushima ramen is that the mass media tried to ginger up a fad but that it did not work." [*Shōsetsu gendai* 2000: 201]

Writing Noodle-Soup History

In the 1980s, as ramen shifted from a food eaten primarily by industrial workers into a fashionable form of entertainment, the demand for a stabilizing historical narrative concerning the origins of the dish also arose. In other words, the hollowing out of industrial labor through mechanization and relocation of plants overseas converted the cultural milieu associated with the traditional production of ramen into an object worthy of historical inquiry. Beginning in the early 1980s, therefore, articles in weekly newsmagazines nostalgically discussing the irrecoverable taste and setting of early postwar Shina soba began appearing with growing frequency.[42]

The first three books devoted solely to the celebration of ramen were published within a year of one another in 1981 and 1982 (the same time that the ramen tours to Kitakata, and television features on ramen began appearing).[43] Among these, the most frequently cited was *Ramen Daisuki!!* (I Love Ramen!),

[42] For example, see Kojima Kō's article "The Poverty of the Picky Eater" (Mazushiki Henshokusha) in March 3, 1981 issue of *Bungei shunjū* p82-84.
[43] The three books are *Ramen Daisuki!* edited by Shōji Sadao (Tokyo: Tōjusha, 1982) , *Naruhodo za Ramen* by Hayashiya Kikuzō (Tokyo: Kanki, 1981) , and *Takaga Ramen, Saredo Ramen* by Okuyama Kōshin (Tokyo: Shufu no tomo, 1982)

edited by comic writer and essayist, Shōji Sadao. The "bible of ramen-related books,"[44] as it later became known, examined the material variation in the dish across region and over time, and introduced some of the most popular shops around the country in a festive and laudatory tone. Chapters such as, "Ramen is a Sigh of Relief for the Common People," also elevated the small-scale production of the dish to a new level of social historical significance that had not been articulated or associated with it in the past.

The text is divided into four sections, each taking a different approach to glorifying the dish. The first part introduces six specific stores in Tokyo that were renowned for taste or tradition, ranging from one long-running shop in Mitaka boasting "ultra orthodox postwar yatai-style ramen," to one recent addition in Ebisu serving "new wave-style ramen." The second part analyzes ramen from facetious academic disciplines such as "Ramen Soup Studies," "Kyushu Ramen Studies," "The Psychology of Ramen," or "The Sociology of Ramen." The third section consists of various celebrity commentaries on their relationship with the dish, and the final section is a comic trilogy written by Shōji.

In describing the differences in ramen across time and space, the book also touches on the historical role of the dish as a marker of postwar social-economic change. Takahashi Yoshitaka's chapter, "Memories of Shina soba," for example, recalls the important role of Chinese noodle-soup as an emergency food during the U.S. Occupation.

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[44] *Focus* 1984: 62

> At any given Chinese food restaurant today, one can find ramen with fine taste and perfectly crafted noodles, but it is impossible to find what existed in the old days, which was an ambiguous dish where it was difficult to determine to what extent it was Japanese, and to what extent it was Chinese (Shina)…Above all else, the charumera-flute-playing pushcart vendor selling Shina soba has vanished from Tokyo. [Hashimoto in Shōji 1982:186]

Takahashi notes the material and contextual dissonance between the Shina soba of the early postwar period and the ramen of the bubble period. The quality of the food had improved, he argues, but the dish had lost its original exotic charm. The foreignness of ramen was thus now retroactively understood to contain a certain value, after nearly all connections to its Chinese origins had been erased from the dish in the previous two decades. Furthermore, Takahashi's type of nostalgic yearning for the lost space of high-growth era Japan illustrates the rationale for the construction of the Raumen Museum a decade later.

Another chapter in the same book titled, "Ramen and Postwar Japanese Society" by Tada Michitarō, describes modern Japanese social development in terms of its food and gambling fads, and treats ramen as *the* emblematic food of Japan's postwar mass consumer culture. According to Tada's analytical schematic, the early modern period is symbolized by the popularity of yatai soba and the game of hanafuda, the prewar period by curry rice and mahjong, and the postwar period by ramen and pachinko. Although he argues that each phase produced the social context in which these foods and games flourished, Tada does not clearly iterate the political and economic relationships that constituted the basis for the popularity of these foods and games in these specific eras. Instead he outlines the connections between each of these to an enduring notion of Japanese civilization, tracing each of the later practices of eating and gaming back to the Edo merchant culture that he contends developed indigenously. [Tada in Shōji 1982: 120-125]

Next, Tada points out the popularity of ramen in cities of the "West," such as Paris, New York, and Hawaii, and argues that ramen has the potential to become the first modern international food produced in the East. He then marks a clear distance between the success of the dish abroad and its Chinese origins, claiming:

> There are people who believe that ramen came from China. If one traces the roots far back, I presume that it did come from China, but the thing called ramen is actually a Japanese creation... I have heard stories from people who have tried to order the dish at Chinese restaurants in Paris, or who traveled across China searching for the dish, but it actually does not exist [in these places]. In the beginning, it was called Nankin soba. That became Shina soba, which became Chūka soba, and this is how we got to where we are today. The name of the dish has changed along with the image of China, but after the war suddenly the name changed to ramen, and it became a distinctly Japanese food with almost no connection to China. [Tada in Shōji 1982: 122-3]

Tada's nation-based framework for deciphering the history of commodities limits his analysis to simply matching existing commodities with countries backward into time, rather than analyzing the politics of exchange by which certain objects and practices imbibe new meanings as symbols of a given group. Despite Tada's authoritative assertion of the noodle-soup's origins as Japanese, however, his attentiveness to the potential of eating and gambling practices as revealing markers of social change laid the groundwork for later works addressing the history of ramen, including those by Okada Tetsu, Okuyama Tadamasa, and Kawata Tsuyoshi. In this manner, *Ramen Daisuki!* not only contributed to the reconfiguration of ramen dining into a celebrated form of entertainment, it set the foundation for other, more academic texts on ramen that followed, which collectively established an orthodox national narrative concerning the dish in the late 1990s.

The historical significance of *Ramen Daisuki!!* as an emblem of the new level of social attention being paid to ramen, and food in general, was not lost on journalists. The May 8, 1983 issue of the weekly newsmagazine, *Shūkan yomiuri*, contained a thirty-page feature story on "The History of Food in the Showa Era," which included a two-page subsection on the ramen boom, titled "The Frightening Situation where Simply Ramen Becomes the Basis for "'Theories of Japanese Superiority.'" [Tamamura 1983; 72] The author of the short piece, Tamamura Toyoo, cites the recent publication of three books on ramen, all within approximately one year, which were *Ramen Daisuki!*, *Naruhodo za ramen*, and *Takaga Ramen, Saredo Ramen*. He states:

> In essence, ramen is currently the hot topic among journalists. That is why everyone is doing a ramen special, and the more one hears that there is a boom going on, the more one gets the sense that there actually is a spectacular boom occurring, making one want to eat the dish in an unthinking moment. [Tamamura 1983:72]

Tamamura then unpacks the social implications of the unprecedented level of television, magazine, and literary attention paid to ramen. He argues that journalists were creating trends in the name of reportage to relieve the vacuity in the everyday lives of the masses, and that the situation revealed Japan's rapid shift towards individualism as seen in the immense reliance on convenience foods by households.

> Despite the talk about a ramen boom, there have been no significant observable changes at the ramen stores of the capital area themselves…
>
> On the other hand, in the instant ramen industry, new products such as high-quality instant ramen that one can supposedly even serve to houseguests appeared on the market last year…
>
> When I look into the supermarket, I see the shelves packed with so many instant ramen brands and varieties that they are almost falling off, such that to an unknowing foreigner it would even appear that the staple food of Japanese people is ramen.
>
> Therefore, ramen is intruding further and further into households. It is changing from something consumed outdoors to a food eaten within the household.
>
> Now, it has gone from a convenient food product simply meant to alleviate hunger to something about which books are written and people pontificate to parade their knowledge when they eat it, making it part of the overanalyzed (unchiku) foods group. I feel that if anything this is a sign of a rather bleak and close-minded "Me-ism." Unlike the high-growth era, when ramen-eating conjured up images of late-night overtime work and the food itself symbolized strength and energy, now it invokes images of a post-high-growth middle-class malaise, where Japanese people are reduced to buying "high-quality" instant noodles to bring home to eat, desperately attempting to relieve the lack of anything festive in their lives with the over-analysis of food. [Tamamura 1983: 72-73]

Tamamura's observation regarding the over-analysis of food as a form of entertainment echoes the Nakae article, "Event-Making out of Meals Continues," mentioned above, illustrating the extent to which the discussions regarding food (rather than its actual production and consumption) was taking on newfound economic significance.

Tamamura's most original and insightful critique with respect to the ramen boom is the point he makes in the title concerning the easy slippage between food appreciation and neo-nationalism. In the penultimate subsection of the article, titled, "Confirming Pronouncements of Baseless Nationalism…" he notes:

> When the situation is such that people begin to think, "Ramen is a great invention of the Japanese people, there is no greater food in the world, Japanese are superior," then this [ramen boom] becomes a confirmation of baseless nationalism. And in reality, the mass media's treatment of ramen, and the tone of the new theories on ramen, appear to come close to a "theory of Japanese superiority."
>
> In one television program that I saw recently, the theme of which was a "search for the roots of ramen in Hong Kong," a female reporter was shown going all over the place searching for something resembling ramen. She evaluated each bowl and found that it did not taste good or was not to her liking. In the end, she settled on a version that most resembled what she was already familiar with, only to dump soy sauce on it to change the color and flavor, finally changing it into the closest thing to Japanese ramen that she could. What was completely lacking, however, was any sort of mindset of modesty towards the genuinely Chinese noodles of China.
>
> It is true that recent television commercials are beginning to increase the use of Chinese motifs to raise the product image of [instant] ramen, but to use Chinese people speaking in broken, accented Japanese (in contrast to the automobile commercials featuring Alain Delon speaking French), makes me think that this is connected to the arrogance that led to Japanese imperialism and its invasion of China, and it appears that to travel all the way to China to shoot on location a group of Chinese people eating instant ramen and clapping afterwards [for a commercial] is a rather patronizing idea conjured by economic superpowerdom.
>
> As far as one can observe, this situation with respect to ramen is clear evidence of Japan and the Japanese people's frustration with their inability to find an outlet to vent their irritation despite having achieved economic superpower status. For all the growth in affluence, all it has produced is a situation where the turning of ramen into luxury food is the result. While slurping that ramen, stress is relieved by thinking about how superior the Japanese are, again by referring back to the superiority of ramen. [Tamamura 1983: 73]

Tamamura's critique of the circular reasoning behind the nationalistic privileging of ramen is a rare example of an attempt to dislodge, rather than envelop, the dish's history from an all-encompassing nationalized narrative. Accordingly, while ramen tours, documentaries, and books all tended to move the still-forming noodle narrative in the direction of a nationalistic tale of "improving" Chinese foods, Tamamura instead viewed the new reverence for the dish as a sign of "the emptiness of Japanese affluence" in the post-high growth era. [McCormack 1996]

As Tamamura mentions, the publication of *Ramen Daisuki!* represented the first wave of the ramen-appreciation boom, which occurred within a noticeably heightened focus on eating as a form of entertainment by the mass media. Although Tada's chapter in *Ramen Daisuki!* provided a brief synopsis of the dish's origins and transformations in Japan, the first book-length study on the history of the dish was Kosuge Keiko's *Nippon Ramen Monogatari: Chūka soba wa itsu doko de umareta ka*, published in 1987. Kosuge's monograph provided an authoritative account of how Chinese noodle-soup arrived and evolved in Japan, laying down the contours of future debates on ramen.

In addition to establishing an authoritative modern history of the dish in Yokohama's Chinese residential district of Nankin machi, Kosuge imaginatively posits an origin myth of the dish in Japan dating back to the early 17th century. The origin myth put forward by Kosuge is that the first Japanese man to have eaten Chinese noodle-soup was the legendary lord Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628-1701), better known as Mito Kōmon, who was also the subject of Japan's best-known postwar television period drama (jidaigeki). Kosuge's story on Mito Kōmon and ramen is creatively conjectured, as she ties disparate pieces of evidence together to infer that "Mito Kōmon must have consumed Chinese noodle-soup" despite the fact that no such event was ever recorded. Kosuge notes that the lord of Mito was known to enjoy udon as well as exotic foreign foods cooked by his political and cultural advisor, Zhu Shun Shui, a refugee of the recently overthrown Ming government in China. From these two separate pieces of evidence, she concludes that the lord of Mito must have been the first Japanese man to eat ramen in Japan. [Kosuge 1987: 43-59]

While Kosuge carefully notes the extent to which Mito Kōmon benefited from Zhu's political advice (as well as the strong influence exerted by Ming China upon early Tokugawa culture) her compulsion to posit a pre-modern origin myth for ramen consisting of a Japanese lord from the Edo period demands further examination. Why was the modern history of the dish, rooted in Chinese migration and industrialization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, insufficient to account for the dish's origins? The very move to locate the original Japanese man to have consumed the dish in Japan (as opposed to the first Chinese man in Japan, or the first Japanese man in China) is significant as it could easily be assimilated into orthodox national history. It therefore avoids a deeper engagement with critical questions such as the construction of a unified Japanese national identity in the modern period and the role of capitalism in that process, or the multiethnic nature of the Japanese empire and the role of foreign labor in building the industrial economy. The tale instead limits the interaction to one between two fully constituted national wholes, each representing an unambiguous ethnicity and corresponding national territory, thereby projecting naturalized borders of modern statehood backward into a time when they did not exist in such forms. In this way, Kosuge's tale circumvents the messy issues of colonialism, exploited labor, and the seizure of natural resources lurking behind the dish's popularization in the modern period by conjecturing an entirely new origin story replete with aristocratic practice, pre-modern purity, and voluntary cultural interaction.

High-End Instant Ramen and Chinese-themed Advertising

The transformation of Japan's economy into a service-sector oriented, value-added economy not only manifested itself in the rise of ramen guidebooks, documentaries, and tour groups, it also became evident in the instant ramen marketing wars for new "high-end" versions that sold for as much as 1000 yen per serving—nearly double the cost of an average bowl of store-produced ramen. The trend began in 1981, when the Myōjō Foods Corporation released the first high-end instant ramen with its Chūka Zanmai (literally "Chinese samadhi," or Chinese mystical fulfillment) line, driving its competitors to quickly follow suit with their own variations on premium instant ramen. The names that the companies chose for their new differentiated product lines all included explicit references to China, and their advertisements often employed vulgarized images of Chinese mythology. New product lines such as Myōjō Foods' Chūka Hanten (the term for an upscale Chinese restaurant, as opposed to the more familiar Chūka ryōriya), Tōyō Suisan's Kami Sanchin (literally "Chinese flavor dinner town") or House Foods' Madamu

Yan were all marketed using images of classical China as the center of East Asian civilization. [*Ushio* 1983: 175]

The abstracted oriental authenticity of the flavoring thus became the reason for the premium price and status of the noodles. The situation was in contrast to the prewar and early postwar period, when Shina soba was associated with actual Chinese people present in Japan who often worked as cooks in Chinese restaurants, or the high-growth era, when the Chinese imagery disappeared from representations of the dish altogether. The introduction of high-end variations of instant ramen and the use of highbrow images of classical China in marketing them during the 1980s, therefore, revealed how the Chinese motif became a valuable commodity marker well after the Chinese people associated with the production of the dish, and the political circumstances surrounding their presence in Japan, had been removed from popular memory. The resurrected use of a caricatured China as a motif in popular advertising echoed similar trends found in 1930s imperial Japan discussed in chapter one.[45] The trend also exemplified the renewed significance of the China market for Japanese trade and investment interests.

Beyond the added value of classical Chinese symbolism, the major producers of instant ramen justified their extraordinary prices on high-end noodle lines by pointing to material differences in the production process of the noodles. One article from the November 27, 1982 issue of the salaryman-targeted weekly newsmagazine, *Shūkan gendai* titled, "What Makes High-end Instant Ramen Different?" for

[45] See also Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire* and Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka*, section on staging the colonies.

example, examined the disparity between the new high-end instant ramen lines and the less expensive versions sold by the same companies. The author found that in producing the new high-end instant ramen lines, the companies had developed more precise machinery that controlled the humidity and temperature of the dough better, and also lengthened the kneading process to make the noodles chewier. With respect to the flavoring, the article notes that while standard instant noodles all contained salt, miso, or soy sauce in combination with artificial flavors, one of the new lines boasted "stewed beef soup base, made with real strips of beef, which inevitably raises costs." Still another noodle maker claimed, "The same process to cook real Chinese food is used, combining over ten different soups, making it quite labor-intensive." [*Shūkan gendai* 1982: 99]

The claims that the new lines of instant ramen were "labor intensive" and made with costly ingredients, though oxymoronic, pointed to a situation where instant foods were no longer just sold as items of superior nutrition or convenience, as before, but rather as sumptuous culinary creations requiring ethnic cooking expertise to produce. The instant food industry's attempts to differentiate high-end lines with images of slow, small-scale, individualized production incorporating hand-selected ingredients cultivated with care revealed how consumers had grown weary of the idea, if not the practice, of eating mass-produced foods. The themes employed to mark up the high-end noodles thus sold the illusion that the type of alienation resulting from the very production process of instant ramen itself could be overcome through the consumption of a new type of instant ramen. By imagining the extra skill and effort involved in selecting the ingredients, flavoring the soup, and putting out the high-end noodles, consumers could be healed of the anxiety generated by their lack of any relationship to, or knowledge of, the producers and the production process behind the food they ate so regularly.

Satirizing the Gourmet Boom: Tampopo

The growth of the ramen appreciation industry occurred within the context of a more general economic transition that entailed a reconfiguration of eating into a celebrated form of entertainment. In the mid to late 1980s, the national television and print media increasingly began to cover stories about the popularity of high-priced gourmet foods produced in Europe or Japan. The "gourmet boom," as it became known, reflected the higher value of the yen in relation to the dollar and European currencies, as well as increases in discretionary spending across households of all income levels due to a speculative bubble in real estate and stocks. One article by journalist Nakae Katsuko from the April 1983 issue of the weekly newsmagazine *Hito to Nihonjin*, "Event-Making out of Meals Continues" (Shokuji no ibento ka ga susumu) spotlighted the phenomenon with reference to the surge in family restaurants. Nakae first refers to the growth of the urban outdoor lunch-dining industry during the previous two decades, noting how salaried workers from the capital district became known as the "soba, curry, ramen tribe" (so-ka-ra zoku) due to their alternating daily consumption of these three foods. Yet, during the 1980s the trend in outdoor dining was moving more toward family restaurants, she argues, for three main reasons. First, the increase in disposable income was allowing more families to allocate resources toward luxury goods that previously had been out of economic reach. Second, the growth of female employment was creating a demand for household labor that housewives had previously carried out without pay, such as cooking. Third, and most crucial, Nakae contends, is the cramped living conditions of urban tenement housing in which most Japanese families lived, making dining at family restaurants "basically an escape from everyday life." [Nakae 1983:112-113] The shift from the soba-ramen-curry centered outdoor dining of the high-growth era geared towards male laborers to the postindustrial marketing of eating as "an escape from everyday life" for families points to a shift in social economic organization whereby a layer of abstracted value was now added to the production and consumption of hot meals apart from their function of refueling labor power.

The ramen boom of the 1980s was undeniably a manifestation of the reconfiguration of dining into mass entertainment. Yet, the appeal of ramen in the "gourmet boom" era lay precisely in its familiarity and everydayness, or anti-gourmet status, as opposed to the elegance and flair symbolized by French and Italian cuisines for example. Thus, while the ramen boom was an integral part of a larger process involving the transformation of eating into an abstracted form of mass-consumer entertainment separate from its original purpose of refueling labor power, it also, ironically, became a food symbolizing the proletarian reaction against the new popularity of high-priced gourmet foods, usually associated with Western Europe.

The assertion of masculinity and industry through the consumption of foods connoting such symbolism became more perceptible in weekly male-targeted newsmagazines as coverage of gourmet foods grew in the mid to late 1980s. The trend is evidenced by a piece in the October 16, 1986 issue of *Asahi geinō*, titled, "Gourmets, Just Eat Shit!" (Gurume nante kuso kurae) The article is simply a guide to the favorite low-cost eateries off of the main highways frequented by truck drivers, but the tone is noticeably antagonistic towards the gourmet-dining trend that was taking hold. [*Asahi geinō* 1986: 111]

The Itami Jūzō film, *Tampopo*, released in 1985, powerfully reaffirmed the growing treatment of handcrafted ramen as the indigenous remedy to the decadence of the gourmet boom, usually symbolized by high-end French and Italian dining.[46] The film also marked the fist time that the dish itself became the unifying theme of a feature-length film, as opposed to a means of conveying the roughness or modesty of certain characters and settings. The protagonist is a young widow who runs a small ramen shop in Tokyo, and the plotline follows her encounter with a milk-truck driver who first criticizes her ramen, then becomes resolved to help in her quest to create the perfect bowl. The tale ends with the widow's success in establishing the type of popular ramen shop that was appearing in the guidebooks, magazines, and television programs so often in that period.

Itami's ability to contrast the historically unglamorous connotations of the dish with the irrational zeal for its production and consumption in the 1980s highlights the shifts in symbolism that the dish was undergoing. Considering the

[46] This point is driven home in a scene where a group of stereotypically portrayed Japanese company men uncomfortably dine in a French restaurant (the symbol of the gourmet boom), and only the youngest worker who is of the lowest rank, ironically, can enjoy the meal due to his familiarity with the food and ritualized nature of the service. The ramen shop, in contrast, is where jovial and unperturbed blue-collar workers enjoy their fare with no pretension while asserting and reinforcing their own masculinity.

explosion in publicity surrounding the dish at the time (indicated by Kawata's figures noted above), the director's choice of ramen as the centerpiece of the story is timely, and highlights the rapid expansion in social and economic value attributed to the production and consumption of food in Japan in the 1980s. For example, the film opens with the milk-truck driver's assistant (played by a young Watanabe Ken) reading a book on "the art of noodle eating," which is a subtle reference to texts such as *Rāmen Daisuki!!*, which began circulating in 1982 as noted above.

The satire embedded within the exalted treatment of ramen production and consumption is clear, as the dish's seemingly contradictory embodiment of material cheapness and near-spiritual devotion form much of the comic relief throughout the film. For example, there is one scene in which a man dressed as a master of the tea ceremony teaches a young disciple the proper "etiquette" (sahō) in consuming ramen, which is a concept filled with irony considering the dish's more common associations with the uncouth. Just as the consumption of tea evolved from an everyday activity to a ritualized ceremony over time, the director shows how the act of eating ramen was taking on new associations with the "traditions" of the nation in this period. Another example of the director's satire is the character of the homeless former professor who is an expert on ramen who, along with his homeless friends, critiques the gourmet food taken from the trash of expensive restaurants.

In this way, Tampopo directs the viewer to contemplate the layers of coded meanings projected onto food and eating that go far beyond its basic purpose of providing sustenance for continued survival (signified by the baby drinking breast milk in the concluding scene). Itami thus satirizes the arbitrary social meanings and status connotations attributed to different foods and the manners in which they are eaten, and does so at the height of the speculative bubble-induced "gourmet boom," when dining out in Japan and elsewhere became more of a value-added form of entertainment with far-reaching macro economic consequences.

Michael Ashkenazi, the anthropologist specializing in food in Japan (whose other work is discussed in the Introduction), published an essay on the meaning of Tampopo in 2004, titled, "Food, Play, Business, and the Image of Japan in Itami Juzo's Tampopo." Ashkenazi views the film as an overall critique by Itami of "his fellow Japanese," and finds that it offers "particularly useful insights into the relationship between the Japanese and their food." [Ashkenazi 2004: 28] Because of the self-limiting, ahistorically construed nation-bound framework that he employs, Ashkenazi's analysis leads to essentialist pronouncements concerning a highly abstracted "Japan" and "Japanese society" that reveals much more about the author's own orientalist predilections than the conditions to be found within the everyday lives of the people.

Some of the quotations most revealing of the limitations posed by Ashkenazi's Japanological style of analysis are as follows:

> Whether in the film's main storyline or in the various asides, the setting is almost wholly within an urban landscape, making this Japanese film remarkable for the fact that there is not a cherry blossom nor a pretty temple, shrine, or perfect volcano to be seen: Itami's Japan is a thoroughly modern and cosmopolitan one.[47] [Ashkenazi 2004: 29]

> In Japanese cuisine, as in the film, foreign influences have been formative in the creation of a unique cultural expression. I have argued

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[47] What is more remarkable is Ashkenazi's outdated anticipation of such tired oriental motifs from Japanese cinema from the 1980s, or from any era.

> elsewhere, following Ivan Morris, that Japanese food, as well as much else of its material culture, must be seen in terms of a process of importation followed by a process of digestion; I have labeled this process "Japanization." Foreign influences are absorbed, then transformed and fitted into the Japanese scheme of things socially, behaviorally, and aesthetically. Thus, the fact that most of the foods (in about thirty-two different food scenes throughout the film) are of non-Japanese derivation is unimportant. These are Japanese foods because that is what the Japanese eat, and, in fact, the entire culture of Japan is composed of objects, actions, and ideas of non-Japanese origin that the Japanese have modified to their taste (in both sense of the word). [Ashkenazi 2004: 32]

> Japanese have expressed their sexuality in ways that may seem odd, even bizarre to members of other cultures who have other cultural tastes. A historic pedophilic preference for prepubescent women is well recorded, and Itami cocks a judicious eye at it, as the yakuza boss lustfully consumes raw oyster spotted with blood from the hands of a prepubescent ama (diving girl). [Ashkenazi 2004: 36]

Ashkenazi's Orientalist interpretations fall in line with a long history of Euro-American knowledge production ostensibly on Japan (or any other part of the East), where so-called experts with specialized training in understanding its unchanging people employ essentialist renderings to describe their supposed uniqueness, homogeneity, submissiveness, and perversion as defined against the rational, democratic, mature Occidental Self. Such studies, which have been exposed for their contribution to naturalizing and reinforcing the colonial mindset in which the subject and object, or self and other, are irreconcilably separate (one acting upon the other, with no sense of relational constitution), have not abated despite calls for a deeper engagement with ideas about the connection between orientalist knowledge production and colonial structures of political oppression and economic exploitation from scholars for over three decades.

Ramen and the Scarcity of Labor

At the height of the bubble economy in 1989, the weekly newsmagazine *Shūkan shinchō* ran an article on how Taishōken, one of the best-known ramen shops of Tokyo, was offering 400,000 yen net monthly salaries to starting employees (restricted to males under the age of thirty-five.)[48] The piece noted that only one out of one hundred applicants would be hired for the position after the owner carefully filtered resumes and conducted interviews. The worker, in turn, would endure twelve-hour workdays consisting of dirty, dangerous, and difficult labor with restricted toilet breaks, but would earn double the salary of the average large-company employee at age twenty-four. The remarkably high remuneration for such "unskilled" labor pointed to the growing scarcity of young Japanese men willing to engage in dirty, difficult, and dangerous work without considerable compensation during the bubble era. [*Shūkan shinchō* 1989, 45-48]

The scarcity of labor in the bubble era briefly led to situations such as that of Taishōken where "unskilled" entry-level workers were commanding considerable earning power. Yet, the end of the speculative bubble in stocks and real estate prices in 1990 ushered in a decade of socially destabilizing corporate restructuring symbolized by large-scale layoffs, an upsurge in part-time and short-term work, and an overall sense of economic uncertainty for workers in both large and small firms. As stable, full-time employment opportunities offering wages sufficient to sustain workers' households became noticeably scarcer during the 1990s, ramen regained

[48] Overt discrimination in hiring based on gender was outlawed in 1999 by a revision of the gender equality law.

some of its Occupation-era allure as a site for low-cost self-employment. As the economy softened and capital became re-concentrated in fewer hands, therefore, ramen-making regained its popular imagery as an economic last resort for the unemployed, in addition to its function as a social-political “escape” from the salaryman lifestyle that it had achieved in the labor-scarce 1970s and 1980s.

Although there are no reliable data measuring the number of laid-off company workers who began small-scale ramen eateries, the appearance of feature articles in male-targeted weekly newsmagazines addressed to “laid-off” readers containing how-to manuals on establishing and maintaining a profitable independent ramen shop suggests that more than a few considered attempting such a venture. One article titled, “The Economics of the Ramen Shop” from the August 19, 1998 issue of *Dakaapo*, for example, begins, “Having been laid off, or perhaps having quit the company on your own, [you may be thinking] ‘Maybe I should start a ramen shop.’ But wait a minute. Even though it may appear that opening a ramen shop is a quick and easy way to start a business, the world is not so simple. On the other hand, if you really do have what it takes to operate a ramen shop properly, you are indeed a praiseworthy entrepreneur.” [*Dakaapo* 1998: 95]

The quote reveals the resurgent appeal of the profitable, independently-owned ramen shop in a time when stable, well-paying company jobs were being cut on a mass scale. The return of ramen-making as a viable source of income for unemployed workers highlighted how the post-bubble economy illustrated a return of sorts to the prewar era in terms of capital concentration and differentiation in wage levels.

The *Dakaapo* article's advice on how to establish a ramen shop also reveals systemic changes in the restaurant industry, where small firm market-entry was becoming more difficult, and chain operations were instead becoming increasingly common. One of the most informative parts of the *Dakaapo* article is a small chart analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the "five types of ramen shops" entrepreneurs could in theory start up.[49] After analyzing the pros and cons at length of each type of shop, the author concludes that for people who have a strong passion for eating ramen, independence may be the key determinant in deciding the style of their firm. For all others, however, the chain shop is recommended simply for the relative speed and ease with which it could be established. Interviews with other former salaried workers running independent ramen shops in the piece all point to the unexpected difficulties owners were likely to face in starting up a new shop, again conveying that a chain operation was the best bet for a recently unemployed salary man. [*Dakaapo* 1985: 98-99]

In the 1980s, the function and meaning of Chinese noodle-soup thus changed once again, losing its purpose as a product of necessity for the reproduction of industrial labor power, and instead becoming an object of media entertainment,

[49] The five types are the completely independent shop (*kanzen dokuritsu gata*), the apprenticeship-derived independent shop (*shugyō dokuritsu gata*), the apprenticeship-derived branch shop (*noren wake dokuritsu gata*), the chain shop (*cheen ten kamei gata*), and the independent *yatai* shop (*yatai dokuritsu gata*). The completely independent shop offered the "the most independence, but also the most volatility." The apprenticeship-derived independent shop provided "reputable know-how with regard to ingredients and taste, but required some independent innovation in terms of flavoring." The apprentice-ship derived branch shop presented the benefit of a "well-established name and flavor that draws customers, but the difficulty of restricting independent innovation." The chain shop "allowed for a complete novice to open a shop, but forbade any type of alteration." Most tellingly, the independent *yatai* shop (the type of which had saturated the cityscape from the late 1920s through the early 1960s) provided "the highest level of freedom, but generated many preliminary problems such as finding vending space, and attaining permits." [*Dakaapo* 1998: 97-99]

regional tourism, and anti-gourmet identity assertion. The spotlighting of independently handcrafted ramen from various regions around Japan, which was intricately tied to efforts to stimulate domestic demand in the countryside, elevated the food to something worthy of devotion by consumers and examination by journalists, scholars, and food critics. The media's focus on ramen consumption as a valid form of entertainment, and the treatment of independently handcrafted food as an object of fetishistic attachment and critical over-analysis, further revealed the extent to which the effects of instant and fast foods celebrated during the high-growth era had produced a backlash against homogenizing, standardized fare.

Chapter Six

Japanese "Chinese Noodle-Soup" and The Raumen Museum

Introduction

The Raumen Museum of Shin-Yokohama, which opened in 1994, may be the best evidence of the dish's canonization as a national food in Japan. Part theme park, part restaurant mall, and part museum, the 3.4 billion yen (or $38 million) enterprise has become a popular attraction particularly for young Japanese (as well as Chinese) tourists. Following the Museum's success, a boom in "ramen theme parks" occurred in various cities throughout Japan. The Ramen Stadium in Fukuoka, Ramen Yokocho Shichifukujin in Hiroshima, and Ramen Kyōwakoku (Republic of Ramen) in Sapporo are but a few of the ramen-based theme parks that sprouted up, and each of them followed the basic formula established by the Raumen Museum of assembling famous regional ramen stores under one roof in a nostalgic atmosphere.

The Museum's gift shop offers a graphic-laden commemorative-edition soft-cover, "The Making of the Shinyokohama Raumen Museum," which describes the meticulous designing and planning undertaken by the Museum's owner and employees before it opened to the public in 1994. The book states that the creators' goal was to reproduce a small Tokyo town as it looked in 1958, and the assemblage of vintage movie posters, telephone booths, train stalls, and store signs all reflect this effort. The role of ramen in fueling the working masses during the period of high-speed economic growth therefore serves as the historical rationale for the nostalgic value projected onto the dish by the Museum. The celebration of the dish as the quintessential fare of the Japanese common man thus establishes a narrative that treats ramen consumption as a culturally meaningful practice that is firmly grounded in postwar Japanese History.

The canonization of ramen in this period can be located partly in the romanticizing of symbols of high-growth era everyday life. As ramen lost its original economic purpose of nourishing the industrial workforce of Japan, it became a commodified form of entertainment evoking egalitarian nostalgia. Jennifer Robertson has shown that concepts and objects reinforcing a collective, egalitarian past, such as the hometown (furusato) and the handmade (tezukuri), visibly cropped up in this period, highlighting the actual decline in the significance of these phenomena in everyday life. [Robertson 1991] Consumption of ramen at small-scale, independent shops, or preferably yatai, therefore became a food of national nostalgia, constituting a consumable form of the fleeting past within the present that promised to heal the anxiety produced by rapid social-economic change, but instead exacerbated it. [Ivy 1995]

The Launching of the Shin-Yokohama Raumen Museum

The Museum's founder and Shin-Yokohama native, Iwaoka Yōji, launched the project with money that his father generated in the real estate boom during the bubble years. After enjoying unexpected success with the Museum in Japan, Iwaoka stated that his next plans were to open a similar venue in Las Vegas, "in order to introduce postwar Japanese food culture and everyday life, and have people understand Japan better. Furthermore, tasty ramen should be popular over there as well." [*Keizaikai* 1998, 81] While the Las Vegas branch of the Raumen Museum has yet to open, in light of the recent wave of ramen-related publicity in New York and Los Angeles, it is apparent that his predictions about the potential of ramen in the U.S. market are spot-on.

"The Making of the Shinyokohama Raumen Museum" includes a description of the concept behind the Museum's establishment, the design process of the building itself, the research that went into making the museum, as well as the publicity it received upon opening. Each of these sections illustrates the new symbolism behind ramen as a food of the Japanese everyman, and the greater shift towards eating as a form of commodified mass entertainment replete with theme-park settings.

The most basic impetus behind the creation of the Museum was a surge in population in the Shin-yokohama district of Kanagawa, a distant suburb of Tokyo, in the 1980s. A study from 1990 showed that over 25,000 workers were eating lunch daily in Shin-yokohama, which gave the Museum's founder enough confidence to take the risk of opening a large-scale eating and drinking establishment with a parking lot. From the beginning, Iwaoka's ambition was to generate "enough impact to make it a landmark in this newly developed area." [*Graphics and Designing* 1995: 9]

While brainstorming a potential theme on which to base the large-scale eating and drinking establishment, Iwaoka and the other planners decided early on that they "did not want to follow the trend at the time and simply open another Italian or French restaurant. The idea was to go beyond the current trends, and to do something really authentic (ōsenchikku)." [*Graphics and Designing* 1995: 9] Television shows featuring gourmet dining destinations were being produced in abundance, and among them, those spotlighting the ramen shops were becoming standard. The more they ruminated, the clearer it became that ramen would be a suitable object around which to build the new establishment. According to "The Making of Shinyokohama Raumen Museum,"

> If you think about it, ramen is really a food of the common people (shomin). Various styles can be found throughout the country. Furthermore, both the young and the old, men and women, eat ramen, and there is probably not a single town in Japan that does not have a ramen shop. Ramen is the proverbial idol of the food industry. Even more, it is not the type of idol whose fame is short-lived, but rather one that is sustained by the common people and lasts a long time as a result of real talent. This was how we decided upon "ramen" as the main theme for the project. [*Graphics and Designing* 1995: 9]

After settling on ramen as the central theme, the planners began conceptualizing how to create a landmark destination based on the noodles as opposed to simply a food court. Iwaoka and his team decided that the best way to reach "the masses" (masu) would be to borrow the techniques of the Walt Disney Company and build a theme-park "where everybody from around the world, young and old, could become completely enthralled as they do in the magic world of Disney." [*Graphics and Designing* 1995: 10] The planners described their ambition as follows:

> To create a space where everyone could become a child…Visitors can indulge in a soothing (kokoroyoi) nostalgia, and adults can feel like children again. In this town, each person has the opportunity to become an innocent child with a strong sense of curiosity. Everyone can revert to childhood, and remember the days when they played hide-and-seek in vacant lots at sunset, or became absorbed in games such as menko,

> bēgoma, bīdama.[50] It seems that this marvelous sensation of feeling that special "something" appeals to real children as well.
>
> In addition to feeling nostalgic, people gain a sense of spiritual uplift (seishin no kōyō). That is because it is designed to satisfy the desire to be a star or to transform oneself that lurks within visitors' hearts. [The recreated] "town of Shōwa 33" truly is a place where everyone can become a star in the sense of the Andy Warhol quote, "everyone has their 15 minutes of fame." [*Graphics and Designing* 1995: 17]

The quote is instructive on many levels. The designers' appeal to an abstracted collection of childhood memories during the high-growth era (the process by which these memories were actively being generated) made the Museum a supplier of sentimental nostalgia as well as a commercial space to rent to ramen vendors. Furthermore, while the attempt to psychologically transport visitors to an infantile mind-state of passivity was in line with the Disney business model, in the case of the Museum, the "magic" was based on meticulously recreating a time and place that most visitors were supposed to remember from lived experience. The Museum's ability to employ a re-imagined space of Tokyo from merely thirty-five years prior as the basis for the "magic" (as opposed to Disney's use of pre-modern Europe), illustrated the extent to which the layout of downtown Tokyo had been transformed in such a short period. It also attested to the need to produce a stabilizing narrative and set of images fitting this recently forgotten place into the tight grid of national History.

In order to present the eating of ramen as an activity worthy of a theme park, the planners decided to incorporate the "history and culture" of ramen to explain the

[50] The three games are Japanese versions of cards, tops, and marbles, respectively.

greater significance of the dish. The attempt to recuperate the history and culture of the dish, however, predictably resulted in a basic narrative consisting of an encounter between two timelessly construed national wholes (China and Japan), and the dish simply transferring from one unit to the other. The popularization of ramen thus became another tale of Japan assimilating the foreign and improving upon it to harmonize it with "Japanese tastes." [*Graphics and Designing* 1995:9]

> Ramen is a food that is enjoyed by most Japanese people. However, it is never included in the category of Japanese cuisine. If it had to be categorized, it would be part of Chinese cuisine. Yet, it is impossible to find the food in China. This means that ramen crossed the ocean from China to Japan, and was rearranged in many ways over a number of years (similar to curry rice in Japan.) In other words, ramen cannot be found in any other country, and is truly a product of Japan's own unique taste. However, until now there has been no spotlight of the history and culture of ramen. There were a number of books, but there were various interpretations included in them, and an authentic history (seishi) that unified the narrative had not been developed. So why not create a shrine (dendō) to ramen. We envisioned a place where shops representing the roots of ramen from locations throughout Japan could be combined with a large-scale instant ramen marketplace…We decided to include a database containing information on as many ramen shops in the country as possible, a computer game based on ramen, and a gift shop full of original goods. This is how the Raumen Museum was conceptualized. [*Graphics and Designing* 1995:11-12]

The next major decision for the creative team was to decide which type of scenery to use to bring the theme park to life. The planners chose to recreate downtown Tokyo as it appeared in 1958 when "the Japanese people were the most spirited (genki)." [*Friday* 1994: 42-43] In addition to being the year when Nissin Foods famously launched the first instant ramen, 1958 was when the Tokyo Tower was completed, the 10,000 yen note was first printed, over one million television sets were sold in Japan, and the era of high economic growth officially began.

[*Graphics and Designing* 1995:20] The decision to fold the ramen boom back into the conventional history of postwar Japan—framed as an insular case of national economic growth achieved through an innate ethno-cultural tendency to work hard—therefore provided national-historical significance to the ingestion of the dish in a way that straightforwardly connected hard work and love of ramen to the "national spirit." In this way, the recreated milieu of high-growth era industrial workers' everyday life became a space for national celebration of the common man's contribution to Japan's economic success.

The recreation of a downtown Tokyo neighborhood as it appeared in 1958 involved extensive historical research on the period by the planners. The team, however, found that the Shōwa 30s (1955-1965) had still "yet to be properly categorized as History, and thus made it difficult to organize or acquire materials that could accurately be dated. 1958 Tokyo was therefore part of a 'lost history.'"[51] [Graphics and Design 1995: 20] As a result, planners were forced to rely on an assemblage of photos, magazines, books, and films, and to study Tokyo neighborhoods such as Nezu, Nippori, and Tsukishima that had changed less compared to other parts of the city. After designing the Museum interior, assembling the antiques, and building the structures for the theme park, the next step for planners was to apply the process of "aging" to many of the props. The planners "aged" the props by physically damaging them or applying dirt to them as is

[51] The idea that the period had yet to be "properly categorized as History" reminds us again of the distance between the past as lived experience and the production of historical narratives that provide it with political meanings that become sites of contestation.

commonly done on film sets. Such methods provided visitors with "the past that they anticipated" (kitai dōri no kako). [*Graphics and Design* 1995: 23]

The next step for planners in recreating a town from 1958 Tokyo was to decide which types of faux storefronts, residences, and objects to create in order to accurately depict a town from 1958 Tokyo. In order to do so, the planners studied population surveys from the period, and created their own fictional town-resident registry complete with the names, ages, family structures, occupations, and hobbies of the town's inhabitants. The process resulted in the Museum's publication of a fictional book chronicling town life in 1958 Tokyo as visualized by the planners titled, "The Sun Sets on the Town of Ramen." [*Graphics and Design* 1995: 19]

The setting sun in the title refers to the artificial dusk that a projection system recreates every forty minutes on the ceiling of the Museum. Similar to indoor shopping plazas in Las Vegas, the device was central to generating the all-encompassing effect of the theme park for planners. In addition to the sunset, the computers in the Museum provide atmospherics by inconspicuously broadcasting various street noises, including the sounds of cats meowing, crows cawing, trains running, and film announcements playing. [Graphics and Designing 1995: 34] In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, Michael Sorkin notes, "This is the meaning of the theme park, the place that embodies it all, the ageographia, the surveillance and control, the simulations without end. The theme park presents its happy regulated vision of pleasure—all those artfully hoodwinking forms—as a substitute for the democratic public realm, and it does so appealingly by stripping troubled urbanity of its sting, of the presence of the poor, of crime, of dirt, of work." [Sorkin 1992: xv]

Once the theme park aspects were in order, the planners attended to Museum matters, which were divided into six parts: history, setting (fūdo), tools, science, culture, and information. The "History" section focused on the evolution of noodle dining worldwide, the roots of ramen in Japan, the history of yatai and charumera, and the history of instant ramen. The "Setting" section examined the variety of noodles, soups, tools, and cooking methods found in various region. The "Tools" section spotlighted the diversity in bowls and spoons, as well as the gadgets used to cook the noodles and soup. The "Science" section addressed the role of alkali water, the nutrition of ramen, the noodle-production process, and the science behind the invention of instant ramen. The "Culture" section provided explanations for the origins of the term ramen, a listing of various novels, movies, and comics mentioning ramen, and a registry of ramen-loving celebrities. The "Information" section furnished visitors with names of popular or unorthodox ramen stores, as well as instant ramen recipes. [*Graphics and Designing* 1995: 49]

The Museum's "History" section provided the framework to incorporate ramen into the national past through three major components: domestication of the foreign, exportation of the instant, and appreciation of regional variation within. The Museum thus built on the work of Kosuge Keiko's 1987 monograph to articulate a single, dominant, nationally significant history of the dish. As noted above, Kosuge's account placed an overarching emphasis on Japanese ingenuity in adapting foreign objects to domestic tastes, and the Museum's recapitulation of the facts and purpose of that narrative thus effectively anchored the object with a firm place in the empty space of the abstracted national past.

The success story of the Japanese instant ramen industry worldwide, and the intricate history of the product lines that dominated the market at different times in the postwar era, comprise the next part of the History section. The Museum's treatment of instant ramen product-line release dates as historically significant events worthy of chronological documentation signaled the newfound import attributed to the everyday practices of postwar mass consumerism as part of the national past. While the move to situate an understanding of the past within the shifting instant ramen fads was important in terms of centering everyday habits as objects of historical inquiry, the reflexive fallback of the ahistorical nation as the starting and ending point of the analysis left out the connections to larger issues including changes in labor, agriculture, trade, and government policies with respect to food and nutrition. The omission of these macro connections again resulted in the familiar story of insular cultural change and continuity without any deeper examination of how global processes may have been unfolding at the local level.

The third component of the Museum's effort to authorize a definitive tale of the noodles' past consisted of tracing the variations in the dish across Japan, noting the local histories of each version. The recently exhumed (i.e., invented) local histories of ramen, dating back nearly a century in some cases, evidenced that every major city in Japan had its own methods of preparation and colorful legends involving pioneering noodle chefs. The exhibition thus highlighted the prewar development of ramen dining in cities such as Sapporo, Kitakata, Sano, and the

Asakusa district of Tokyo alongside more recently recognized areas such as Asahikawa and Wakayama. An example of unity through diversity, the variation in the form of the ramen reinforced the underlying ubiquity and accessibility of the object throughout the nation in modern times, and as such, it became a consumable emblem of the modern nation itself. In this way, the prominence accorded to regional differences in ramen illustrated the extent to which food choices and eating practices had become standardized in the preceding three and a half decades.

One of the most intriguing components of the exhibition area dedicated to the history of ramen is a statue of the Myōjō brand's animated character, Charumera ojisan, used in instant ramen advertisements from 1966 and after. As noted in Chapter Three, the invention of the animated Charumera ojisan character, drawn in the image of the archetypal noodle-cart puller from the prewar and early postwar eras, signaled at once both the decline in the physical presence of this group in the cities of Japan and the rise of Japanese-themed advertising in instant food commercials. In this way, the construction of a greater-than-life-sized statue modeled after the instant ramen advertising character, which itself was modeled after the disappearing street vendors of Tokyo, crystallized the ersatz nature of the Museum's exhibited items.

In an illuminating discussion on the Shin-Yokohama Raumen Museum, Jordan Sand argues that the food theme-park is best viewed as a manifestation of both the commodification of nostalgic impulses, and a critique of "overprescribed urban modernity:

> [W]hen the unending cycle of retro fashion came around to the recent past of the late 1950s and early 1960s, the points of reference were not the national icons of achievement in that era (the Olympics themselves, for example) but the fading relics of the era's relative poverty. The "brightness" associated with Japan's postwar economic boom helped revive the era as an antithesis to the deepening economic gloom of the 1990s present, yet popular memory groped instead to recover the sights, sounds, and smells of the back alley and the penny-candy store… [Sand 2005: 105-107]

Sand is attentive to both the commercialization of the disappearing milieu of industrialization that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the critique it formed of everyday life in the hyper-rationalized space of contemporary Tokyo. His analysis takes account of the heightened rationalization of everyday life and ironically its critique that are at once implied by such new models of leisure as that put forth by the Museum.

Poor Reviews from Noodle Connoisseurs as Free Advertising

Even before opening its doors to the public, the Raumen Museum was able to generate significant interest by attaining gratuitous media publicity from all of Japan's major newspapers, magazines, and television broadcasters. According to its planners, the novelty of the Raumen Museum's style of business combining food court, theme park, and museum made its opening a significant event in the national press. The planners were also fortunate in that their decision to open the Museum coincided with a lull in major news stories in world events and national news. In addition, the spotlighting of regional styles by the mass media in the 1980s and early 1990s (discussed above), and the resultant change in status of ramen into a fashionable food among the young and the restless, turned the Museum's opening into a prominent story in the Japanese press.

According to "The Making of the Shin-Yokohama Raumen Museum," the planners decided at the outset not to allocate too large a share of the venture's resources to advertising because it was not necessary considering the Museum's foreseen ability to generate publicity for itself. Thus, while the company expended 1.2 million yen on promotional activities, it was able to generate roughly 1.5 billion yen worth of publicity overall. [*Graphics and Design* 1995: 61-62] Specifically, the opening of the Museum generated 160 million yen worth of newspaper publicity, 140 million yen worth of magazine publicity, and 1.2 billion yen worth of radio and television publicity. Furthermore, over 80% of the media's free advertising occurred in the spring of 1994 during the first three months of the Museum's operation. [*Graphics and Design* 1995: 64]

The mass media reported on the opening of the Museum in mostly favorable terms, showing potential visitors the novelty and excitement of the new food theme park. One example of the 140 million yen worth of magazine coverage of the Museum's opening was an article in the tabloid *Friday* that ran in the March 11, 1994 issue titled, "A Time-Slip to the Shōwa 30s? There Is a Different Flavor to the Ramen of the 'City of Aishū (Nostalgic Sorrow).'" The article notes:

> The sight is as if one slipped back in time to the past, most likely making an old man or two remember his childhood days and feel overcome with emotion. The nostalgic row of shops that has been revived in the present is not a movie set. It is the Raumen Museum of Shin-Yokohama that will open on March 6. The self-confessed ramen-loving President of the

> Museum, Iwaoka Yōji, states, "I found it odd that a ramen superpower such as Japan had no facility spotlighting this fact…."
>
> But why is it necessary to recreate a row of shops from the past to eat ramen? According to Kumagaya Tōru, the Museum's Head of Operations and Planning, "it was in the early Shōwa 30s that Japanese were the most spirited (genki). 1958 in particular is the year when instant ramen was born, and is a year that should be commemorated as the birth of the ramen revolution in Japan. Therefore, marking this year as the starting point of ramen culture, we recreated a row of shops from that period.
>
> The time of day in the Museum is always late afternoon [due to the painted ceilings], when the sun is setting and the stomach is getting hungry. You hear the sound of children playing, and the traveling tofu merchant's horn, and then you faintly smell the delicious scent of ramen drifting out of a shop. Inevitably, you find yourself going into the shop. The bustling noises from the street are all computer-generated, and provide an added dimension of background music to the experience of eating ramen.
>
> Middle-aged men can enjoy the nostalgia, while young couples who have no knowledge of that period can visit the "Ramen City of Aishū" as an amusement park. However, the prices are not as they were in those days, so please take that part into account!" [*Friday* 1994: 42-43]

As the example above shows, most articles touching upon the opening of the Museum tended to strike a laudatory tone. However, for self-proclaimed devotees of ramen, the Disney-inspired simulacrum often represented a commercialized dilution of the now-sanctified, nationalistically construed cultural milieu surrounding the independent production of the dish. One such ramen connoisseur, Satomi Shinzō, who lists his own institutional affiliation as "Managing Co-Director of the Ramen Research Association," wrote a piece in the July 1994 issue of the weekly male-targeted *Bungei shunjū* relating this position. Explaining his own interest in researching the Raumen Museum, he states:

> I am an unabashed lover of ramen. In the last decade I have visited over two thousand shops. But I have not done this to be some kind of gourmet food critic giving stars to one shop or another based on the tastiness of their dish. Rather, I have undertaken this task as an iconographical way to observe the "Japanese sense of beauty" with all seriousness. [Satomi 1994: 308]

He then describes the crowd of men and women both old and young waiting to enter the Museum in a line as "resembling the scenes from Auschwitz concentration camp as depicted in the film 'Night and Fog.'" [Satomi 1994: 309] After waiting one hour and eighteen minutes, Satomi finds himself finally entering the Museum, whereupon he must wait another hour before actually being served at one of the eight shops. He duly notes the incongruity between the ultramodern vending machines selling entry tickets to the Museum and the attempt to recreate a Tokyo "time-slip" back to 1958. He then scorns the long wait for restrooms, the useless souvenirs on sale at the gift shop, the filthy indoor air despite the non-smoking policy, and the stack of instant ramen with the taste of the Museum's featured shops packaged for home-cooking. Most striking for him, however, is the sheer number of people who line up for over two hours in order to taste a bowl of noodles from a famous store's subsidiary although the real shop is only a few stations away. He comments:

> For over two hours, none of us have even had a glass of water. But the people appear to actually enjoy all the waiting in line. What a strange tribe. What kind of psychological structure do they have? Could ramen really be worth such tribulation? [Satomi 1994: 309]

The idea that the customers considered all the time waiting in line an integral component of, rather than an impediment to, the entertainment package offered by the “theme park of ramen” is thus alluded to by the author, but is too strange for him to seriously contemplate. Yet, the level of quotidian boredom implied in such behavior again brings to mind Lefebvre’s contention regarding everyday life in the modern world:

> ‘[C]reation’ becomes fetishized and degraded first to a cult of making things and having the know-how to make them, and then to a reverence for ‘contraptions’ and ‘gadgets.’ There is a trivial ideology surrounding the making of things, and an equally trivial attitude of reverential contemplation of them once they have been made. [Lefebvre 1995: 214-215]

Satomi also finds himself irritated with the increasing lard content of the dish in general during the last decade. He thus highlights the changing material composition of the dish since the beginning of the regional ramen boom in the mid 1980s and its popularization as an object of fashion among young people. He particularly takes issue with the overwhelming preference for shops serving pork-bone based soup high in lard content, as opposed to the more traditional, “Tokyo-style” ramen using a fishier broth. He finds that “people who prefer [the lard-laden] variety have lots of energy and tend to have unrelenting or pushy [shitsukoi] personalities, making them more tolerant of the long lines and the greasy fare.” [Satomi 1994: 311] Satomi notes that the popularity surrounding shops with high lard content was leading to a situation where each shop was raising the ante and attempting to out-grease the next. New-age entrepreneurs were thus deceiving consumers who knew no better into believing that the oilier the dish, the tastier, and were getting away with charging outlandish prices as a result. He also faults the newer shops serving oilier ramen for incorporating excessive amounts of monosodium glutamate, which he deems acceptable only in small doses as a sort of "hidden ingredient." [Satomi 1994: 312-313] In this way, Satomi gripes at the perceived lack of sophistication and independence in the tastes of ramen-trend followers, whose preference for greasy, salty, over-flavored soup base has destabilized the normative mold of the food.

Ultimately, however, Satomi is a ramen purist who is most disturbed by the commercialization of independently handcrafted Chinese noodle-soup. He therefore concludes his piece with a warning that too much attention ruins the object of admiration, and calls for moderation in the ramen-appreciation world. Yet curiously, Satomi finds greater fault with the gullible consumers following media-marketing trends than with the actual creators of the Museum for vulgarizing what he considers to be a type of folk practice. According to this logic, the planners of the Raumen Museum were simply targeting an already-formed niche market to generate capital, while the consumers were reconfirming their lack of internally developed subjectivity; blindly following the herd.

Despite his apparent disdain for the trendy young consumers who treat ramen as a marker of fashionableness, Satomi claims that the value of the dish, for him, derives from its very status as a pedestrian, or "B-class" food, in contrast to the more rarified realm of soba noodles. He argues, "The national specialty of this country, soba, is an 'A-class' food replete with its own refined manners of consumption. In addition, experts will not treat you as an adult if you do not know the differences among the various regional soba-flour, which are further divided into gradations that are suitable for assorted degrees of noodle thickness. In contrast, ramen has no tedious rules. Moreover, no matter how hotly one discusses the subject, there is no hidden sneering or any inclination to assert connoisseurship behind the discussion. It is a small and simple pleasure. That is why it became a national food." [Satomi 1994: 310] The irony of Satomi's position is that while he celebrates the ordinariness of the dish in contrast to more rarified noodles such as soba, he also attempts to elevate it to an object of connoisseurship, exalting both the noodle-soup and himself as an expert in the process. One can see the changing demographics associated with the dish's consumption, the shift in its material composition, and the economic transformations associated with the transition to a service-sector-focused value-added economy in Satomi's pronouncements.

Satomi Fukutomi (no relation to the previous author discussed above), an anthropologist studying internet-based "communities" of independent ramen-shop devotees, argues that ramen indeed achieved a newfound status as an object of connoisseurship in Japan during the 1990s despite its longer postwar history as a "B-class" food. Fukutomi notes, "[B]ased on my observation of *râmen-ya* between 2006 and 2007, connoisseurial elements, such as aestheticization, craftsmanship, and the social element of "eating out" (to be discussed below) have accrued to new wave *râmen-ya*. These elements have effectively submerged low-class images in certain *râmen-ya* transforming this ordinary comestible into a connoisseurial object. Since 1996 *râmen* has become a connoisseurial object among certain groups of people…" [Fukutomi In Press: 8]

Fukutomi's work provides valuable insight into the shifting status of ramen from a "B-class" food to one deemed worthy of connoisseurship. Her study points to the fluidity of what qualifies as expertise as opposed to trivia with regard to culinary creation, and how practices associated with low-income workers became reconfigured as national customs during the era of economic globalization. The shifting symbolic valuation of ramen in this era can again be located in the macroeconomic transformations taking place in Japan and elsewhere in the industrialized world, where the onset of globalization retroactively altered the cultural milieu of welfare-state-era industrial labor into an object worthy of nationalistic celebration and mass commercialization. The irony of Satomi Shinzō's situation is that his own career as an "iconographical ethnologist" of ramen is itself predicated on the dish's transformation into a "connoisseurial object," even as he bemoans that process.

The Neo-Nationalistic Connotations of Lighter Broth

A curious part of the post-bubble ramen boom is the resurgence in the use of the term Shina soba to refer to what is marketed as the classic form of the dish. A wave of new eateries boasting authentic, traditional-style ramen (making greater use of seafood and domestic wheat-flour, pork, chicken, and salt) began to appear in the early 2000s, catering to customers who desired less lard and salt content than found in the tonkotsu style. Thus, as the popularity of the tonkotsu style, which was at center of the previous boom and more popular among young men, began to fade, lighter-broth versions catered toward demographics such as older men and young women took its place.

Yet, the difference between the tonkotsu ramen of the 1980s and the Shina soba of the 2000s goes beyond simply a material modification in soup broth and noodle composition.[52] The resurgence in the term "Shina soba" is ripe with political and historical significance, as it has occurred precisely at the same time that rightist politicians such as Ishihara Shintaro and nationalist historians such as Fujioka Nobukatsu began popularizing calls for a reappraisal of Japan's postwar foreign relations and its "masochistic" teaching of colonialist history. In this way, the changing names and meanings attached to a dish can provide a glimpse into the cultural and geo-political trends of the still-developing post-Cold War order in Japan.

Perhaps the best example of a new-age ramen shop specializing in what it calls Shina soba is the aptly named Shina soba ya, a nationally renowned ramen restaurant owned and operated by Sano Minoru. The popularity of his shop, owing to its remarkable name and Sano's idiosyncratic cooking methods, earned him a coveted space in the Raumen Museum to open his branch shop, which subsequently launched his career as a charismatic ramen chef on the variety-show circuit.

Sano's training in the food business began in the outskirts of the Tokyo metropolitan area during the midst of the gourmet boom. After working as a chef in a "Western style restaurant" for eight years, Sano opened Shina soba ya in Fujisawa city, Kanagawa Prefecture in 1986. After cultivating a reputation for himself as a skilled chef during the ramen boom of the late 1980s, he opened a branch shop in the

[52] The Shina soba boom has taken place alongside the popularization of Korean food and nouveau Japanese cuisine. In the last decade, there has been a turn toward Asia in Japan for popular cultural inspiration in conscious rejection of the Euro-American influence that has dominated the postwar period.

Raumen Museum in 2000, and eventually closed the original store in Fujisawa in 2004.

Known as the “Guru of Ramen” (Ramen no oni), Sano achieved notoriety through his strictness in terms of selecting ingredients, disciplining subordinates, and even regulating customer behavior. Shina soba ya’s success as a nationally renowned store therefore owed much to the performances of its owner in exhibiting fussiness, intemperateness, and grouchiness toward customers, employees, and suppliers. His persona functioned as a demonstration of the archetypal Ganko oyaji (stubborn middle-aged man) heroically portrayed in the television documentaries and magazine articles guiding consumers to the most idiosyncratic and supposedly tasty shops.

Sano exhibited his strictness and stubbornness by establishing policies regulating all aspects of conduct in his shop. Signs around the shop warned customers, “No Private Conversations Allowed!” “No Strong Perfumes Allowed!” and “No Wasted Food Allowed!” [*Shūkan gendai* 1998: 201] Furthermore, Sano’s willingness to enforce his own rules by asking customers to leave, or by refusing to do business at all on days when his soup stock or noodles did not achieve the high standards he set, made him famous as a dedicated chef with a type of bygone integrity towards his work. Sano and other celebrity ramen chefs, therefore, personified both the economic freedom and ethno-cultural integrity projected onto the independent ramen shop owners by the mass media in an age of heightened capital concentration and labor disempowerment worldwide. For example, Sano decided early on to make his own noodles combining durham semolina, usually used for pasta, with wheat-flour grown and milled in Japan. (Shina soba ya's policy of purchasing as many of its supplies from domestic sources as possible became another point of promotion.)[53]

Sano achieved a good deal of celebrity with his stubborn ganko oyaji ramen chef persona. Between 1999 and 2003, for example, Sano regularly appeared on a variety show on the TBS network named, "Gachinko," coaching real independent ramen shop owners into revitalizing their shops through strict discipline. His appearances often involved screaming and throwing ramen-related objects as a way to inspire his unsuccessful pupils. In this way, the "Guru of Ramen" established himself as the archetypal independent ramen chef, using his short-temper and quirkiness as evidence for his authenticity and commitment to the craft.

Although Sano became the emblematic ganko oyaji ramen chef on television, he was but one of many such figures heroically depicted in the press' spotlighting of old-time ramen shop owners in the resurgence of Shina soba during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Andō Kachio, owner of Kōka in Gifu Prefecture, is another ganko oyaji-type figure specializing in Shina soba. In a short piece titled, "Building Up Taste" (Aji o kitaeru) *Sunday mainichi* writer Yamamoto Mizue reports on a visit to Andō's store, where she meets his loyal customers, and inquires about his philosophy towards noodle-soup. She writes,

> [Andō's] soup base is rather thick and not transparent, despite it being called Shina soba. Because of this, some customers may be a little hesitant to try it at first, but once you have a sip, it is clear that this is a taste not available anywhere else….Some customers note 'The more you

[53] Japan's food security (or self-sufficiency in terms of food production) has steadily declined from a high of 89% in 1960 to 40% in 1998, where it has remained for the last decade despite government efforts to promote self-sufficiency. (http://www.maff.go.jp/j/zyukyu/fbs/dat/2-5-1-2.xls)

> eat, the more it becomes a habit. You start thinking that maybe there is a special ingredient, because after you get used to it, the other places taste so boring.' Andō himself states, "There is nothing rare about it—it is simply old-fashioned (furukusai) work being done with all carefulness." [Yamamoto 2000: 143]

Andō's description of his work as "furukusai" conjures the same image of small-scale independent ramen-making as advanced by the Raumen Museum and journal articles romanticizing the Datsu-sara. Yamamoto's exalted treatment of Andō's relationship toward his work is based on the idea that the chef represents a dying method of small-scale creation where the producer is devoted to his craft and its social consequences, and much less concerned with the profit motive.[54] Thus, the seriousness of the noodle-maker as a depot of history is impressed upon the reader. Andō's self-presentation as a worker of a bygone era plainly enjoying his craft appeals to the same sentiments as the Ramen Museum in its production of an "anticipated past" for consumers of ramen. In both, the appeal of the bowl goes far beyond the tastiness of the flavoring to include an image of the collectivized past as one of homogeneity and equality. Andō's use of the term Shina soba rather than Chūka soba or ramen is again the ultimate indicator of his "furukusai" sensibility, authenticating his ganko oyaji status and making his shop worthy of a two-page feature story in a popular tabloid.

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[54] Like other ganko oyaji ramen chefs, Andō bases his store hours on the amount of soup he prepared rather than adhering to predetermined business hours, leading him to close shop whenever the soup runs out.

From Chinese Fast Food to Japanese Slow Food

The Slow Food Movement was founded in Italy in 1989 by 62 delegates from 15 countries as a response to the spread of fast food dining and the threat it represented to the environment, local food practices, healthy eating habits, and an understanding of the connection between producers and consumers. By 2008, the organization included over 88,000 members promoting what they call "eco-gastronomy," which involves an appreciation for the long process of agricultural production and environmental impact of a food in addition to its gourmet qualities. Slow Food Japan was founded in 2004 as the national chapter of the slow food movement.

Writing in 2002, renowned ramen expert Okuyama Tadamasa concluded his nearly four-hundred-page treatise on Chinese noodle-soup in Japan with a discussion of the Slow Food Movement. He argues for the appropriateness of considering recent trends in ramen appreciation as part of a concerted, global effort on the part of first-world consumers towards rethinking their fundamental relationship towards food. He writes, "The procedure for making ramen involves making the noodles, the soup, and flavoring the meat, each of which takes a great deal of time and effort. It is fundamentally the world of Slow Food." [Okuyama 2002: 379]

From Okuyama's description of ramen, it is clear that the dish it has taken on a completely different function from its high-growth-era purpose as a cheap, hearty, and fast fuel for hurried workers. There is also little that remains of the Chinese origins that were central to its appeal in prewar Japan. By including ramen in the world of

Slow Foods, a movement of Western European origin with strong symbolism of culinary high culture, Okuyama has removed the elements of work and necessity, and has modified it to be associated more with leisure and luxury. This is more or less the form in which it has been exported as a Japanese culinary export to global centers of finance such as New York, Los Angeles, Paris, London, Shanghai, and Amsterdam in the last decade.

What began as a food from China famed for its cheapness and rapidity in preparation in the age of rapid industrialization, therefore, has become a slow food symbolizing the heightened value of the hand-crafted, the genuine, and the old-fashioned in an age of "technicity." In this process, we see not only the increased scarcity of time unencumbered by the pressure of ever-rising standards of labor productivity, we also see a heightened level of anxiety toward food in general, resulting from the lengthening of the food chain and the misalignment of profit incentives with the task of producing safe, healthy, and tasty foods for the anonymous mass of consumers.

Conclusion

The Politics of Chinese Noodle-Soup

The history of Chinese noodle-soup in modern Japan contains a larger narrative concerning the reproduction of the capitalist means of production. After being introduced to Japan by migrant Chinese workers under conditions created by Euro-American imperialism, the dish became symbolic of Japan's colonialism in China and the industrialization of the food production process in the prewar period. In addition to refueling the labor power that was responsible for reindustrializing the country after the war, its instant form provided a discrete channel for the absorption of surplus U.S. wheat flour on a mass scale that transformed dietary habits in Japan and later elsewhere. Chinese noodle-soup then became a celebrated component of the national menu as an emblem of Japanese ordinariness, just as the mass society that had produced the widespread sense of belonging to a homogenous middle class defined by such ordinariness became obsolete.

In the biography of Chinese noodle-soup, I argue there is a history of the reconfiguration of the relations of production, specifically between food, workers, and the state in modern Japan. The story is useful in illuminating how the ideology sustaining the reproduction of capitalism operates at the level of common sense and positive incentives that permeate everyday life. [Althusser 2001] [Gramsci 1971] The malleability of the dish as a container of consumable meanings, and its increasing popularity over the course of the history of modern Japan, are illuminating points of entry for understanding the changes in common sense towards the production, consumption, and preparation of food, and their relationships to shifting definitions of nutrition, labor, entertainment, and the state.

The significance of Chinese noodle-soup as an object of study therefore derives from its ability to reveal how these associations developed over time, and how cooking and eating practices seamlessly shifted from the realm of custom to that of tradition. The various categories into which the dish is simultaneously placed (Japanese food, comfort food, "Chinese" fast food, nighttime post-drinking food, working-class lunch food, young people's food, man's food) each contain a small history of the evolution of everyday life practices in Japan for different groups of people, instructing us of both the differences within Japan and how they have changed. In this way, the dish provides a window into the process of the making of culture at the level of the nation, but also at the level of class (blue-collar), gender (masculine), age (youth) and ethnicity ("Chinese").

The exceptional fact about Chinese noodle-soup in Japan is clearly that it provides a site of access to studying historical change by highlighting the interrelatedness of so many different areas of social organization ranging from the international to the regional. Furthermore, its evocative power in encapsulating the small pleasures of urban everyday life in modern Japan is well above other foods such as okonomiyaki pancakes or udon noodles that are also made primarily with wheat flour.[55] In addition, the ironies or incongruities contained within the object are instructive of the contradictions inherent to the political history of modern Japan.

[55] The Tokyo-centric nature of the mass media in Japan partially accounts for the disproportionately high coverage of Chinese noodle-soup in relation to the other two dishes mentioned above, which are consumed more in Western Japan.

For example, the dish is Chinese in origin but largely American in terms of ingredients and Japanese in its international symbolism. It also transformed from a dish symbolizing the mechanization of mass-scale production and the greater demand for speed upon the hurried worker of modern industry in the 1930s to a slow-cooked object of handcrafted devotion produced by artisan chefs in the 1990s. In addition, the accentuation of regional tastes in the 1980s highlights the homogenization of food practices in the period of high growth. There is also an irony in that its instant form is now a global product rarely associated with Japan, but in its restaurant form it is exported throughout the globe as the iconic food of young Japan. The history of Chinese noodle-soup in Japan thus provides a site at the everyday level for understanding the complicated nature of Sino-Japanese relations, Japan's dependence on food imports from the U.S., the homogenization of eating practices in Japan, the industrialization of food production, changes in nutritional science, and the transformation of entertainment, among other issues.

At bottom, however, the popularization of Chinese noodle-soup is inseparable from the containment of the industrial workforce as a decision-making force in the political arena. The nationalization of ramen by the press subtly fostered the idea of an organic productive community at a time when the international economic structure that had guided Japan's high growth and bubble economy gave way to neo-liberal policies of deregulation and privatization. The totalized industrial workforce as the image for an organic productive community (represented by the nation) transformed the food of the workers, Chinese noodle-soup, into a dish with national significance. Put differently, the collective will of the entire populace, presented as workers, changed the food emblematic of industrial workers into the supposed favorite of the Japanese everyman.

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