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Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	State of the Art	3
1.2	Social Constructionism	5
1.3	Research Design	7
2	The Discourse on Food	11
2.1	Theoretical Approaches	11
2.1.1	The Functionalist Approach	12
2.1.2	The Structuralist Approach	14
2.1.3	The Developmental Approach	17
2.1.4	Further Approaches	20
2.2	Practical Framework	22
2.2.1	Comparative Matrix	25
3	Enquiring Regionality	31
3.1	Ingredients	31
3.1.1	Staples	32
3.1.2	Plant Foods	39
3.1.3	Animal Products	45

3.1.4	Seasonings & Condiments	49
3.1.5	Beverages	53
3.2	In the Kitchen & At the Table	64
3.2.1	Methods of Preparation	65
3.2.2	Tableware	71
3.2.3	Meals & Menus	80
3.2.4	Table Rules, Manners & Rituals	83
3.3	Ideas about Food	87
3.3.1	Religious Beliefs & Superstition	87
3.3.2	Health	89
4	Conclusion	91
A	Abstracts	97
A.1	Abstract in English	99
A.2	Zusammenfassung in Deutsch	101
	Bibliography	103

List of Figures

2.1	The Culinary Triangle	15
3.1	Map of Global Rice Production	33
3.2	Per Capita Meat, Fish, and Seafood Consumption by Type in 2014	47
3.3	Recorded alcohol per capita (15+) consumption in 2010	56
3.4	Recorded alcohol per capita (15+) consumption in 2010; adapted	57
3.5	Soft Drinks as sold by Category 2013	62

List of Tables

2.1	Comparison of Selected Ethnographic Approaches in Chang (1977b)	24
2.2	Comparative Matrix	26
4.1	Summary of Findings: Ingredients	92
4.2	Summary of Findings: Continued	93

Chapter 1

Introduction

This master's thesis is concerned with food. Food as a daily necessity of mankind. But in contrast to nutritional studies, this paper is concerned with the cultural aspect of eating and drinking. While the intake of food is a basic biological necessity, what we eat and how we prepare it, at the same time, is strongly influenced by our society's culture. It is not naturally given that one region prefers any method of preparation over the other. Wang (2015), in following the controversial distinction made by Huntington (1993; 1996), identifies three major civilisations: the Western Judeo-Christian, the Middle Eastern Islamic and the East Asian Confucian. Distinguished by their religious traditions, cultural ideals and political institutions, but, moreover also in their culinary and dining practices. While some of these practices are influenced by religious traditions, others themselves have become cultural ideals.

Nationalist discourse on the other hand uses food as a distinct marker to define 'us' and 'our' food versus 'them' outside. This study takes the case of East Asia to test if such a stark distinction holds true against an analytic enquiry. It does so in reverse by questioning the regionality of East Asian food and drink. Is there something like an East Asian culinary region? A joint food culture? For the purpose of answering this question, the paper has to identify what constitutes a food culture first. From the literature that does exist on the region's culinary aspects in particular and on the sociologist theory on food in general it derives at a set of criteria universally applicable to the countries under research here. In addition, it also draws its relevance from this initial analysis, since it closes the gap between individual country studies on one hand and studies of certain particularities of the region's food culture on the other hand. This study thus provides a broad scope where others provide limited depth. While it has its limitations in

the number of aspects that can be discussed within the means of a paper like this, it nonetheless provides a valuable picture of the culinary regionality of East Asian food and drink. Answering the question whether or not such a regionality exists is valuable in multiple ways. On a business level, commonalities in taste make products marketable across borders. On a socio-political level, they function as argument in the understanding of nationalist discourse. In the socio-historical sphere, they open up gateways for further research. In short, their implications are manifold.

A paper of any length naturally has to make limitations. The most important of these limitations in regards to this paper is the choice of countries under analysis here. East Asia can be defined by its shared Confucian ideals and practice. China, Korea and Japan share a long history of cultural and economic exchange. Vietnam, while often labelled South East Asian, has long experienced the same Sinocentric development. Taiwan, which is included as a separate entity in this study, has a much contested position in other fields. This study does not attempt to add to the discussion of Taiwan's political status. It rather understands Taiwan as a de-facto entity, subject to Chinese cultural influence for much of its younger history and thus likewise worth of analysing. In the case of Korea, reference throughout this study is generally based on South Korea in a post-war context, unless otherwise noted. Historical developments are understood in their pre-division peninsula wide context. While the distinction of world regions is exclusive elsewhere, this study does not claim an outside border to the East Asian culinary region. Rather, it tests the above mentioned countries for 'membership' in the region, inviting future research to apply its criteria to enlarge the region where applicable.

The remainder of this introductory chapter is concerned with the state of the art in food culture related research on East Asia, the construction of food culture and the design of this particular research. Chapter 2 further discusses the theoretical approaches (2.1) within the discourse on food, from which this study derives at its practical framework (2.2). This framework then is applied to the actual enquiry into East Asian culinary regionality (3). The findings of this analysis are summarised in the conclusion (chapter 4) as well as presented graphically in tables 4.1 and 4.2 on pages 92 and 93.

1.1 State of the Art

Many studies have been conducted, occupied with the analysis of certain aspects of a food culture. In the context of this paper, East Asian food culture has been analysed by various of its elements. Wang (2015) has produced a comprehensive study of chopsticks as the iconic utensil of East Asian food intake. Kopplin (2002) has insightfully arranged leading experts on the history and art of lacquerware (both discussed in detail in 3.2.2). And yet, they have produced works of ‘chopsticks culture’ and ‘lacquerware culture’ rather than ones of East Asian table culture. The *Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture*, an introduction wishing to “*explain key aspects of modern Chinese culture*” (Kam 2008, blurb), mentions ‘food’ seven times throughout its various chapters of which not one is dedicated to this vital part of everyday life and culture itself. Rather it is merely a side note, usually in the form of ‘traditional culture *and* food’, rather than being acknowledged as an outstanding and distinctive cultural phenomenon, worth exploring in itself. As has been described, this study tries to achieve closing this gap. A gap between the plurality of culinary cultural characteristics and the culinary culture itself, the actual *habitus* in the form described by Farquhar (2005).

The two studies mentioned above are just an exemplary share of what has been written in relation to food, nutrition and eating in East Asia. Historical studies are offering insights into the origins and development of certain cultural aspects. Rath (2010), for example, is studying old Japanese cookbooks to identify a possible Japanese national cuisine in pre-modern times, before a Japanese nation in the modern sense even arose. Cwiertka (2006) also reflects on an imagined national identity and a perceived culinary cultural homogeneity within nation states. Country studies, like the books presented by Ashkenazi & Jacob (2003), Carter (2003), Chang (1977b), Cotterell (1987) or Newman (2004) are maybe the closest available (and valuable input) to this study at hand, trying to draw a complete picture of their respective subject nation’s food culture. However, they are limited in scope by the a priori exclusion of everything possibly related but beyond the border of their respective nation state.

Others, this author would characterise as ‘motivational’ in nature. Lee (2009a) is evaluating on the reasons why East Asia is increasingly adopting Western modelled wine drinking. Sherman & Billing (1999) are looking behind the spice preferences of certain regions, to identify a Darwinian evolution of taste preferences in response to climatic necessities. These authors, and numerous others, whose

valuable contributions are listed in the bibliography section of this paper, are thus driven more by the motives behind, than they are by the actual peculiarities of food culture. Actuality is a mere result.

The works of all of these authors and a number of others are used in this study to extract valuable inside, which then can be combined to draw a complete picture of East Asia's culinary regionality in all its peculiarities. As such, what is lost in depth as compared to other studies, is gained in scope. A scope broad enough to establish the necessary comparability and wide enough to cover a region in its culinary whole.

Fields outside of sociology have also delivered appealing additions to aspects of East Asian food culture. These include, without being limited to, studies on the influence of the use of chopsticks on perceptual and motor skills, i.e. Hatta & Kawakami (1999), or on the environmental impact of disposable chopsticks (Shih, Huang, & Chen 2010). Nutritional and health studies are by nature especially concerned with food related matters. Chew, Lim, Omar, & Khoo (2008); Teas, Braverman, Kurzer, Pino, Hurley, & Hebert (2007), among many others, examine the beneficial aspects of seaweed consumption on individual health. The Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition is devoted to the health advantages and disadvantages of an *Asian* diet. Other works look at the life prolonging contributions of certain *Asian* nutritional lifestyles. Okinawa, Japan's southernmost island prefecture has received special attention, since it is home to the world's largest share of 100-year-olds (Schwanitz & Wierling 2014; Sho 2001; Yamori, Miura, & Taira 2001).

In his 2008 study on soy bean products in Japan, Ozeki acknowledges the difficulties in academic research on the topic of food culture in general. In order to illustrate a certain food culture, he uses the "*phenomenon of collective taste preferences*" (Ozeki 2008, 144), a certain preference internalised by every member of a society from the earliest childhood. In addition, it functions as a divider between "*our own culture's taste and foreign tastes*" (Ozeki 2008, 145). Ozeki outspokenly criticises the use of *ingredients*, *seasonings*, or *cooking techniques* as stereotypical emphasis on superficial features of a cultural sphere. For reasons explained, this author would like to disagree. Because of the complexity of everything cultural, a broad array of characteristics needs to be analysed in order to make valuable conclusions. Conclusions not aimed at drawing premature generalisations, but at identifying homogeneity in a region on which future generations of research can be built.

As with the complexity of a certain dish, the complexity of a food culture can be broken down to its individual ‘ingredients’ in order to gain insight and comparability. This is what this study is trying to achieve. Rather than comparing the use of apples in different recipes, this paper is looking at the whole fruit basket - to borrow from a culinary metaphor. The way of doing things might be easily explained for a single dish. The use of a certain spice or a certain preparation method might have proven beneficial to the final dish’s taste, texture - overall enjoyment in short. For a culture, this has proven rather more complex. The whys and hows behind the construction of the cultural recipe sometimes operate in much secrecy. The following sections are to explain how, at least some, light can be shed into this secrecy.

1.2 Social Constructionism

Among the many routines of human daily social life, the intake of food can be seen as highly *institutionalised* endeavour. As Berger and Luckmann put it in their pioneering work *The Social Construction of Reality*: “*Social order is a human product, or more precisely, an ongoing human production*” (Berger & Luckmann 1975, 52) *the Way of Doing Things*, or in the context of this work *the Way of Eating Things*, within a given society is achieved by the repetition of actions, which have proven worthwhile. The resulting limitation in choices offers a grade of convenience, which in the sphere of food can be as valuable as it can be life-saving. By reproducing the food choices of other members, the likeliness of consuming poisonous or otherwise inedible foods is limited. Through socialisation, these habits (i.e. of preferring one sort of fruit over the other) become accepted and unquestioned institution. (Berger & Luckmann 1975) Why it is not acceptable to eat (perfectly safe) pet food for instance is one of these food institutions. On the other hand certain toxic or intoxicating food and drink choices are well accepted in one society, while they are frowned upon or even banned in another. (Mennell, Murcott, & Otterloo 1992)

The socially constructed nature of food choices, the *food culture* of a given society, can also be identified by applying Hacking’s first two claims of social construction:

- (0) *In the present state of affairs, X is taken for granted; X appears to be inevitable.*¹
- (i) *X need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. X, or X as it is at present, is not determined by the nature of things; it is not inevitable.*

(Hacking 2000, 6,12)

Clearly, the basic human need for food and nutrition is inevitable. However the choice of food, its preparation, seasoning and combination as well as the settings, utensils and events of its consummation are of little relation to this basic human need. In this sense Hacking's claims of what is expressed by the term *social construction*, in this paper helps us understand the socially constructed nature of food choices. *Choices* itself are thus at the centre of any enquiry into "*what constitutes a culture*" (Sobal 1998, 385).

This work thus builds its definition of *culture* - as used in *food culture* - upon the founder of modern cultural anthropology Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917). For him, "[c]ulture is that [socially constructed] complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor (1871) as quoted in Sobal (1998, 385)) Tylor's definition already includes important input factors for the *black box*, which is crucial to this analysis and will be discussed further below.

Within the sociologists' field of consumption and consumerism, food and eating will always bear a unique standing, since however high a symbol of social status or self worth a particular food item might be, there are always limits to its consumption. The most basic of which will be shown by one's own body reacting with nausea or extrusion. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997)

Another distinction in terminology has to be made at this point. Both, the terms *constructivism* and *constructionism* appear in the discussion of human interaction and social construction. While the latter follows the tradition of Berger & Luckmann (1975) as well as being the more widely accepted term in sociology, the former is more commonly used in the field of psychology. Deriving from Jean Piaget's cognitivism, *constructivism* in its psychology-definition explicitly focuses on the shaping of learning processes through social interaction. (Scott & Marshall 2009) Social constructionism, as has been introduced earlier in this section, "*emphasize[s] the socially created nature of social life.*" (Scott & Marshall 2015)

¹Hacking (2000, 12) chooses (0) in order to emphasize this being a precondition to (i)

As such an enquiry into social constructionism can be occupied more deeply with the analysis of the actual *artefacts*² that are created, rather than it is with the processes and forces that influence its creation.

1.3 Research Design

Sobal (1998) has identified two dimensions upon which to categorise the cultural comparison in the field of food, eating, and nutrition. Like on the two axes of a graph, the research design can be located on the intersection of the component of time and the choice of research unit. In this respect, this study is clearly synchronic in time. While the literature chosen might not represent a singular point in time, it is chosen with the aim of comparing the countries at hand. An analysis of changes or trends within the countries or the region over time is not subject of this paper.

When it comes to units of analysis, Sobal (1998) points out the problematic nature of “[s]pecifying a culture as a unit of analysis” (388). This objection has been accounted for in the design of this study by using de facto nation states as units of analysis (purposive sampling). While the borders of a certain culture often are vague and difficult to draw, this research uses the defined nation states to approach and identify by approximation these cultural borders.

What clearly remains outside the scope of this analysis is to exhaust the limitations of a possibly distinctive East Asian food culture. Limiting any cultural enquiry to the scope of certain nations might be incomplete as a culture could easily stretch beyond the borders of these states. (Hofstede 1983) On the other hand, limitations have to be made in order to grant feasibility within the given scope. Any findings from this research can then be applied to further enquiries into the region in order to further broaden our understanding of a concept as complex as regional food culture.

Another critical factor in research design according to Sobal is the representativeness of findings, interview partners or other given sources. This has been considered in the research design of this work by relying on a large variety and diversity of published sources. Through this spreading of input, general representativeness could be increased while at the same time minimising or even

²A *social artefact* is not limited to having a physical form as in archaeology, but can also describe any immaterial occurrence formed by social construction. (Kriz 1988) In this sense, *food culture* is a social artefact for the scope of this work.

neutralising any possible biasing effect from any single primary research. This *purposive sampling* thus is applied in the choice of countries and sources under study here for reasons of feasibility and quality assurance as stated above.

Returning to Sobal's second axis, this research is cross-national in design, comparing characteristics in different nations for reasons described above. In its research question and underlying working hypothesis, it does look for unifying elements within East Asian food consumption habits, which are distinctive for this set of countries. Through the geographic limitations of its research, this paper does however not attempt to explore any global, trans-culturally identifiable characteristics of human food intake, as described by Cohen (1961), Poggie (1995), Dirks (1993), and Leary (1981).

It has been established in Tylor's definition of culture applied to this study (see 1.2), that the forces and processes influencing the social construction of artefacts can be manifold. Further there is the afore mentioned occupation with actual peculiarities rather than the *whys* and *hows* in sociology that also meets the limitations of an MA-Thesis like this. Thus the concept of a *black box* needs to be introduced in addition to the actual research criteria defined in 2.2.

Originating from John B. Watson's (1878-1958) behavioural approach to psychology, the *black box* summarises all the processes and factors not measurable in an objective way at the time of research. The concept becomes even clearer when looked at from the perspective of systems theory: Looking at a highly complex system, researchers are only able to measure the relationship between input and output factors in order to gain knowledge of the inner workings of the system by approximation. Food culture is such a black box. The wholeness of all social forces, processes, actors and circumstances that work together in inscrutably ways within this box formed and continue to form the dishes, manners and beliefs associated with food and drink.

While in other fields this black box approach might be criticised for disregarding the actual decision making processes and institutions forming our social reality, its introduction helps creating a feasible research setting and design. In addition, valuable insights into the inner workings of this social constructionist black box might be derived from the analysis of its own outcomes. Building in part on Bourdieu's work, Farquhar (2005, 8-9) describes this black box as *habitus*, a "*disorderly and inarticulate collection*" of everything involved in the continuous construction of any social reality.

A final thought has to be given on the issue of *measurement*. As Sobal again points out, it is crucial to all types of research, but “*particularly problematic for cultural comparisons*” (Sobal 1998, 389). Therefore the subsequent section 2 will introduce the main contributions to the academic engagement with food culture. From this analysis a comprehensive set of trans-culturally applicable and identifiable criteria (table 2.2.1) is derived. On these criteria the analytical part (chapter 3) of this paper will then be based.

Chapter 2

The Discourse on Food

“Food can be studied from the viewpoint of many disciplines.”

(Mennell et al. 1992, 35)

Surprisingly little has been written about the culture of food. Given that it takes such a vital part in everyday life, one wonders why it seems to have been of such limited interest to sociologists and anthropologists alike. Or, as Beardsworth & Keil (1997) put it, it is a “[...] *curious fact that food and eating seemed to be topics for enthusiastic discussion for virtually everyone but the sociologist*”. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, X) For German philosopher, economist, socialist and sociologist Karl Marx the word ‘Diet’ simply referred to a political assembly. (Mennell et al. 1992) As such, this chapter tries to assemble the most common theoretical approaches towards the culture of food and its sociological study.

2.1 Theoretical Approaches

Early studies of food and eating habits investigated social welfare and unequal distribution of nutrition, thus using the empiric parameter of food and its distribution in order to show underlying social concerns. Examples, as mentioned by Mennell et al. (1992), include the studies of Britain’s working-class poor in the late 19th and early 20th century by well-established social scholars and reformers like Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree (1871-1954) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895).

In 1981 Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen put forward his idea that, “[t]he law stands between food availability and food entitlement.” (Sen 1981, 160), thus re-establishing discussion and research of the economic, social and

political prerequisites of famines, while at the same time denying a simple shortage of food availability. This ‘nutritional aspect’ of food has ever since been at the core of the sociological and social-anthropological study of food.

An early attempt to classify theoretical approaches towards the study of food and its cultural aspects has been made by Goody (1982), following the general trends in the broader fields of anthropology and sociology. He thus identified three theoretical approaches in order to summarise research that has been made into the different substantive aspects of food and eating. These three main approaches are entitled: the *functional*, the *structural*, and the *cultural*. He then however continues to discuss studies based on historical and comparative data, without subsuming them under an additional, more specific fourth heading. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Goody 1982)

Mennell et al. (1992) later picked up Goody’s systematisation with *functionalism*, *structuralism* and introducing *developmentalism* in addition to the former two, while at the same time omitting Goody’s *cultural* category. This results from the fundamental nature of culture at the core of all of these approaches, which thus can be omitted as a separate distinctive label. The later argument has also been used by Beardsworth & Keil (1997), who closely follow Mennell, Murcott, & Otterloo’s tripartite composition. With slight alterations, the relative clarity and structure of their arrangement will thus also form the basis of this work’s further analysis, while it has to be said however (in the words of Mennell, Murcott, & Otterloo), that:

It would be going too far to speak of a succession of paradigms in the sociology of food and eating, [...] because each of these fashions has been associated with research into different substantive aspects of food and eating, without any decisive invalidation of earlier approaches, questions and answers. (Mennell et al. 1992, 7)

With this in mind, the paper at hand continues to analyse the *functionalist*, *structuralist* and *developmentalist* approaches, each in respect to its logic, the underlying questions as well as its representative examples.

2.1.1 The Functionalist Approach

Within the functionalist approach, society is seen as an organic system, where every ‘organ’ has its distinctive and specialised role. Thus, a holistic focus is

set on the interrelationships and interdependencies within this ‘organisms’ and the distinct *manifest* and *latent* functions of food within. While the former are distinctively recognised by the members of the society under study, the latter describe those not recognised or willingly denied. In addition, functionalism looks at dysfunctional attributes, disrupting the organic system. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997) Notable contributions, among which are some household names in sociology, include Davis (1966), Durkheim (1984), Merton (1957), father of American sociology and Nobel Prize Laureate Robert C. Merton, and Parsons (1951).

Roots of functionalism can be traced back to as far as the foundation of the British school of social anthropology itself, with Bronislaw Malinowski’s (1884-1942) comprehensive study of the Trobriand Islands and their complex system of beliefs and social exchange, expressed within the patterns of food production and distribution among the secluded society. (Malinowski 1935) In her own studies, Audrey Richards (1899-1984), student of Bronislaw Malinowski, continued his approach, linking the production, preparation and consumption of food with the life cycle, group structures and social bonds among the Bantu and Bemba peoples of sub-Saharan Africa. (Richards 1932; 1939) With her studies being anthropological in nature, the symbolism of food and the conventions of nutritional intake were vital expressions of cooperation, exchange, belonging and commitment among a society under research. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Mennell et al. 1992)

Said to have introduced Emile Durkheim’s French sociology into British anthropology, Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) himself denied the label of being a functionalist. At the same time, he nonetheless contributed to the demonstration of the functional role of food through showing its aspect in facilitating the individual’s socialisation and fostering a mutual sense of obligation among members of the Andaman Islands’ population. (Radcliffe-Brown 1922) A key aspect highlighted in his work, the interdependence through co-operative production and sharing of food, forms a recurring theme in the study of food and nutrition, not only within sociology and anthropology. University of Virginia’s Thomas Talhelm, together with a team of Chinese and US Psychologists, argued in 2014 “[...] *that a history of farming rice makes cultures more interdependent, whereas farming wheat makes cultures more independent, and these agricultural legacies continue to affect people in the modern world.*” (Talhelm, Zhang, Oishi, Shimin, Duan, Lan, & Kitayama 2014, 603) In other words, returning to the German proverb *denn du bist, was du isst* (because you are, what you eat), maybe

we are not only what we eat, but what our parents and their parents before them ate already.

While the functionalist approach was and is target of criticism and to a certain degree discarded nowadays, some of its basic ideas are still found at the core of many discussions on the non-nutritional role of food among a society, as was highlighted above. Among the main points of criticism, however, remains its overly static view of human social organisation, complete with the inability to illustrate its conflicts, change and the origin of institutions within society. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997)

2.1.2 The Structuralist Approach

Despite its persistence and re-emergence as *neo-functionalism*, both Beardsworth & Keil (1997) and Mennell et al. (1992) spend much more thought on the structuralist approach, due to its “*great virtue of [...] clearly recognis[ing] that ‘taste’ is culturally shaped and socially controlled.*” (Mennell et al. 1992, 8) It does so by looking behind the social linkages (as described by the functionalist approach) to identify deeper universal rules in order to understand, that everyday culture and everyday speech are both produced by an identical set of rules. (Beardsworth & Keil (1997) following Saussure (1960)) As with understanding a language, understanding these underlying patterns will help us understand the human mind and the functioning of society.

The French anthropologist and ethnologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009), himself an early proponent of structuralism, derived his *gusteme* directly from the linguist *phoneme*¹ In his 1963 analysis of English and French cuisine, he argued for a threefold set of opposing factors under which the *gusteme* can be analysed. These three are *endogenous/exogenous* (local and exotic), *central/peripheral* (staple foods or enhancement), and *marked/non marked* (strong flavours versus. flavourless). Comparatively better known and more frequently quoted however is his *Culinary Triangle* (Figure 2.1). It graphically shows his ideas of how cooking, as a cultural transformation process, converts raw ingredients from their natural state into acceptable for human consumption, while at the same time the *natural* transformation process would lead to a rotten state. In addition *cooked* food itself can be turned into rotten by natural disintegration. The connections within the

¹In linguistics, a phoneme refers to “[a]ny of the perceptually distinct units of sound in a specified language that distinguish one word from another, for example p, b, d, and t in the English words pad, pat, bad, and bat.” (The Oxford English Dictionary 2016)

triangle are however seen to point in one direction only, since a *cooked* food can not return to its *raw* state.

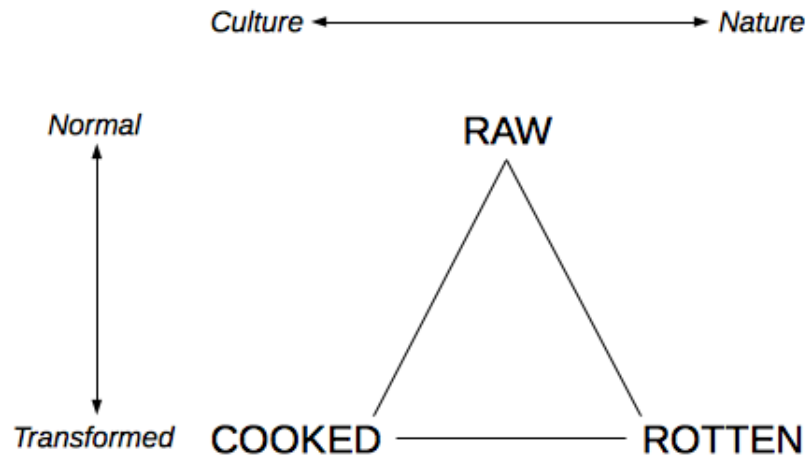


Figure 2.1: The Culinary Triangle

Adapted from Levi-Strauss (1966) and Beardsworth & Keil (1997)

While he continued to develop his idea by placing different forms of cooking at different stages in between the corners of his triangle, other authors soon doubted the scheme's usefulness, or even ridiculed it as plain common sense and circular in nature, since the underlying patterns are deduced from its surface appearances. (Goody 1982; Mennell 1985) Despite the criticism, we nonetheless may borrow from Levi-Strauss's argument that it is culture that makes food edible and worth eating. Thus, what might have been transformed from its raw state towards rotten by nature's forces, could might as well return into the sphere of edibility by culture's dictate, as seen with the Sardinian Casu Marzu, literally 'rotten cheese', fermented well beyond what's generally termed edible by the larvae of the *pilophila casei* fly. If we then add the definition of *culture* as everything, that is not imperatively dictated by our surroundings and circumstances, this points towards the conclusion, that similar forms of practices related to food (its production, preparation, consumption etc.) are also an indication towards the affiliation with a certain group or society.

Later, Dame Mary Douglas, ennobled Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) by Queen Elizabeth II for her contribution to the field of social anthropology and structuralist analysis, in observing her own family meals, defined food as a code. This code transports information on relationships and events within a given social sphere. The messages, among others, include information on status, belonging and restrictions. Understanding a meal as both,

a physical and a social event, she emphasised the alimentary and nutritional role of food above all symbolism. (Douglas 1972; 1984) Following her mentor, Australian linguist Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday's understanding of language and linguistics, she agreed that "[e]ating, like talking, is patterned activity, and the daily menu may be made to yield an analogy with linguistic form." (Douglas 1972, 62; quoting Halliday (1961)) Departing from Halliday's hierarchical units of categorisation for the description of food, *daily menu*, *meal*, *course*, *helping*, and *mouthful*, she arrives at an analysis of her own family's eating habits, proving, what appears to be an underlying structure within the majority of English meals, in the majority of possible occasions.

The final advocate of structuralism ought to be mentioned here is French philosopher and linguist Roland Barthes (1915-1980), deeply ingrained and engaged in the philosophical theory of signs and symbols and aligned with the structuralist cause. As such it comes at no surprise that his semantic, rather than empirical analysis identifies any given food item as an item of information. Thus *menus*, as a form of syntax, and *diets*, as a form of style can be used in order to analyse the meaning behind food as form of communication. Barthes himself looking at food advertising, identified three dominant arguments food is used to disseminate: (1) the vitality of tradition and past, (2) the perception of male-female divergence, and (3) 'health'. The latter explicitly towards the endowment of the body with a number of specific attributes, like 'energetic', 'alert' or 'relaxed', through the intake of certain foods. (Barthes 1979; Mennell 1985) Examples of his three arguments are omnipresent to this very day with certain soft-drink companies advertising the empowering and (bull-like) strengthening features of its produce (3). Others celebrate their regional or local cuisine as their cultural heritage (1), while vegetarian and organic alternatives are presented in a female setting, whereas burgers and steaks are presented by horse-riding or car-repairing muscle men (2).

Highlighting the role of food as means of communication, structuralism has faced broad criticism for its failure to bring into focus central interconnections of hierarchical human societies, the cycles of production and consumption as well as the influence of given biological or climatological preconditions. By focusing solemnly on the 'language' of food, the structuralist approach blanks out social and/or historical factors involved in the emergence of the analysed patterns. It thus also fails to help shedding light on origins and evolution thereof. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Goody 1982) Mennell (1985) takes his criticism one step further by following Elias (1978a) argument, presuming a general Western assumption, that there are eternally unchanging formulas below, even outliving

their own ever-changing surface appearances. It is this tendency which, according to Mennell, threatens the possibility of understanding what is going on within human food systems. As with the aforementioned functionalist approach, time has shown that, while certain influences of the structuralist approach remain influential today, it is rendered rather unpopular in general discussion.

This section has dealt with the most prominent proponents of structuralism in the sociology of food. Before continuing to the *developmental* realm, it might be best summarised and concluded with the words of Beardsworth & Keil:

Rather than focusing upon the practicalities and the social processes involved in producing, allocating and consuming food, the structuralist gaze is directed towards the rules and conventions that govern the ways in which food items are classified, prepared and combined with each other. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 61)

2.1.3 The Developmental Approach

The third category discussed here, the developmental approach, is described as less of a consistent theoretical category or strong coherent label than the two aforementioned divisions. The range of approaches subsumed here do however share significant common ideas, the most outstanding of which is their common understanding of today's social rules and settings as directly pertinent with the past they are originating from. Thus, the concept of change, including its conflicts and contradictions takes on a comparatively central focus point in sociological analysis. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Mennell et al. 1992)

Stephen Mennell, who himself argued for the establishment of a developmental category in 1992, by means of his comparative analysis of English and French eating habits and taste patterns Mennell (1985) became an early contributor to the developmental cause. In his study, he again borrowed from German-born sociologist Norbert Elias (1897-1990) in applying the latter's concept of Western self-constraint to the study of food and appetite. Elias had shown that over the centuries constraints exercised upon the individual members of Western societies shifted progressively from external to internal. In other words it is the individual exercising constraint over him/herself, rather than being constraint by an external force. (Elias 1978b; 1982) What Mennell (1985) achieved in his well praised study, was to bring the *figurations*, or series of social, cultural, economic and political structures determining the *civilizing of appetite* to the centre of interest. By their

analysis, a plethora of food- and nutrition-related realities, “*as diverse as anorexia nervosa and vegetarianism*” (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 65) can be explained.

British social anthropologist Jack Goody concluded from his studies of two ethnic groups in northern Ghana that changes in a given food culture result from changes within the larger, global setting of industrial production, processing, preservation, distribution and retailing of food. He noticed during his time in Ghana, that the traditional cuisine is not given up entirely, but rather enhanced and altered by an influx of English cooking techniques and dinner etiquette for formal settings. Goody compared this to the use of the English language in formal contexts as a result of colonialism. (Goody 1982) His analysis was then used as a basis for Sidney Wilfred Mintz (1985) formulating his relationship of political and economic conversions with the tremendous rise in Western sugar consumption, especially among members of the Western industrial working class.

American anthropologist Marvin Harris (1927-2001) addition to the study of food and eating, praised as “*particularly significant contribution*” (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 66), came in the form of *cultural materialism*. Linking production forces as described by Karl Marx with an understanding of the role of demographic factors in the formation of a sociocultural system as derived from Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), Harris understood human social life and interaction as a direct response to the difficulties of everyday life as well as the necessity to adapt to our natural setting. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Harris 2001) *Developmental* in emphasising the continuous adaptation to economical and environmental settings, his theory also shows “*affinities*” (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 66) with functionalism as explored earlier. (Mennell et al. 1992) As such, in his analysis of food and eating, Harris is very critical of the structuralist methodology of analysing a food culture independently of its given nutritional, ecological and economic settings. Exploring a practical logic behind food prohibitions and taboos on their *symbolic*, *moral* and *religious* basis, like with beef in Hinduism, pork in Judaism and Islam, he again arrives at the conclusion that these are merely to be seen as responses and adaptation to environmental necessities as well as the *homo economicus*’s drive for resource output optimisation. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Harris 1986; Mennell et al. 1992)

French sociologist and anthropologist Claude Fischler draws a more pessimistic image of an eroding culinary culture. The traditional axioms of *gastronomy*, rules, norms and meanings within a society structuring food and nutritional behaviour in his view, are disintegrated by outside forces. These forces include everything that puts up pressure on the consuming individual, like agro-industrial

conglomerates (through advertising), animal rights groups, or the state itself. Fischler described the resulting state of mind as *gastro-anomy*, linking his thoughts to the ideas of Durkheim². This gastro-anomy, as a result of the aforementioned outside forces, interferes with the original culinary culture, thus disturbing the creation and sustainability of the individual's own identity, which in parts is based on her/his dietary affiliation. However, forms of counter movement develop against the gastro-anomy. (Fischler 1980; 1986; 1987; 1988) Food risks, anxieties and scares are met by individually developed nutritional systems and self-constraints: growing ethical concerns with the production of meat and livestock is met by vegetarianism and veganism, the oversupply and advertising of highly nutritious foods, snacks and sweets is encountered with rigid weight-loss diets and a stringent ideal of beauty, advocated by fashion designers and glamour magazines. Themselves critical of the limitations of structuralism, Mennell et al. (1992) nevertheless put Fischler under the structuralist banner, while acknowledging his role at the “[...] *end-point to the structuralist dominance over the sociology of food and eating* [...]” (Mennell et al. 1992, 13). On the other hand, due to his developmental perspectives on the destruction of codes and regulations guiding food culture, Beardsworth & Keil (1997) not only rank him among the developmentalists, but further use his concept as connecting piece onto their own work.

Developing from the aforementioned theorists, Beardsworth & Keil (1992; 1997) brought forward an *alimentary totality*, summarising the plethora of edibles available at any given time. Within this totality, the *menu* comprises all practices, principles and guidelines used by a society to chose what is eaten, when and how. Two types of menu, the term being defined much more general than in its common use, are to be differentiated: *traditional menus* and *rational menus*. Fischler's influence on the two different types is clearly recognisable, with the traditional menu being described as “*taken-for-granted [in] nature*” (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 67), deriving from a long-lasting set of beliefs combined with customary practice determining the choice of food. Through their *taken-for-granted* nature, they facilitate the alienation of foreign culinary traditions as far as to labelling them ‘barbaric’ or ‘perverse’. The rational menus on the other hand are defined by a specific goal, aimed at being achieved through their self-imposed regulatory aspects. These goals include, among others, individually or collectively desirable outcomes like gain or loss of weight, an enhancement of physical and/or mental functioning, and general aspects of health based on what is described in adver-

²In Durkheim's understanding *anomie* describes a state of absence of moral guidelines within a society, undermining social norms and values. (Kenneth 2005; The Oxford English Dictionary 2016)

tisement as scientific or quasi-scientific ground. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997) Four categories of *sub-menus* to the rational menus are identified by the authors:

- *convenience menu*
The goal is to minimize the time and effort necessary for acquisition, preparation, and presentation of food.
- *economy menu*
Keeping food cost within a certain budget is the main focus of this rational menu.
- *hedonistic menu*
Above all other aspects, the sensory pleasures of food and eating are highlighted, also accounting for a drive towards exclusive or restricted foodways beyond their nutritional value.
- *moral menu*
Ethical considerations, like animal rights, ecological reflection or political issues, govern the self-restraints imposed upon oneself.

Out of the afore mentioned rational menus, Beardsworth & Keil (1992; 1997) continue, the individual within a given society can build his or her own *diet* by varying degrees of deliberate choices. The resulting *menu pluralism* and the ongoing adjustment in accordance with multifaceted factors such as the setting of the food event, the person's mood or economic background has only been made possible, according to the authors, by a *menu differentiation* resulting from an enlarged alimentary totality, which exceeds the boundaries of the traditional menu. In other words, Beardsworth & Keil might agree with Fischler on the destructive forces of the modern food system with its industrialised production and globalised distribution, when it comes to the traditional settings of food culture. However, they also speculate about its developmental power. By breaking up the traditional menus, the modern food system might support “[...] *the emergence of a new, more open, flexible and pluralistic nutritional order*” (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 68).

2.1.4 Further Approaches

While this introduction has adopted a framework for the arrangement of the various approaches towards food culture as proposed by Beardsworth & Keil (1997), additions have to be made where their structure seems to lag certain important input. As such, the aforementioned Mennell et al. (1992) continue their introduction on “*Theoretical Orientations*” (1-19) with three additional chapters on

“The Development of Culinary Cultures” (20-27), *“Ethnological Food Research”* (28-34), and *“Nutritional Trends”* (35-41) respectively. Despite their separation in terms of book structure, these latter three chapters are but a continuation of the introduction of the various approaches towards the extensive field that the study of food and eating can represent.

These *further approaches*, as this author entitled them, are as it appears more concerned with practical and concrete occurrences manifested by means of food culture, the understanding and explanation thereof. As such, their approach seems less driven by an urge to define or excavate universal patterns. Rather it is *“an attempt at understanding society and culture through eating”* (Mennell et al. 1992, 32-33). This is by no means to say that the aforementioned theoretical approaches have not produced a large share of very valuable ground work, the results of each of whom have contributed to the overall discourse on this topic and the study of whom are a necessary preliminary and preparatory work for those who want to gain further insight into this field. It thus does not surprise, that many of the afore introduced theorists also produced noticeable works of ethnographic nature. Their connections between the three initially mentioned approaches and the *ethnological food research* as discussed by Mennell et al. (1992) therefore can not only be drawn from their respective research focus but also in person, with (among others) Richards, Douglas, Levi-Strauss, Goody, or Harris also listing prominently among the group of ethnographic field researchers.

In 1977 Chang Kwang-chih produced what has been described *“the classical study”* (Mennell et al. 1992, 32) of the substantial cultural and historical role of food in China. A Sinologist and Harvard Professor of archaeology, in his anthropological and historical book *“Food in Chinese Culture”* (1977b), Chang brought together ten experts on Chinese history, each choosing his/her individual approach towards the study of the development of Chinese food culture in its respective dynastic setting. As a result, the book is an ethnographic account of the history of nutrition, food and foodways in China from the ancient kingdoms via the great dynasties to modern China. In addition to the valuable collection of explicitly food related historical information on China, the book also offers a direct comparison between the structure chosen by the individual scholars to handle such a research. Three of these approaches are analysed more closely in the next section, in order to derive a suitable framework for the present study at hand.

2.2 Practical Framework

As discussed in the previous section on the discourse on food, from the study of the various approaches towards the study of the culture of food this paper arrived at Chang (1977b) from where it will abstract its own analytical framework.

The assignment of specific classifiers, each representing a focus point for the analysis of a given food culture does help to extract and target certain aspects, thus not only structuring the work at hand, but also facilitating the comparability and traceability of the results. One must keep in mind, that an academic examination of a topic as versatile as food offers a plethora of possible contact-points, therefore a pre-defined structure is *sine qua non*. Table 2.2 highlights a choice of approaches chosen by three respective authors in Chang (1977b) for their individual historic analysis. The authors themselves (Anderson & Anderson 1977; Chang 1977a; Hsu & Hsu 1977) offer little insight as to why they have chosen the respective headlines to guide their work, however, the comparison in table 2.2 clearly shows parallels.

The first big subject matter all three authors tackle despite different wording is *ingredients*, whereat Chang (1977a) and Hsu & Hsu (1977) explicitly highlight the category of *grains* or *staples*, and that of *animal foods* versus *vegetables* respectively. Anderson & Anderson (1977) on the other hand limit their conduct to *ingredients* in general. Another category represented in all three approaches in some sort is *beverages*, themselves valid for analysis not only by their nutritional value, but also due to their ritual role within religious practices or concerning table manners. A factor, under-represented in this choice of aspects of foodways is *seasoning*. What else, if not seasoning lets us most easily distinguish certain culinary traditions? While Hsu & Hsu do not explicitly mention *preparation methods* of any sort, Chang is especially diligent in this aspect, differentiating between *methods* & *dishes*, *food utensils* and *drink vessels*. Anderson & Anderson as well as Hsu & Hsu reserve room for the analysis of *unity* & *diversity* or *regional variations* respectively, while Chang and Anderson & Anderson also do commit further to the non-nutritional aspects of food, with the former looking at *meals*, *feasts* & *ritual use of food*, *food semantics*, and general *ideas about food*, while the latter further divide their *non-subsistence aspects of food* into *personal*, *social* and *cosmological* aspects.

As initially mentioned, despite independent terminological terms, parallels are noticeable among the three contributions. Thus, the parallels need to be brought in accordance with each other to derive at a well suitable methodological

framework. This reference will then help to identify possible unifying and/or separating aspects within the food culture(s) of East Asia. It is summarised and charted graphically in the comparative matrix given by table 2.2.1 and introduced in the following section.

Comparison of Selected Ethnographic Approaches in Chang (1977b)		
Chang (1977a)	Hsu & Hsu (1977)	Anderson & Anderson (1977)
Foodstuffs	Staples	Ingredients & Nutritional Value
- Grains		- The Ingredients
- Other Plant Foods	Animal Products & Vegetables	- Food Processing
- Animal Foods		- Drinks
- Beverages, Condiments, Seasonings	Meals & Meal Times	- Sugar, Oil, Salt
		- Nutrition & Nutritional Values
Cooking Methods, Dishes, Utensils	Dining Out	- Changes in Nutrition & Nutritional Values
- Methods & Dishes		
- Food Utensils	Tea, Wine, Spirits	Preparation & Uses of Food
- Drink Vessels		- Unity & Diversity
	Regional Variations	- Non-subsistence Aspects of Food
Meals, Feasts & Ritual Use of Food		- Personal Aspects
		- Social Aspects
Food Semantics		- Cosmological Aspects
Ideas about Food		

Table 2.1: Comparison of Selected Ethnographic Approaches in Chang (1977b)

Own illustration after Chang (1977b)

2.2.1 Comparative Matrix

As introduced in section 2 above, the discourse on food culture mainly drew from observations in the field universally applicable patterns. Drawing from their experience, this paper established its own comparative matrix (table 2.2.1) based on the analyses assembled by Chang (1977b). The matrix employed for the analysis of the food culture of the countries at hand is comprised of three main categories, each with its own sub-categories for better overview and structure.

Ingredients

While many authors on food related issues refrain from defining such basic terms as ‘ingredient’, this study looked to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary which describes **ingredients** not only as *“foods that are used together to make a particular dish”* but also as *“things or qualities that are necessary to make something successful”* (The Oxford English Dictionary 2015). It is the combination of the two ensuring the practicality of this definition for the scope of this work. On one hand, while not all ingredients in all dishes can be analysed for a humble paper like this, it looks explicitly for ingredients commonly and broadly used within and among East Asia as confined by the scope of this thesis. On the other hand, it is exactly the success of these ingredients both by taste and agricultural feasibility in the region, that allows for their usage as markers of a (possible) shared cultural food identity.

For reasons of structure and analytical feasibility, a term as broad as ‘ingredients’ needs further division. While the choice of sub-categories has been explained already, this paper again finds in the Oxford Dictionary a viable definition of **staples**, as a *“large or important part of something”* and *“basic type of food that is used a lot”* (The Oxford English Dictionary 2015). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) combines these two by stating that *“[a] staple food is one that is eaten regularly and in such quantities as to constitute the dominant part of the diet and supply a major proportion of energy and nutrient needs.”* (FAO 2015b)

Staple foods, or staples for short, are however not sufficient to meet the nutritional requirements of any given population. Thus numerous additions in the form of **plant foods** and **animal products** are necessary for vitamin and micronutrients intake. Rising income and living standard also adds to diversification in food choice, bringing more divers and non-traditional ingredients to the table. However, their choice remains and always has been a question of culturally socialised (i.e. learned) taste, with only a couple hundred out of 50.000 edible plants

Comparative Matrix					
Category	Country				
<i>Ingredients</i>	1	2	3	...	n
Staples					
Plant Foods					
Animal Products					
Seasonings & Condiments					
Beverages					
<i>In the Kitchen & At the Table</i>	1	2	3	...	n
Methods of Preparation					
Tableware					
Meals & Menus					
Table Rules, Manners & Rituals					
<i>Ideas about Food</i>	1	2	3	...	n
Religious Beliefs & Superstition					
Health					

Table 2.2: Comparative Matrix

Own illustration

contributing in a significant way to the world's food supplies. (FAO 2015b) Same is true for animal products, their usage being limited by various sorts of social constraint (religious, ethical, taste, etc.) (Mennell et al. 1992)

Beginning from time immemorial, humans have used large amounts of resources, sacrifice and effort to spice up their meals in daily life and for festive occasions. Naval and land expeditions have set out to guarantee access to and wars have been fought to establish commercial rights over **seasonings & condiments**. With no other category of ingredients, natural vegetational constraints have been overcome as thoroughly through trade and agricultural engineering as with the spices we add to our food. (Sherman & Billing 1999) The *capsicum* genus, commonly known as peppers, once was native only to the Americas, where it has long been cultivated for culinary purposes. Only after the Spanish and Portuguese introduced them in Europe and their Asian colonies, they became vital in numerous local cuisines, including many in South East and East Asia. (Nunn & Qian 2010)

In his foreword to *Social and Cultural Aspects of Drinking* (SIRC 1998) Morris sets drinking on top of all human activities, second only to breathing itself. From this vital role of the intake of **beverages**, he further concludes their social and ritual significance. While the first drinking rituals had to content themselves with a basic choice of water, milk, plant-juices, and blood, the earliest civilisations added “a form of shared, chemical day-dreaming that provided vital opportunities for social bonding” (Morris 1998, 2) through the introduction of alcoholic beverages, like wines and beers. *Social drinking* has ever since been a core ingredient in human social gatherings of all sorts. Where local custom prohibited the intake of alcoholic or otherwise intoxicating beverages, various other liquids took over their central role. Or as a member of the Islamic Moroccan Berber once pointed out to the author: “You [Europeans] have your Whisky, we have our Mint Tea”, referring to the central beverage of most social life in the Maghreb region of Northern Africa. With two (tea and sugar) out of the three main ingredients (the third being mint) traditionally imported, this drink is also an early example of globalisation and the social construction of food (and drink) culture beyond locally available produce.

In the Kitchen & At the Table

Our food culture is not only created by *what* we eat, but also by *how* we eat it. Pasta and rice are popular dishes in Italy and yet, the preparation, the plates and cutlery used at the tables as well as the succession of dishes in a meal is very different to a Korean or Taiwanese dinner table. Thus, the second set of

criteria is concerned with what happens to the ingredients described above when prepared **in the kitchen** and served **at the table**.

From the two basic forms of food preparation, boiling in water and grilling on a fire, mankind came a long way and has developed various different **methods of preparation**. But even the initial two already mirrored a cultural decision. The decision to and how to produce and use utensils. And while environmental factors might have had an important role in their initial development, their spreading might be equally promoted by cultural imitation.

What is said about methods of preparation (and the utensils used in doing so), certainly is also true for **tableware**. While it is necessary to find a container for liquid foods and drinks, the shape, style and materials can alter with taste and fashion.

Douglas has defined food as a code. An underlying code below our **meals & menus**, which, once exposed, is more telling than the mere taste and smell of the dishes we consume.

The last subsection, concerned with **table rules, manners & rituals**, is an intermediate step between the table and the general ideas related to food. Certain rules might have been developed in response to necessities of the local diet. Others do reflect the general belief system, be it religious, philosophical or otherwise oriented. The latter will be discussed separately, although their transition is seamless.

Ideas about Food

This last set of criteria is an important addition to the study of any given food culture, that has already looked at what is eaten and how it is eaten. Any conviction, more or less firm, religious or otherwise rooted, is working within the *black box* that creates a cultural *artefact*. A society's food culture is no exception. Food and drink prohibitions, based in **religious beliefs & superstition** are the most prominent influences on nutritional choices in this regard. Other influences might be more subtle, to the point where they become so naturalised, their origin is rarely recognised. Ideas about **health** and the human body are likewise strong in shaping our food choices.

In this trinity of observable categories everything can be interrelated. The ingredients originally found in the region might have influenced the meal time succession of dishes. Religious beliefs can have created food taboos or, vice versa, are the result of shortages and social concerns. Table rules and manners

are acknowledging local superstition, while the real and ascribed health benefits or disadvantages control the use of certain spices. While the exact derivation of origins and interrelations between these factors is neither the desired output of this study nor feasible within its scope, the comparison of their shape and form is. As such, this paper tries to close the gap between the numerous forms of research concerned with the origin, influence and characteristics of one certain aspect and the multifaceted reality that is constituted by the hidden workings of a given food culture.

Chapter 3

Enquiring Regionality

This chapter below puts the framework defined in section 2.2 into practical use. The countries under study are discussed in relation to the focus points that represent the single entity of a food culture as defined in table 2.2.1.

3.1 Ingredients

Ingredients are the single components that are combined to make a dish. In the success of their combination lies the significance for this study. Historically, the region has been especially adventurous and waste avoidant in its use of plant and animal parts for nutritional intake. A leisurely stroll on any of the region's colourful markets will support this statement. To scope with the abundance and richness of the food supply, selected ingredients will be presented that are reflective of the whole region. The basis of every diet is formed by a staple. Usually in the form of grains, the staple constitutes the prevailing share of food intake. Traditionally, this is what tackled people's hunger, the other foods being a welcomed if at times luxurious addition. As such, this section will start by looking at the two main staples of East Asia, before continuing with an analysis of the plant and animal derived sides, the guiding seasoning principle, and the beverages accompanying the meals.

3.1.1 Staples

Among all ingredients in East Asian cuisine, rice as a staple to “[r]oughly one-half of the world population [...]” (Encyclopedia Britannica 2015) ranks among the most prominent in public discourse. But it is often overseen that East Asia is also a noodle region. From breakfast to dinner, and from quick lunch snack to festive family reunion, noodles are as ubiquitous as is rice. As such, this section will look at both, rice and noodles, their historic development and modern variants, to explore similarities and differences across East Asia.

Rice

Discussing food and nutrition in East Asia, one plant product immediately comes to mind: Rice. According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2015) “*virtually all of East and South East Asia is wholly dependent upon rice as a staple food*”, with China and India accounting for approximately 50% of the world’s milled rice consumption (and production). According to the same source, out of the world’s total rice production, only 10% are accounted for by countries outside of Asia. (Muthayya, Sugimoto, Montgomery, & Maberly 2014, 7-8) Map 3.1 clearly shows the East and South East Asian domination in world rice production, which is also further echoed in the region’s consumption numbers. With demand for rice expected to rise about 70% over the next 30 years in Asia, daily per capita consumption will also remain by far highest in East Asia. Countries like Vietnam see intakes of more than 110 kg per person annually (more than 300 g daily), as compared to 45 kg in Latin America and 70 kg in the Caribbean respectively, both regions with culturally high rice consumption rates. (Muthayya et al. 2014, 8,10-11)

Rice is a powerful crop. Weather and irrigation needs provided, rice crops can “*produce more food energy and protein supply per hectare than wheat and maize.*” (Chang 2000, 132) Thus, enabling the nutritional life support of larger populations than any other grain. Several varieties exist, with *sinica* and *japonica* types, as the names imply, dominating Northern East Asia. In Vietnam and parts of Southern China, a “hasty” branch of *indica* rice, first cultivated by the Champa in present day Southern Vietnam, produces two to three harvests a year. (Wang 2015)

Archaeological evidence has proven early rice cultivation amongst civilisations of South, South East and East Asia, with the earliest dating back 7000 to

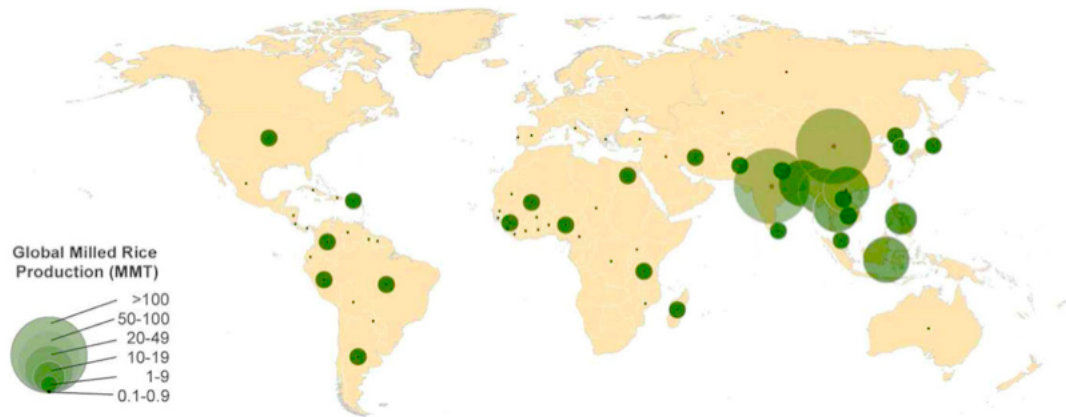


Figure 3.1: Map of Global Rice Production

in Million Metric Tons (MMT); from: Muthayya et al. (2014, 9)

5000 BCE in what is current day China. Within the 145 million hectares of rice paddies and up to 715 million tons of annual paddy rice production worldwide, China, Japan, Vietnam and South Korea are leading, or at least ranking among, the top rice producers worldwide, adding an economical aspect to the nutritional importance. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2015; Muthayya et al. 2014)

According to the Statistics Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOSTAT) in 2013, rice was by far the biggest commodity in Asia according to Net Production Value. Of an Asian total Net Production Value of Intl. \$¹ 171,7 billion, Intl. \$ 66,8 billion are produced among the countries subject to this paper, with the vast majority of Intl. \$ 50,2 billion provided by mainland China (Intl. \$ 50,6 billion including Taiwan). Despite only the Chinese rice production has been surpassed in tonnage by maize, Net Production Value of maize remains low at less than one fifth of rice's value measured in Intl. \$. With an indigenous meat production rising annually, much of this maize goes into stock feed however. For the other four countries rice remains the number one commodity both by quantity and Net Production Value. (FAOSTAT 2015b;c)

While the international trade with rice has increased by a factor of three since the 1970s, the high demand and consumption rates within Asia ensure for a majority of production being consumed domestically and regionally. At the same time, rice remains crucial to local food security, thus being subject to strict protective measures by Asian governments, the foreign trade, both import and export, are controlled by state trading authorities in China, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam. Japan and South Korea gave up their ban on rice imports

¹constant 2004 to 2006 International Dollar

not earlier than the 1990s. The Japanese consumers further remain particularly ‘nationalist’ in their consumption, bearing prices 10 or more times higher for domestically produced *japonica* rice as compared to foreign produce. (Muthayya et al. 2014)

For obvious geographical reasons, rice production was historically and is still today facilitated by climate and irrigation in Southern China, Taiwan and Vietnam. Three harvests a year are possible, while Northern Chinese, Korean and Japanese farmers bring in one harvest. Thus, rice throughout history remained a more luxurious staple for commoners in these areas, relying on additional staple crops for nutritional survival. Grains like millet, sorghum and wheat in the form of porridge and flour for noodles and dumplings were important additions to feed the populations. (Chang 1977b; Cotterell 1987; Wang 2015) For China it is argued, rice reached its present day significance by as early as the Ming Dynasty. (Anderson 1988) Two factors allowed for this development: New varieties of the crop had been introduced to Northern China in earlier days and slowly gained paddy-ground. In addition, the Grand Canal facilitated the inflow of Southern Chinese rice to the new capital Beijing and surrounding areas. In Japan on the other hand, rice was diluted with beans and other ingredients well into 19th century. The longing for the white grains is supposed to be why they bear such a prominent cultural position until today. Ordinary Koreans also remained on a diet organised around bowls of other grain staples for much of their history, resulting in the survival of the spatula shaped spoon on Korean dinner tables, which will be further discussed in section 3.2.2. (Wang 2015)

The cultural importance of rice is further passed down in language. Cooked grain food has been and continues to be the main staple of many, if not to say most human societies. The Chinese character *fan* initially was used as a rubric word to describe all cooked grains. Over the millennia and representing the position cooked rice takes in East Asian food culture, this term has become synonymous to cooked rice. Same is true for the character’s respective readings in the Korean (*bap*), Japanese (*[go]han*) and Vietnamese (*com*) languages. This outstanding role in the culinary traditions of the region is further transmitted in the Chinese and Japanese for ‘eating’ or ‘eating a meal’. The Chinese *chi fan* literally would translate as ‘eating rice’, as does the Japanese *gohan o taberu*. In Vietnam, a number of proverbs highlight the importance of rice, i.e. “if you have rice, you have all. You are short of rice, short of all.” (as cited in Wang (2015, 70)) The significance of rice for East Asia might easily be put on par with the role of bread

in Western monotheistic societies². As such it is not surprising that rice has and is playing an important role as festive and ritual food as well. More on the religious and ritual use of food will be analysed in section 3.3.1

The dominant role of rice cannot be argued with in an East Asian context. The white grains are ubiquitous not only in their cooked form but also as a cultural symbol. The latter of which also remains, while those able to afford it, reduce the actual amount of rice in exchange for meats and vegetables. For the scope of this analysis, rice clearly is a unifying element in the East Asian food culture. However, it is not the only staple home to the region.

Noodles

“Anyone who has spent time in East Asia knows that the region is awash with noodley dishes.” (Kushner 2012, 27)

While it can be argued that noodles themselves are a product of culinary culture, a preparation made from flour and other ingredients, it has to be seen as a staple food in its own rights. As the quote above and the discussion below shows, noodles are an ubiquitous part of East Asia’s daily diet. Traditionally they filled up the stomach, like rice did, while other (side) dishes were meant to entertain the palate, at least of those who were able to afford such a luxury. With growing wealth, noodles, fried or in soup, today have become a sought after dish in itself, seeing chefs going lengths to refine the acquired tastes.

Looking into East Asia’s historic noodle bowls, again China takes on the role of ‘food taster’, if only for geographic reasons. It is believed that milling technology travelled east from present day Turkey to make its first appearance in modern Anhui, Qinghai and Yunan provinces around 3000 BCE. Grinding seeds in a mill was and is the prerequisite to making dough from the flour of various plants. When the technology first appeared in China, the foodstuffs produced resembled primitive flat-breads (Chinese *bing*) fried from a mixture of flour and water. The product (and term) survived in Central Asia, as it did in many other parts of the world. In Northern China, filled with meats or vegetables, *bing* is a common breakfast item until today. (Kushner 2012)

While the skills of milling, mixing, raising and baking flour-dough were advanced i.e. in Central Europe towards the omnipresent bread ever since, Chinese

²An interesting overview to the role of bread in the three large monotheistic religions is provided by Arnow, Boys, & Shafiq (2013)

ancestors discovered the possibility to also boil it in broth. From there *bing* slowly developed thinner and longer in shape, transforming into the myriad of noodle shapes East Asian chefs know of today. (Kushner 2012; Wang 2015)

In spite of the active exchange within the region, milling technology seems not to have appeared in Korea and Japan before the fourth or fifth century CE. But when it did, noodle dishes followed instantly. While early Chinese texts still speak of a Japan outside of China's political and cultural sphere, they nonetheless mention a Japanese liking to *huntunjiao*, (Kushner 2012) today internationally better known from their Cantonese pronunciation as *wanton* or *wonton*. Nowadays more frequently translated as (Chinese) *dumpling*, they consist of a noodley skin filled with vegetables and meat.

It is worth allowing a culinary excursus here, since not only noodles but also certain forms of what we now translate as *dumplings* are commonly known and indulged in throughout East Asia. In contrast to the above mentioned *huntun*, the Chinese *jiaozi*, Korean *mandu* and Japanese *gyoza* all have a somewhat thicker, round skin. They are served either boiled, steamed or fried. While the Chinese characters for *jiaozi* are still commonly used in Japanese Kanji, the Korean name is an adoption from the Chinese *mantou*. In China, the latter term nowadays refers to unstuffed steamed buns made from a yeast-raised wheat flour dough. When filled with meats and vegetables, *mantou* becomes *baozi*, another popular (breakfast) snack throughout China. And, while *jiaozi* are less common in glutinous rice oriented Vietnam, the *baozi*-like *bánh bao* is widely available.

Another shared and close relative of the original *bing* in China, Vietnam and other parts of South East Asia is *youtiao* (Vietnamese *quay*), sometimes translated as Chinese cruller. Long strips of dough are fried in oil and eaten with noodle soup, soy milk or as a sandwich for breakfast or as a snack.

The close relationship between flour and noodles as well as the shared noodle history and noodle culture of East Asia is also reflected in the respective languages. The Chinese character and pronunciation *mian* can mean both flour and noodle. From China it made its way into Korean *myeon* and Vietnamese *mien* or *mi*. Despite different pronunciation, the same character is still a commonly used Kanji in Japan, describing either noodles or dough.

Today, in Japan three main types of noodles are commonly distinct: the thinner, usually made from buckwheat *soba*; the thick wheat *udon*; and the heartier, more springy *ramen*. While the latter is widely acknowledged as Chinese import, the former two are often entitled traditionally Japanese (despite their earlier Chi-

nese origin). (Kushner 2012) All three are served hot in broth, while soba often also appear cold with extra dipping sauce. The fried *yakisoba* resembles Chinese style fried noodles with meat, tofu or vegetables. Despite the name, wheat-flour noodles are mostly used. Cold noodle dishes are also common in China (*leng mian* or *liang mian*) and Korea (*naengmyeon* or *raengmyeon*) as a refreshing dish in summer. (Maangchi 2016b; Xiachufang 2016)

The East Asian love for noodles of all kinds also reflects in consumption numbers for instant noodles. Instant noodle products are omnipresent throughout Asia and are growing increasingly popular in other regions as well. But this time, the product is a Japanese export rather than a cultural import from China. In 1958, following extensive private development and testing, Ando Momofuku came up with the world’s first instant noodles, “Chikin Ramen” (Chicken Ramen). Inspired by Japanese *tempura* deep-frying, the new method provided a basic dish ready to be eaten in minutes. (WINA 2016) While traditional methods of preserving noodles, like the drying familiar from Italian supermarket-shelf pasta, require proper cooking in a pot on a stove, Ando’s instant noodles just need to be soaked in hot water. Flavouring agents are already part of the package, thus producing an instant noodle soup meal in only a few minutes. Over the years, much variety and diversity was added to meet local taste preferences. (WINA 2016)

The product not only met local taste preferences, but also met the demand of industrialising Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. In 1971, the iconic “*CUP NOODLES*” brand was launched, for the first time combining the instant noodles, flavouring and freeze-dried condiments in a disposable cup. In 2005, two years before Ando’s death, Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi enjoyed an adapted version in zero gravity aboard the Discovery space shuttle. (Leibowitz 2011; Raskin 2009; WINA 2016)

From the space shuttle it is only a small step to the soup bowls of millions, if not billions of people: In 2014, the World Instant Noodle Association (WINA), an industrial association of instant noodle producers, estimated a global consumption of 102,7 billion servings annually. China is leading the statistics with an annual 42 billion servings. (WINA 2014) Comparing the WINA country statistics with population numbers however, South Koreans are leading the field with 72,8 annual servings per capita. (WINA 2014) This number becomes even more

impressive when compared regionally. According to this author's calculations³, South Koreans thus consume almost double the annual servings their Chinese neighbours (32,5) do. Vietnamese would come in a distant second place, with 55,1 servings still ahead of Japan (43,3). Among the countries under study here, Taiwanese consume the least (30,3). But even the Taiwanese numbers confirm an East Asian joint liking of the product when compared to the USA (13,4) and Brazil (11,5), the only two non-Asian (despite a sizeable Asian population) countries among the Top 10 gross consumers.⁴

Because of the climatic conditions that facilitated the production of rice, noodles made from rice flour traditionally are more common to Southern China, Taiwan and Vietnam than to the grain-dependant North. *Pho*, generally translated as rice vermicelli, a noodle soup served with different toppings, might pass as the single best known Vietnamese dish outside of Vietnam. (Wang 2015) Its proximity to various types of Chinese *mian* and the described Japanese and Korean varieties of noodle soup dishes cannot be argued with. Similar in texture and taste, the semi-translucent *glass noodles* are found throughout the region. They are produced from various starches, depending on the local conditions, and thus are a very good example of the joint culinary culture of East Asia. Adapting to local climatic conditions, different plant starches are used as starting product to ultimately achieve the same end product. Similar to other types of noodles mentioned above, they are used throughout the region in stir fries and soups. In Korea, *japchae* combines sweet potato starch noodles with vegetables and beef in a popular stir fry dish. Chinese mung bean starch noodles also form the basis for *mayi shang shu* (literally ants on a tree), as do Japanese *harusame* in soups and fried dishes. (Carter 2003; Han 2010; Laoding 2016; Maangchi 2016a; Mika 2014)

In addition to the importance as everyday fill-up, noodles might even have played an important role in promoting and distributing the use of chopsticks throughout East Asia and beyond. In countries of South East Asia, noodle soups of Chinese origin sometimes are the only food eaten with the help of chopsticks. And even in the 'fork and knife' Europe, diners today seize a pair of disposable chopsticks when snacking at a fried noodle stall. (Wang 2015) More on the *chopsticks region* and the use of other tableware is discussed in section 3.2.2.

³For reasons of comparison, the absolute numbers presented by WINA have been divided by the actual population numbers for 2014. Population numbers have been obtained from The World Bank (2015), with the exception of Taiwan (Trading Economics 2015).

⁴The other Asian countries being Indonesia (2nd), India (4th), Thailand (8th) and the Philippines (9th).

It has been shown that rice and noodles are the undisputed staple foods of all of East Asia. Despite the existence of certain local variations, they nonetheless form the common nutritional base of the region's diet. *Eating rice* (and noodles) might be the region's synonym for a meal, but the two staples are not enough to draw a comprehensive picture of East Asia's food culture. Thus, the following section will be concerned with plant and animal additions to the East Asian (rice) bowl.

3.1.2 Plant Foods

The list of edible plants is sheer endless. However, only a few hundred contribute in a significant way to the world's food supplies. (FAO 2015b) A few hundred are still too much for any academic research to cover. Rather, a statistical overview and evidence from other research will show a joint preference. The majority of this section will then be given to two equally important plant additions to the East Asian diet.

Overview

According to a market analysis given at the International Tradeshow for Horticultural and Floricultural Production and Processing Technology (Horti ASIA 2015), the Asia Pacific region in volume “*accounts for 75% of the global vegetables and 66% of global fruits*” (Kocheri 2015, 6). Together, fresh vegetables and fruits account for more than two thirds of fresh food sales by volume in 2014 (Kocheri 2015, 9). All five of the countries under study in this paper are found among the top ten regional vegetable and fruit markets, with China alone consuming 59% of all vegetables and 55% of all fruits in the region. (Kocheri 2015, 7,8) Despite the huge population size, the Chinese market data remains remarkable. India, second in both statistics and comparable in population size, accounts for less than half the volume China does. Chinese vegetable and fruit consumption per capita thus ranges among the highest in world. Vietnamese vegetable consumption is also recorded above world average. In South Korea, both because of traditional meat preference and financial feasibility, vegetable consumption numbers are only slightly above Western European numbers. Japanese consumers are well in between, matching world average. (Kocheri 2015)

In line with the statistical data shown above, Newman (2004) in her study on Chinese food culture describes the country as eating more varieties and quantities

of vegetables than most others. Especially popular, in her view, are scallions, leaf greens and various sorts of peas and beans. For Japan, Ashkenazi & Jacob (2003) identify the *brassica* family as home to the prevailing vegetables used, including cabbages, radishes and turnips. Given the omnipresence of kimchi, the same might be true for Korea. In addition, lettuce, cabbage and spinach are typically used in *namul*, seasoned vegetable dishes. The former two are also inherent in the practice of wrapping pieces of grilled meat and *gochujang* sauce in leafy greens at dinner tables. (Carter 2003) Leaf greens are also very popular in Vietnam, eg. among the “9 most popular vegetables in Vietnam” listed by Vietnam Online (2015), five are leaf greens. While the website does not reveal the source of their findings, anyone travelling in the country will be able to confirm the ubiquitous presence of green leaves.

More of an acquired taste, and crucial in the achievement of *umami* taste, at least before the advent of industrially produced MSG (monosodium glutamate), various forms of seaweed also play an important role in East Asian cooking. Knowledge of the cultivation and harvest of different sorts of seaweed have a long history in the coastal areas of all countries under study here. Easily dried for preservation, they were also traded into inland areas. Kelp (*kombu*) is a staple ingredient in the basic Japanese *dashi* broth (see 3.1.4. Laver (*nori*) in its dried form is rolled around Japanese *maki* and Korean *gimbap* (see 3.2.3) or used as soup vegetable throughout the region. Other edible forms of brown seaweed, sea lettuce and agar are served in salads, stews and even sweets. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003; Carter 2003; Cotterell 1987; Newman 2004; Vietnamese Food 2012)

While the amounts of consumed vegetables vary throughout the region, a joint liking of leaf greens can be read from the quoted studies. Seaweeds, while a rather new addition to almost all non-Asian culinary traditions, has an uncontested position throughout the region. Soy, the vegetable discussed next, plays an even more crucial role in the achievement of an East Asian food culture.

Soy

The “king of beans” (WWF 2016) is consumed globally on an unprecedented scale today. Containing twelve times more protein than milk, most consumers are unaware of its intake. Instead the majority of global production is used as soy bean meal in animal feed. Thus, by consuming meat and eggs everybody is contributing indirectly to the global demand for this legume.

The use of soy as animal feed can be traced back to as early as the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BCE - 256 BCE) in Ancient China. Huang (2008) supports this early use of the bean with lines from the *Shijing*, a collection of folk and ceremonial songs that is regarded one of the Five Classics of Confucianism. But in addition to the use in animal mast, the Chinese also used it for more direct consumption as early as the aforementioned Zhou Dynasty: First, it was cooked as a grain or made into *congee* (porridge). Later, through fermentation processes a preserved soy relish called *shi* and a fermented soy paste (*jiang*) was introduced. (Huang 2008) This paste ultimately formed the basis for soy sauce, a fact which is mirrored by the Chinese character *jiang* for soy sauce, which, together with the sauce, also found its way into the Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese language.

Later approaches of using soy beans for culinary purposes included the sprouting of the bean in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and the grinding of the beans with water to produce soy milk. The latter development formed the basis for bean curd or *doufu*, otherwise known as *tofu* from its Japanese pronunciation⁵. By as early as the Tang Dynasty (618-907), bean curd was already a widely available commercial product in China. (Huang 2008; Tan 2008) From here it also found its way into the kitchens of Japan, Korea and Vietnam. These four countries are thus summarised as “*the core tofu culture area*” (Tan 2008, 115).

Building upon this long standing history, Tan (2008) identifies three main products of soy origin significant to the foodways of present day China: *doufu*, *doujiang* or soy milk, and *douhua* or soy bean custard. Through the path of history, numerous variants of *doufu* have been developed and enjoy great popularity, also with a growing number of eaters outside of East Asia. These variants include (but are not limited to): *doufu pi* (tofu skin), *zhizhu* (tofu sticks), *dong doufu* (frozen tofu), and *dougan* (dried tofu). The latter itself is again used to make smoked (*xun doufu*) or spiced (*wuxiang doufu*) variants as well as the infamous fermented *chou doufu*, commonly translated as smelly or even stinky tofu through to its distinct fragrance.

Within China, this variety of *doufu* has become part of the everyday diet and “*an inseparable part of Chinese foodways*” (Tan 2008, 109) on a level with pork and chicken. A certain degree of local likes and dislikes in preparation methods and spicing can not be denied. However, as the popularity of dishes such as *mapo doufu* and Chinese Hotpot show, *doufu* remains a well enjoyed ingredient among

⁵The two terms *tofu* and *bean curd* are both used to refer to the general product in this study, whereas local terms as the Chinese *doufu* or the Korean *dubu* are used in their specific country context.

all regions of China and Chinese overseas diaspora. The dishes itself can thus be found on menus throughout, allowing for local variations in degrees of spiciness and other taste factors. The same is true for soy milk and soy bean custards, which, each in its local variation can be found throughout China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau in traditional wet markets and supermarkets alike. (Mao 2008; Tan 2008)

In Vietnam, historical accounts of the merits of *dau phu* can be traced back to the 18th century, praising its nourishing and detoxicating effects. Buddhist monks, either originating from China or on return from a pilgrimage to China, are thought to have brought soy beans to Vietnam by as early as the year 1000 CE. Alternatively, they might have found their way to Vietnam by means of the royal tributary missions to the Chinese court. (Nguyen 2008) Whatever way it took, soy soon became popular in Vietnam and remained so ever since. Today, tofu can be found in both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, as well as soups, and in both elaborate as well as everyday recipes (for a full list of example dishes see Nguyen (2008, 190-92)).

Apart from soy milk and tofu, soy beans play an important role in the production of various other foodstuffs and condiments. Maybe the single best known condiment outside of East Asia and most frequently used within is *soy sauce*. The numerous variants of this sauce and the *umami* taste they create are further discussed below in section 3.1.4.

In Korea, “*soy beans [also] constitute a fundamental component of the [...] diet.*” (Cwiertka & Moriya 2008, 164). The legume even makes an appearance in North Korea’s *Arirang* Mass Games. (Frank 2014) Soy beans whole or mashed, smoked or finely ground as well as soy bean sprouts can be found in all sorts of dishes, from cold starters to desserts. A wide array of different *dubu* products, similar in structure and production technique to the Chinese choice described above, is used in frying, braising, simmering or as a filling for dumplings (*mandu*). Above all *chang* (fermented soy foods) are an essential component of the Korean cuisine. (Cwiertka & Moriya 2008) Their importance is further evaluated in the section on seasoning and condiments (3.1.4).

In 2014, the United States and Brazil were the world’s largest producer of soy beans with an annual production of 108 m and 90 m metric tons respectively. (FAOSTAT 2015d) However, the versatile bean largely goes into export to countries including China, Japan and Taiwan or is processed into cooking oil and livestock feed. With a share of 9,6%, Asia is also the second largest region ac-

cording to production after the Americas. China, in 2014, produced 12,2 m tons, Japan 232.000 t, Vietnam 168.000 t, South Korea 139.000 t, and Taiwan 1.173 t. (FAOSTAT 2015d) At the same time all of these countries (except China) also import between 1 m and 2,76 m tons of soy beans.

China, with 63 m tons (FAOSTAT 2015d), today is the largest importer of soy beans worldwide. While some of these imports (and the domestic production) go into the production of soy related foods as described here and in later sections, a major share ultimately feeds the country's ever growing meat production, which in 2013 accounted to 83 m tons. (FAOSTAT 2015a)

Among the countries under analysis here, Japan still has the largest percentage of daily soy protein intake. According to FAO data, in 2002, 9,5% of all protein intake was accounted for by soy protein. Surprisingly, despite four decades of steady rise in (animal) protein intake, the daily per capita soy consumption between 1961 and 2002 remained almost constant. (Messina, Nagata, & Wu 2006, 3) This shows that despite the growing popularity and availability of alternatives, soy products defended their traditional place in the Japanese diet.

While soy beans are used for eating, their true value lies in their use as raw material to variegated contributions to the East Asian menu. Tofu is both uniquely East Asian in its origin, as it is in its consumption. With other world regions only recently adopting a taste for bean curd. This study will revisit soy beans when discussing the East Asian *umami* taste preference (section 3.1.4) and the bean's equally valuable contribution thereunto.

Pickles

Comparable to noodles, as described above, *pickles* are not per se an ingredient. Numerous plant and in some cases also animal food products are cured, fermented and pickled for durability and taste. In East Asia, however, they form such an ubiquitous part of daily meals, that they are discussed as an independent ingredient here. As will be shown below, the question of what actually is used as a starting product for turning into pickles is not as important as is the general prevalence of pickled foods in the region.

Koreans on both side of the 38th parallel take a lot of national pride in their kimchi⁶ (*gimchi*), even advertised as “*Korea's greatest food*” by the Korea Tourism

⁶The word kimchi was introduced into the English language from the McCune-Reischauer transcription of Korean. *Gimchi* is the Revised Romanization equivalent.

Organization (KTO 2015). The process, called *gimjang* in Korean, of preserving vegetables through lactic acid fermentation and seasoning it with fermented seafoods and red pepper powder has been listed an intangible cultural heritage of humanity. In 2013, the method has been praised as “*reaffirm[ing] Korean identity*” and “*strengthening family cooperation*” by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (UNESCO 2013). However, while the choice of spices might be particular, preserving vegetables by means of pickling and fermentation is common throughout East Asia and the world.

In Korea, pickling *gimchi* dates back to the 7th century CE. At that time it must have looked quite different however, since red chilli peppers, giving the vegetable its distinctive colour and spicy taste, were unheard of in Asia before the post-Columbian introduction of native American plants. It was not until the 16th to 18th century that hot pepper powder became the signature spice in kimchi production. Similar to other pickled foods, it is said to be rich in vitamins and beneficial to one’s digestion. Local variations exist in degrees of saltiness and spiciness, as do alternative choices of vegetable. Lee, Park, & Kim (1999) identify nine kimchi regions within the whole of the Korean peninsula, each characterised by the dominance of one of the main ingredients over the other. The most common form throughout Korea nonetheless is made from whole Chinese (Napa) cabbages, *baechu* in Korean⁷. Other vegetables used include diced radish (*kkakdugi*), and cucumbers (*oi sobagi*). (KTO 2015; Lee & Lee 1993; Yoon 2005)

Despite the strong national sentiment that is associated with kimchi in Korea, brine fermentation in what is present day China might again predate its use on the peninsula. (Newman 2003) Whoever came first, pickles are as common a garnish at Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese and Vietnamese meals as they are at Korean. Served with a bowl of rice or congee (porridge), they might even account for a simple, yet complete meal. (Chou 2003) These basic meals are a close reminder to the origin of East Asian food culture, assembling a number of tasty side dishes around a filling bowl of staple grain. The number, quality and quantity of side dishes served, continues to be dependent on the economic situation and occasion of the meal. Section 3.2.3 will further deal with the ‘rice, soup and side dish’ setting of East Asian meals.

In Northern Vietnam, pickling mustard greens (*dua muoi*) and eggplants (*ca muoi*) with the help of lactic acidic bacteria is common year round, while the Chinese cabbage version (*dua chua bap cai*) is traditionally prepared to stock for winter. (Nguyen, Van Hoorde, Cnockaert, De Brandt, Aerts, Binh Thanh, &

⁷(*da*)*baicai* in Chinese, *hakusai* in Japanese, and *cai thao* in Vietnamese

Vandamme 2013) In Japan, famous fermented aliments include the distinct *natto* soy beans and the *Calpis* brand soft drink. Fermentation of soy beans also has a long tradition throughout East Asia, as was discussed earlier. In addition, it plays an important role in producing the region’s signature seasoning and other condiments (see 3.1.4).

‘Pickling’ foods is not limited to lactic acid fermentation. In fact, the English language associates the term ‘pickle’ more with a vinegar or salt marinade than with actual fermentation. (The Oxford English Dictionary 2016) While East Asia knows of a large variety of lactic acid fermented foods, marinated pickles are also readily available. The Chinese language for example differentiates between the aforementioned *yancai* (fermented), *jiangcai* (marinated in soy sauce) and *xiancai* (salted) vegetable preserves. (Silbert 2013) In Japan, *tsukemono* pickles are ubiquitous, served as condiment to a meal or savoury snack with an alcoholic drink. Most widely known outside of East Asia is *gari*, the pickled and coloured ginger usually accompanying sushi. Made from *daikon* radish, the peculiar yellow *takuan* is another variety from Japan, which also enjoys widespread popularity in South Korea, where it is called *danmuji*. (Chou 2003)

Pickles of one sort or the other are ubiquitous in East Asia. The vegetables used in their production might differ slightly from country to country. Seasoning and flavours might differ even more throughout the region, but a meal can hardly be considered a meal without at least one sort of pickle being part of the arrangements.

This section has shown, that in the plant food sphere a strong degree of conformity exists. While this by no means is intended to deny local taste preferences or the vegetal circumstances of a region as vast and diverse as East Asia, it does nonetheless speak for large degree of regionality.

3.1.3 Animal Products

The above section has analysed East Asia’s shared soy protein intake as well as other plant contributions to the dinner tables. While for certain countries the vegetable intake is significant, animal protein in the form of fish, meats and eggs is an important addition. Traditionally their consumption was limited by economic and religious constraints. Both of which play a much smaller role today.

Meats & Fish

It is said, that with growing income levels, consumption of animal products is rising in East Asia. In 2013, China's meat production was the world's largest with 83 m tons of total meat. This number becomes even more telling in comparison to the United States' 42 m tons. A distant second place. (FAOSTAT 2015a) However, consumption patterns across the region vary. And income appears to play a smaller role than anticipated.

Numbers from a Euromonitor International report compare per capita meat, fish, and seafood consumption in 2014 throughout the region. The results see both Taiwan and South Korea on top in terms of animal protein intake with more than 100 kg per capita. In all of Asia Pacific⁸ this is only surpassed by Malaysia and Hong Kong. The latter with an astonishing 144 kg being the world's largest per capita consumer in terms of volume. (Friend 2015)

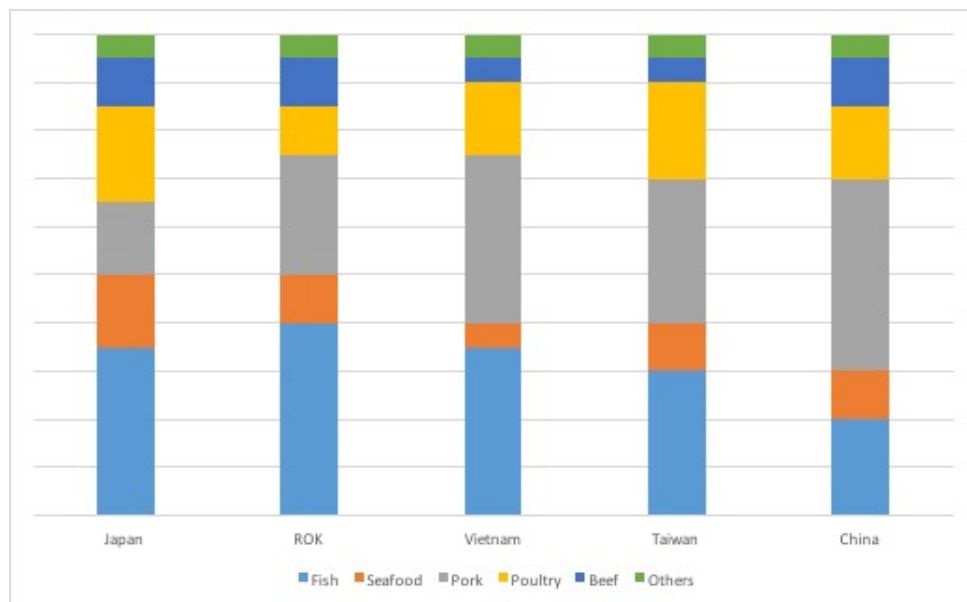
As mentioned above, rising income does have an effect on the intake of animal protein through meat, fish or seafood by means of increased purchasing power and thus access to the produce. While this affects consumption patterns and habits in a society, approaching income levels across countries are not automatically reflected in likewise consumption patterns. It can be argued that South Korea, Japan and Taiwan share a comparable per capita GDP based on purchasing-power-parity between Intl. \$37.000 and 46.000 (IMF 2014) only the animal protein consumption of South Korea and Taiwan holds comparable. Japan on the other hand sees an annual intake of just about 60 kg, close to Vietnam's, and far lower than the other countries discussed here. (Friend 2015) In comparison, the Japanese economy boasts 6,5 times the Vietnamese income level. (IMF 2014) In China meanwhile, a combined meat, fish and seafood consumption of almost 80 kg per capita *"is in line with that of Germany and Denmark"* (Friend 2015) despite a much lower income level.

It has been shown that in overall numbers, the animal protein consumption in the region gives little evidence towards a shared culinary culture. Looking now at the source of animal protein, i.e. the type of meat, fish or seafood consumed does not change this at first. Figure 3.2 is an approximation of the figures shown in Friend's report.

⁸Asia Pacific as defined in this Euromonitor International study includes 12 countries from South, South East and East Asia. (Friend 2015)

As the chart shows, Chinese cover around 40% of their animal protein intake with pork, Vietnamese 35%, Taiwanese 30%, South Koreans 25%, and Japanese only 15%. A similar, but much less diverse picture is given by the countries' fish consumption: South Koreans tend to get almost 40% of their animal protein from fish, followed by Japanese and Vietnamese with about 35%, Taiwanese with a little over 30%, and Chinese with just about 20%, despite of the ceremonial role fish takes in festive family gatherings and other social food events (section 3.3). An easy and direct answer would be the large part of the Chinese population that lives and traditionally has lived further away from the sea and other large bodies of water.

Figure 3.2: Per Capita Meat, Fish, and Seafood Consumption by Type in 2014



Approximate share of total consumption by type of animal protein. Adapted from Friend (2015).

A very interesting picture develops when the sources of animal protein are not divided by type of animal, but rather are combined by the realm they are living in. In other words, adding up the numbers for aquatic types of animals (here fish and seafood) as well as their onshore counterparts (pork, poultry and beef). In direct comparison between Japan and South Korea it appears that Japanese consumers make up in seafood what they fall short in fish consumption. Likewise Taiwanese consumers add in poultry (20%) what they leave out in pork (30%) vis-a-vis their Vietnamese neighbours. From this perspective, China remains a terrestrially dominated food culture (70% including other meats). If we assume, that the majority of 'other' meats (including lamb, mutton and goat) are from land animals as well, Taiwan and Vietnam also tilt towards field and barn meats.

South Koreans and Japanese on the other hand enjoy an equal share of marine and terrestrial animal protein.

Especially the Japanese diet has been described as high in fish consumption. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003) The statistics show however an equally high share of terrestrial animal protein. In summary, while certain parallels might be drawn from the analysis, an ‘East Asian consumption pattern’ does not become evident.

Eggs & Milk

East Asia also is an egg region. In stir fries, soups and as condiments, either fresh, seasoned or pickled, almost all meals come with an egg in some form. According to a FAO report, per capita egg supply in 2011 was the highest in East Asia (excluding Vietnam), with more than 300 eggs per person and year even triple the amount of other Asian regions, and well above North America and Europe. (FAO 2015a)

Evans (2014; 2015), collecting production numbers for Asian countries, identifies 60% of the world production in the region. Per capita⁹, the production numbers are highest for Japan with 19,8 kg of eggs in 2013, followed by 18 kg in China, 14,6 kg in Taiwan, 12,2 kg in South Korea and only 4,2 kg in Vietnam. According to Evans (2014), per capita consumption in urban centres in China and Japan even outnumbers the respective national production numbers, with as much as 21 kg in the two countries. With Confucian scholars praising the beneficial qualities of chicken meat and eggs, their consumption in China was already widely popular in the 17th century. In Japan, on the other hand, strict Buddhist principles limited the use of eggs in earlier days. And while their health properties also became proclaimed during the Edo Period, they are a rather modern, if enthusiastically naturalised, addition to the Japanese diet. (Rath 2010) The aforementioned production numbers are also reflected in the protein intake per capita and day recorded for 2011, obtained from FAOSTAT (2016). Both China and Japan saw almost 6 g of protein supplied by eggs, while Taiwanese and South Koreans got 3,8 g and 3,5 g respectively. Vietnamese consumed only 1,1 g of egg protein a day.

Protein supply numbers for milk give an equally diversified result. Traditionally milk has been far less prominent in East Asia, than in Europe and America.

⁹Total production numbers presented in Evans (2015) are divided by population numbers for the same year obtained from The World Bank (2015), and Trading Economics (2015) for Taiwan respectively.

Nonetheless, consuming milk and milk products has come more in vogue. Japan is leading the region with 4,1 g of daily per capita protein supplied from milk. China and Taiwan are both close to 2,5 g, while Vietnam (0,6 g) and South Korea (0,5 g) see much less milk protein intake. Compared to the European Union (6,8 g) and the United States (10,1 g), these are still small shares. (FAOSTAT (2016), numbers from 2011)

As with animal protein in the form of fish, meat and seafood, the numbers for eggs and milk do not provide a clear picture. Traditionally, egg consumption was also contingent upon economic factors. Today, two vastly different countries in terms of per capita income nonetheless share the same per capita consumption - Japan and China. In conclusion it can be said that the regionality apparent in staple consumption and vegetable patterns is not continued in animal protein intake.

3.1.4 Seasonings & Condiments

As the proverb goes: “Variety is the spice of life.” And manifold is the variety of spices used in kitchens and at prandial tables throughout East Asia and beyond. Over the path of history, “*various woody shrubs and vines, trees, aromatic lichens, and the roots, flowers, seeds, and fruits of herbaceous plants*” (Sherman & Billing 1999, 453) and even minerals have been introduced to spice up the taste of our food. Spice trade made certain regions rich and exploited others, while cultural and technological achievements also travelled along their routes. (Sherman & Billing 1999)

In the culinary sphere, spices are usually divided into *seasoning*, used in preparation, and *condiments* to be added at the table. While some are exclusive to one realm, others can be used in both ways. Pickles might be added as a seasoning during the cooking process or be placed as a condiment at the table for diners to season to taste. The same is true for the omnipresent salt shaker. As such, this section is less concerned with categorising into the two, than with creating an understanding of comparable patterns of use in the countries analysed.

Throughout the region, a distinctive *umami* taste is sought to be achieved through the use and combination of certain ingredients. Among other ingredients, the ubiquitous soy sauce, fish sauce and even pickles are used to achieve the ‘tasty’ resemblance distinctly different to the four tastes of sweet, salty, bitter and sour.

Umami

The concept of *umami* became famous with Ishige and Ruddell's theory of the "*umami cultural area*" (as quoted in Ozeki (2008, 147)). The term itself describes a certain type of meaty and hearty taste in addition to the well-established four tastes of salty, sweet, bitter and sour, that the human tongue is supposedly able to identify. While the taste and the methods for its achievement are old, its name is rather new. In 1908, Japanese chemist Ikeda Kikunae (1864-1936) first described its peculiarity among the tastes, deriving from glutamic acid, a form of amino acid. (Mouritsen 2012; Otsuka 1998)

The umami cultural area of Ishige and Ruddell is comprised of two sub-regions, that both share the distinctive regional "*standard taste*" (Ozeki 2008) fondness of umami. However, the sub-regions differ in their means of creating this distinct taste experience. Thus, the people of the *East Asian* sub-region (in this context North East Asia), with its alleged center China, traditionally rely on sauces made from fermented grains and beans in order to make their food and meals 'umai'. By contrast, the *South East Asian* sub-region has, over the course of centuries, developed numerous fermented fish sauces for the same reason. Today, the boundaries of these two sub-regions cannot be drawn precisely, as is so often the case at the crossroads of two socio-cultural entities. (Otsuka 1998; Ozeki 2008)

In Japan, *umaminess* is achieved by two standard elements: (1) *dashi*, a basic stock obtained from an infusion of kelp, shitake mushrooms and dried fish, and (2) fermented soy beans, either in the form of *soy sauce* or *miso*. (Otsuka 1998; Ozeki 2008) The everyday miso soup is by far the most prominent representative of the use of miso. With the increasing international popularity of sushi and sushi-like dishes, also miso found its way into kitchens and restaurants globally. A third, despite less prominent element is *shiokara*, fermented fish or other seafoods, resembling Korean *jeotgal* and Vietnamese *mam*.

As the soy sauce did, Japanese miso originated from the early Chinese *jiang*, which was introduced to Japan either via Korea or by Buddhist monks directly on their return from China (see 3.1.2 for details on the development of soy foodstuffs in China and beyond). In its origins, *hishio* by its Japanese name, was not yet divided into liquid form (soy sauce) and paste (miso) as it is today. The later separation of sauce and paste also divided social classes. The expensive *shoyu* (soy sauce) was reserved to the high classes until the Edo Period (1603-1868), when production spread and methods improved. On the other hand, *misoshiru*, the prominent soup made from left over miso paste, already became a principal

item of the common Japanese diet during the Muromachi Period (1333-1573). (Ozeki 2008) In contemporaneous Le Dynasty (1428-1788) Vietnam sauces made from fermented soy were even required as payment for border officials and fees for Confucian government examinations, representing the culinary cultural status of the produce. (Nguyen 2008) Despite today's availability of foreign foods, the umami taste derived from the miso paste and fish stock "*remains a reference point*" (Ozeki 2008, 154) for Japanese consumers.

Products of soy bean fermentation, *jang*, form an equally essential component of the Korean culinary culture. It was in fact essential enough to have a distinct storage area reserved to in every traditional Korean home, called "*changdokdae*". (Han and Han (1995) as quoted in Cwiertka & Moriya (2008, 164)) Or, as North Korea's Eternal President Kim Il-sung is said to have pointed out: "*Koreans can hardly be Koreans if they don't eat doenjang* [fermented soy bean paste]" (Cumings 1997, 396).

Historical accounts on the origin of soy bean fermentation trace a very similar story to what has been described before. However, there is a continuing dispute between Chinese and Korean scholars on where the process was invented first. Early produce of this type has been eaten as early as the Three Kingdoms Period (57 BCE - 668 CE), which was later developed into the liquid soy sauce (*ganjang*) and the soy bean paste (*doenjang*). With a later third addition, this two products remain either a main seasoning ingredient or a staple condiment of every Korean meal. (Cwiertka & Moriya 2008; Otsuka 1998)

The third and late addition to the group of staple Korean *jang*-sauces came with the post-Columbian surge of New World food-plants. The arrival of red peppers from Central America lastingly and extensively changed the taste of (not only) Korean food. The resulting hot red pepper paste (*gochujang*) is assumed to have been introduced by the end of the 16th century. (Cwiertka & Moriya 2008) As one internationally renown Korea expert once pointed out: It is hard to even imagine a Korean cuisine without chilli today.

Korea also has a long history of *jeotgal* (fermented seafood paste) to achieve the umami taste. (Otsuka 1998) It is a key ingredient in kimchi pickling and as such a staple seasoning commodity on the peninsula. The production itself is identical to the production of fish sauces in Southern China and Vietnam, where it serves the same taste reason. The difference between paste and sauce lies merely in the pressing of the former to achieve the latter. In both cases various

types of whole fish or seafood are fermented with salt to develop the necessary amino acids together with the brown-red colour. (Otsuka 1998)

Vietnam is especially famous for its use of fish sauce (*nuoc nam*) to achieve umami taste. (Otsuka 1998) In addition, all of the other, aforementioned products of soy and fish fermentation also list prominently in Vietnamese kitchen and table use: fermented soy paste (*tuong*), soy sauce (*nuoc tuong*), and fermented fish paste (*mam*). Thus, not only in the general taste preference but also in the individual achievement of umami, a high degree of culinary cultural homogeneity can be identified.

A variant of fish sauce, among other East Asian countries, popular in Chinese cooking both in the People's Republic and on the island of Taiwan is oyster sauce (*haoyou*). Thick and rich, the sauce is dark brown to black and adds a salty umami taste to dishes. Thickened with wheat flour, it also gives structure to the sauces it is added to. (Cotterell 1987; Newman 2004)

The global trend towards food products of an industrial origin is also noticeable with regards to soy sauce. The traditional method(s) of production were both labour and time consuming. (Cwierka & Moriya 2008; Mao 2008; Tan 2008) By the 16th century Chinese and Japanese commercial producers already facilitated the traditional fermentation method by adding whole wheat grains to the soy beans, as well as cultivating *Aspergillus oryzae* mold for the process. However, it still took up to two years to make good quality soy sauce. Another large step towards industrial scale soy sauce production was made in the 1930's when an artificial method of breaking down the soy protein was introduced in Japan. The resulting *HVP* (hydrolysed vegetable protein) soy sauce or *chemical* soy sauce undergoes the process in a few days. It is then enriched by flavour and colour additives or blended with traditionally fermented sauce to meet the consumer's taste expectations. Today this latter methods allow for an efficient and comparatively low-cost production. (Cwierka & Moriya 2008)

As a result of both, the socio-economic changes in the region and the cheap availability of factory made produce, chemical and blended soy sauces account for the majority of sales in East Asia today. In South Korea, for example, 69,1% of soy sauce sales in 2002 were attributed to this kind. However, with growing wealth and food awareness, a reverse trend can be identified. Numbers for traditionally fermented products are growing again. (Cwierka & Moriya 2008, 172)

Ikeda, when first scientifically describing the umami taste, also saw the economic possibilities arising from it. While East Asian condiments and seasonings,

as described, have always targeted a high umaminess, he was the first to patent ‘pure’ umami from the production of monosodium glutamate (MSG). The company that arose from this patent, Ajinomoto, today handles one third of the global MSG production of approximately 2 million tonnes annually. (Mouritsen 2012, 63) With as much as three times the average daily intake of added MSG (Mouritsen 2012, 64), East Asia also is the largest MSG market. Outside Asia, the white crystalline powder is mainly used as an additive for industrially produced convenience foods. Within Asia, it is also a popular seasoning in kitchens, both at professional restaurants and at home. (Beyreuther, Biesalski, Fernstrom, Grimm, Hammes, Heinemann, Kempfski, Stehle, Steinhart, & Walker 2006; Mouritsen 2012; Newman 2004)

While a large variety of seasoning and condiments are known to the East Asian chef, the dominant taste ambition is umami. For its achievement all countries under study have acquired very similar skills, in the form of sauce or paste as described in this section. The popularity of pickles, as described in section 3.1.2, aside from their durability, can be credited to their umami taste characteristics. It can be argued, that the provincial cuisines of China as those of other countries vary in their enjoyment of spiciness, bitterness, saltiness and sweetness. Ingredients and spices are chosen in appreciation of their effect in this regard. But, below these lies a joint craving for umami, shared by all of East Asia.

3.1.5 Beverages

Beverages also constitute an important part of any given food culture. No meal is complete without the accompanying drink. In many societies alcohol is an especially charged cultural symbol, both for social interaction at the dinner table and in religious rituals. Throughout Asian history, tea also played an outstanding role. This section thus consecutively looks at tea, alcoholic beverages, and soft drinks to identify commonalities in East Asian beverage consumption.

Tea

From a European, romantic-Orientalist perspective tea ultimately is an “*Asian beverage*” (Krieger 2009, 60). And despite the unknown geographic origin of *Camellia sinensis*, it first gained certain popularity in China as a medicinal plant in the second century BCE. From its mythical origins - either as a result of a Buddhist saint’s sacrifice or a legendary emperor’s genius - it took until the 6th

and 7th century CE to become a commercially significant crop. The cultural and artistic flourishing of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) also saw the establishment of tea as a mean of social and cultural exchange, although limited to higher strata. (Cotterell 1987; Krieger 2009; Schleinkofer 1956)

The thriving cultural and commercial exchange of this period also brought tea to neighbouring realms. Buddhist monks have imported the first tea, among other food stuffs and religious ideas from China to Japan in the 8th century. A Chinese princess' dowry brought tea to Tibet. And the commercially resourceful Chinese merchants sent compressed tea-bricks to the Mongol and into Central Asia. (Krieger 2009; Schleinkofer 1956)

In 828 CE King Heungdeok of Silla is recorded to have received tea seeds from Tang China and ordered them to be planted on Jiri-san mountain. In addition, Korean legend knows of a princess that is said to have brought tea with her from India in the 2nd century. A number of Korea's oldest Buddhist temples also claim to have introduced tea to the peninsula. (of Taize, Hong, & Owyong 2010)

By the Song Dynasty (960-1279) tea production had expanded and the beverage had become a daily basic for the majority of Chinese people. Laws and regulations for the first time administered production, seasons and varieties. High ranking imperial representatives oversaw much of the production, trade and distribution processes, making sure the best qualities were reserved for the emperor and his imperial court. During this era, the method of preparation using powdered green tea and a bamboo whisk was first developed. This method is still practised in East Asia, most notably in Japan today. (Krieger 2009; of Taize et al. 2010; Schleinkofer 1956)

The later Mongol-led Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) saw a preference turn towards full leave preserved tea as common outside of the Chinese Empire, while the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) returned to green tea. Black tea at this stage was considered mostly for export. Despite the change of 'colour', the habit of using the full leaves instead of powdered tea remained. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1921), which was of Manchu origin, drinking black tea with mare's milk became popular among the imperial court. At the same time for much of the population green tea remained the beverage of choice. (Krieger 2009)

In Japan, tea prepared by the Song Dynasty powder and whisk method disseminated from the royal courts and Buddhist monasteries to the broader population between the 15th and 17th century. It is with certain national pride, that

the Song preparation method has been preserved in Japan¹⁰ well into the 20th and 21st century, while “*it diminished following the nomadic [Yuan] invasion in China*” (Okakura (1979) as quoted in Krieger (2009, 91)). Today, due to the ascribed health benefits, powdered *matcha* is reinvented as a lifestyle product within and outside of the region, making it into supermarket shelves and onto Starbucks menus.

Tea still plays an important role in the drinking culture of East Asia. In addition to its ceremonial role in religious and social events, tea remains an everyday drink. When it comes to tea, Japan can be described as traditionalist: 78% of tea sold is green tea, a large share of which is loose tea for preparation in a tea pot. (Euromonitor International 2014e) However, in all countries under study, numbers for loose tea are declining for convenience reasons (tea bags, instant tea). The form of packaging and new introductions do only slowly diminish green tea’s popularity throughout the region. With the exception of Taiwan, all countries see green tea as the majority of tea sold. Taiwan traditionally is a stronghold of Oolong production, which reflects in the consumption. Oolong tea is also reported a favourite throughout the region, as is barley tea in Japan (*mugicha*) and South Korea (*boricha*) as well as Pu’er in China. Traditionally, as described above, black tea was produced for export only and, despite large marketing efforts by international beverage companies, plays a minor role in tea consumption within the region till today. This is also reflected in the combined market shares (>50%) for green teas and other teas as mentioned above in the five countries of the region. (Euromonitor International 2014e,f; 2015a;b;c)

Apart from it remaining a popular drink, much symbolic meaning and strong feelings are associated with tea in East Asia. Its health enhancing characteristics are praised (section 3.3.2. Its long history is celebrated as cultural achievement. And the form of preparation and presentation is regarded a fine art, be it the ceremony itself or the pottery used. As shown above, with the exception of Taiwan, green tea unites the region’s taste preference, either in whole leave form or powdered.

Alcoholic Beverages

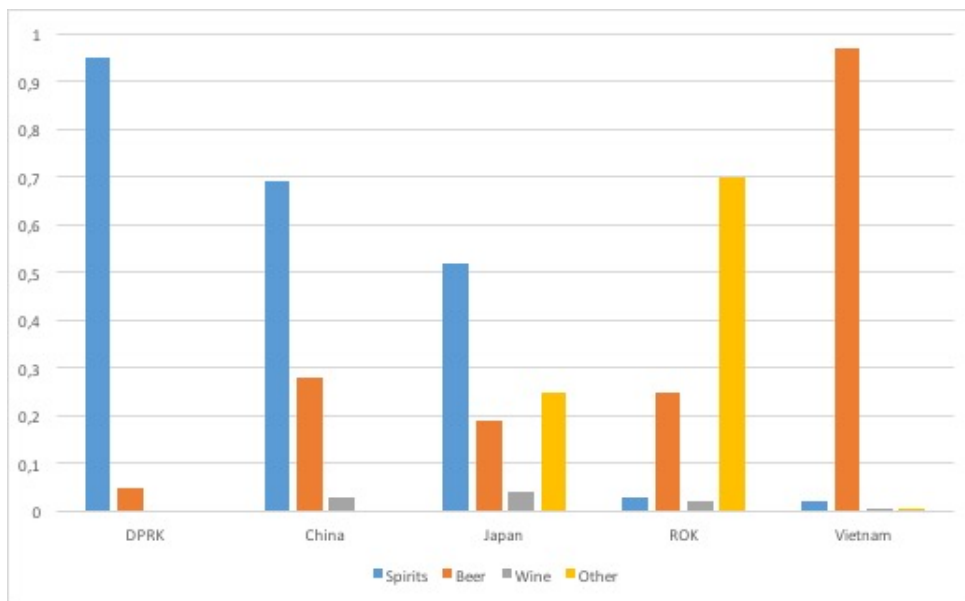
As shown before, among the cultural achievements of East Asia, tea has acquired a distinct and celebrated position. Alcoholic beverages however, do outdate the production and consumption of tea. The knowledge of fermenting beverages

¹⁰Readers of German will enjoy the thorough introduction to *chanoyu* given by Goetz (1934).

might be as old as 9.000 years in China. It can be securely assumed, that its neighbours followed shortly.

The World Health Organization’s (WHO) *global status report on alcohol and health 2014* addresses geographical differences in alcohol consumption habits. Comparing the numbers presented for the countries under study in this thesis¹¹, a rather diverse picture of East Asia prevails. As shown in figure 3.3, with the exception of Vietnam, either ‘spirits’ or ‘other’ alcoholic beverages dominate the consumption statistics of the individual countries. North Korea, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), appears to be a particularly spirit oriented nation, while its southern neighbour is strong in other alcoholic beverages. A difference that is in contrast to their shared *soju* culture. Soju, an alcohol traditionally distilled from rice or barley can qualify as a spirit. Avoiding rice shortage and following stricter government regulations in South Korea, however, changed production methods and pushed alcohol percentages well below 35%¹²(Harkness 2013), thus adding to ‘other’ alcohol.

Figure 3.3: Recorded alcohol per capita (15+) consumption in 2010



Share of total consumption by type of alcoholic beverage. Adapted from WHO (2014).

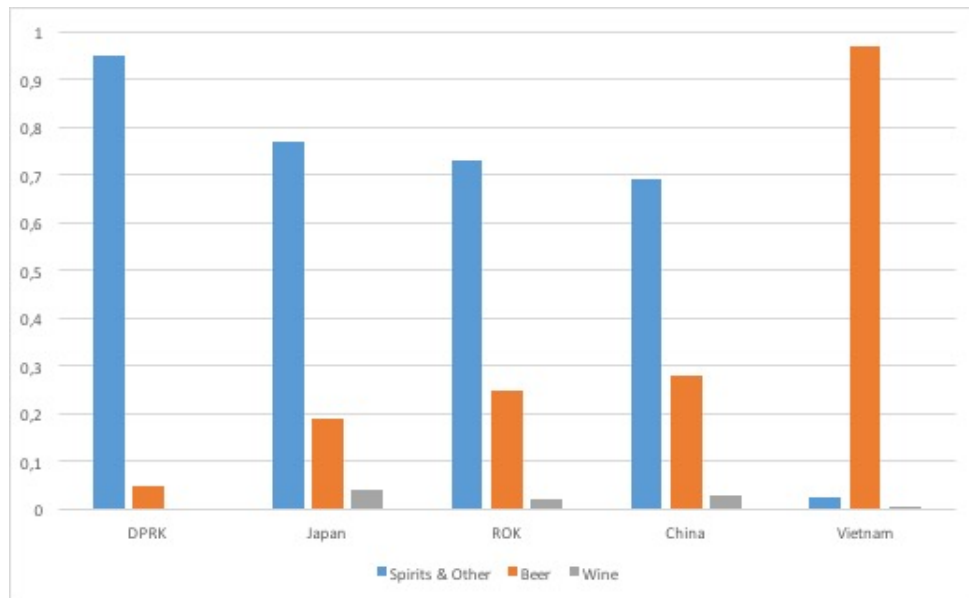
‘Other’ alcoholic beverages in the WHO report include, but are not limited to “fortified wines, rice wine or other fermented beverages made of sorghum, millet or maize” (WHO 2014, 31). Since traditional methods of alcohol production can

¹¹No data is published for Taiwan.

¹²HITE-Jinro’s *Chamisul* brand, South Korea’s best selling soju and the world’s number one selling alcohol brand, has approximately 20% alcohol by volume depending on the actual type.

include both distillation and fermentation, as shown in the Korean soju-example above, numbers for spirits and other alcoholic beverages have been combined in figure 3.4 to allow for a better comparison of the five countries.

Figure 3.4: Recorded alcohol per capita (15+) consumption in 2010; adapted



Share of total consumption by type of alcoholic beverage with categories ‘spirits’ and ‘other’ combined by author. Adapted from WHO (2014).

Figure 3.4, with the exception of Vietnam, thus shows a much more homogenous picture throughout the region. For Japan, South Korea and China, consumption of spirits and other (traditional) alcoholic beverages dominates between 69% and 77% of total alcohol consumption. North Korea’s 95% have to be read with caution due to the general limitations on data availability from the country. In addition, the comparatively very limited access to other alcoholic beverages, much less imported wines and beers, might help explaining the high number.

Traditional Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic beverages have enjoyed the same prominence in East Asian history as they did throughout European history. Religious rituals, social gatherings, literature and numerous recipes use and make reference to fermented and distilled liquors. Traditionally, in all countries of the region the Chinese character *jiu*, consisting of the conventionalised wine vessel (*you*) and the three dot radical for water, was used in naming all sorts of alcoholic beverages. Due to its outstanding importance as a cultural symbol comparable to Western wine, this character and the compound nouns formed with it are usually translated as ‘wine’. However, it

is worth mentioning, that the character's meaning originates in traditional grain fermented beverages. This shows a long standing tradition of fermenting grains for the benefit of alcohol production. It is also a reminder to use the 'wine' translation with caution.

Japanese *sake* might qualify as the most familiar type of traditional East Asian alcoholic beverage, renown globally today. Korean *soju* brand Chamisul is the most consumed brand of alcohol globally, as mentioned earlier. Nonetheless both of their ancestors once again came from China, where the knowledge of alcohol fermentation might be as old as 9.000 years. (Roach 2005) However, rice only arrived in Japan around the third century BCE, with introduction of advanced *sake* production being dated to around the 4th or 5th century CE. Rice grains, usually white rice for Japanese sake but other variations exist from glutinous and red rice, are polished to reduce the protein that is stored in the outer shell, leaving the starchy inner kernel. While the starch contained in some grains naturally transforms into sugars through mashing, i.e. from barley in beer brewing, for making sake the help of *Aspergillus oryzae* moulds is needed to perform this task. Similar to beer brewing, yeast then transforms the sugars to alcohol - the desired end product. Produced by this traditional brewing method, the resulting beverage may be subject to variations in alcohol percentage and taste. Thus, in order to achieve a constant taste outcome, modern production methods also see the addition of other grains and/or high percentage alcohol. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003; Linzbichler 1967)

Comparable products exist in China and Taiwan (*huangjiu* or *miji*), Vietnam (*ruou can*) and Korea (*cheongju*). However, they have not enjoyed the same ubiquitous appreciation in their respective countries as sake has in Japan. Despite diminishing consumption numbers in face of foreign (beer, wine) and home grown (*shochu*) competition, Japanese 'rice wine' remains an irreplaceable cultural symbol, even incorporated into the nationalist discourse by its everyday term *nihonshu* or 'liquor of Japan'. It features prominently in most Japanese restaurants (especially in *izakaya* style taverns) and has a fixed position in religious rituals as described by Antoni (1988) (see also 3.3.1).

If sake is the 'liquor of Japan' then *soju* is the 'spirit of Korea'. A distilled beverage, it builds upon the grain distilling traditions of Central Asia and China. As such it is believed to have been derived from Mongol (Yuan) influences on the later Goryeo Dynasty that ruled the Korean peninsula from 918 to 1392. It has remained the national drink ever since. The traditional starting material again is rice. However, due to the limited availability, other grains have been added

throughout history and by as late as post-war South Korea, its production was still regulated by the government to avoid food shortages and famine. In South Korea, it also experienced a significant reduction in alcohol content, from around 40% (still common in North Korea) to under 20%, comparable to Japanese sake. (Han 2004; Harkness 2013) Harkness recalls his South Korean host expressing preference for the old days: “*Our liquor was like Chinese liquor, very strong*” (Harkness 2013, 13).

Chinese distilled liquor, *baijiu* (literally white liquor) still is very strong. The standard brand *Maotai* can reach up to 70% alcohol by volume. A much lighter version of Chinese wine is *shaoxingjiu*, wine from Shaoxing in Zhejiang province. Made from glutinous rice, it qualifies as *huangjiu* and thus is a relative of Japanese sake. (Cotterell 1987) It is drunk at dining occasions, but most famous for its use in meal preparation, i.e. *zuixia* (drunken shrimp).

Beer

Despite having a much shorter history and smaller share in East Asia, beer is increasingly popular today and thus has entered the daily food and drink habitus of the region. The first breweries were opened by colonial rulers to drown their homesickness in the 19th century, but the drink rapidly spread to other countries in the region. Asia, since the 2000’s, is both the leading global beer producing and beer consuming region by volume. (Kirin Beer University 2015a;b) This is mostly due to the large population, with annual per capita consumption still far from the levels of traditional beer consuming societies, like the Czech Republic (142,6 l) and Austria (104,8 l). (Kirin Beer University 2015a)

Unsurprisingly, China is leading the world both in beer production and consumption with approximately 45 billion litres annually. (Kirin Beer University 2015a;b) Much more telling than the absolute numbers for this study however is once more the comparison on a per capita basis.¹³ Here the numbers again show an interesting homogeneity throughout East Asia as defined for the purpose of this study. South Koreans, Japanese and Vietnamese all consume between 40 l and 45 l of beer annually. Only China falls a little short with 32,88 l. Possible explanations for the latter being the financial restrictions within large parts of the population (in comparison to Japan and South Korea) as well as the compar-

¹³Numbers published by Kirin do not include per capita accounts for all countries under research here, therefore the absolute numbers are divided by the actual population in 2014 obtained from The World Bank (2015). No numbers are published by Kirin for Taiwan. A China Post article from 2008 speaks of only 22,5 l per capita (Bruyas 2008)

atively large population groups that refrain from alcohol. However the numbers show, and everybody with field experience in East Asian countries will agree, beer today is an (almost) inevitable part of social gatherings.

Grape Wine

While grapes are grown and consumed fresh or dried in Asia for a long time, grape wine, also is a rather modern addition to the East Asian dinner table. Lee (2009a) has given three propositions for the growing wine trend, developed from underlying globalisation trends. The argument might easily be transferred to the growing beer consumption (and other foreign ‘imports’) mentioned above. Accordingly, (1) global trade facilitation, (2) an open mindset towards Western culture, and a (3) globalised media have spurred wine consumption in East Asian countries. The trend is not entirely new with growth numbers in the late 1990s and early 2000’s averaging above 60% annually for China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan (Lee 2009a, 258) - and continuing to be strong. Vietnam reported a doubling of per capita consumption between 2005 and 2010. (Vietnam Investment Review (2015) quoting Tuoi Tre) In Japan, there is even a widely popular wine themed Manga comic called “Drops of God” (*Kami no Shizuku*), which further spurred the wine trend and also made wine more popular among South Koreans. (Meiburg 2015)

The guilty pleasure of alcoholic drinks is almost as old as mankind. Ancient Egypt is supposedly the cradle of beer, the Aztec had their pulque. As such, it is no surprise that ancient East Asia developed and adapted their own forms of drinking in line with the basic crops of the area. With the exception of Vietnam, these traditional drinks still account for the majority of alcohol intake. Again, local taste preferences are noticeable, especially in regards to alcohol percentage, but the overall picture remains homogeneous. Beer is a growing factor in the region, as is grape wine. With continuously rising income levels, the latter will take an even bigger share in the future. Due to its assigned position in social events, the traditional alcohol of the region will nonetheless remain important.

Soft Drinks

While traditionally home brewed tea or herbal and floral infusions were the non-alcoholic beverage of choice in East Asia, the countries under study here now constitute a giant market for global and local soft drink producers. Again, due

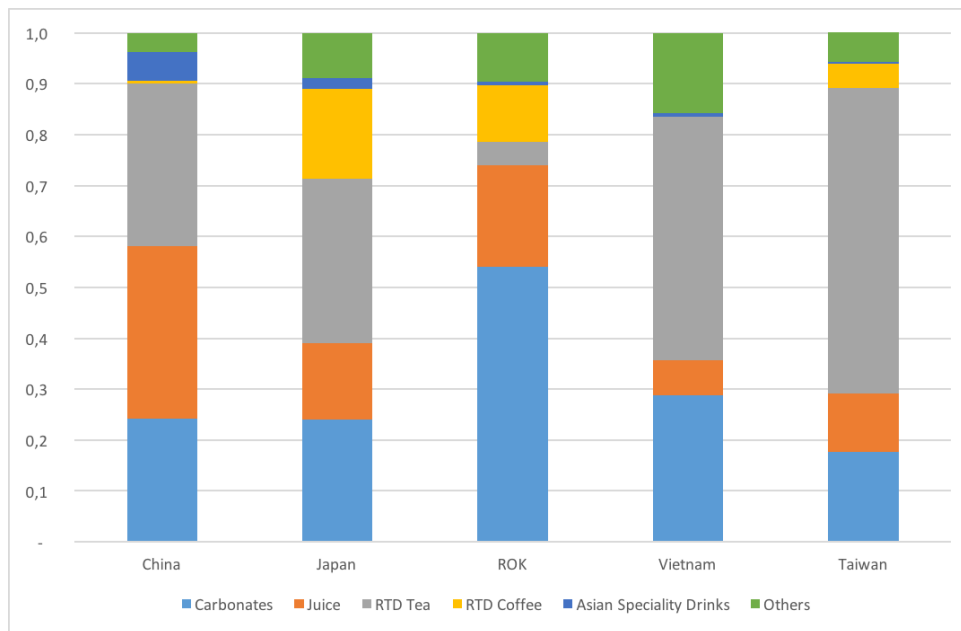
to its population size, China amounts for the largest share of sales numbers. 83,9 billion litres of soft drinks were sold in 2013 in the People's Republic of China, according to a Euromonitor International (2014a) market report. This is a lot compared to the total sales number for all five countries of 117,2 billion litres, however, the picture changes drastically once more as soon as the population numbers are factored in. On a per capita basis¹⁴, China is the second smallest soft drink market in the region. Only 61,7 l of bought soft drinks were consumed in 2013, compared to 36,7 l in Vietnam, 101,4 l in South Korea, 106,7 l in Taiwan and 176,7 l in Japan. Once again, income levels might play a role in the low per capita amounts of China and Vietnam as compared to South Korea, Taiwan and Japan. In addition, sales of informal, small street vendors for fresh fruit juices, popular in the warmer regions of Southern China and Vietnam might be under-represented in the statistics. One would think that another reason at least for China (and Taiwan) might also be the ubiquitous presence of (hot) water dispensers in office complexes, schools and universities, train stations etc. The ready availability of sanitised water (through boiling) in combination with the ever present water bottle, almost every person carries with her, makes more or less expensive shop alternatives less attractive. However, China has a very large share of bottled water (41%) among sold soft drinks, second only to South Korea (49%) in the region. Fears of unclean water or lack of precipitation might account for some of the shares. Taiwan, on the contrary sees a significantly smaller share of bottled water sales (26%), despite warm climate. The unproblematic access to safe tap drinking water from mountainous regions throughout Japan on the other hand, has resulted in only 7% of soft drink sales accounted for by bottled water. Excluding bottled water from each countries per capita numbers gives us an even more telling picture on local preferences: Without bottled water, the average Chinese bought 36,3 l of soft drinks in 2013. In Vietnam, it was 28,1 l, 51,8 l in South Korea, and 79,2 l per person in Taiwan. Japan's 142,3 l set the country even further apart from the rest. The ever present soft drink vending machines thus can be seen as a Japanese marketing success. (Basis for all calculations here are the numbers provided by table 5 of Euromonitor International (2014a;b;c;d) as well as the adjusted Taiwanese numbers of Euromonitor International (2016))

While the absolute numbers for the soft drinks market in the respective countries is valuable in order to achieve a general understanding of the local situa-

¹⁴As previously applied, the total numbers reported from Euromonitor International (2014a;b;c;d; 2016) have been divided by the population numbers for the same year provided by The World Bank (2015) to improve comparability. Euromonitor International (2016) reports the Taiwanese numbers for 2015, thus the numbers are adjusted backwards by the total growth factor 2013 to 2015. A linear growth in all segments is taken as basis. Population numbers for Taiwan are again obtained from Trading Economics (2015).

tion, it is worth to drill down further for an understanding of taste preferences. Again the total numbers provided by the individual Euromonitor International (2014a;b;c;d; 2016) country reports form the calculation basis. Since the topic of bottled water has been discussed in the previous paragraph, the numbers presented here are percentage shares per type of soft drink as share of the total non-water markets. These numbers are also displayed in chart 3.5.

Figure 3.5: Soft Drinks as sold by Category 2013



Share of total volume of non-water soft drinks as sold by type of soft drink in 2013. Own calculation after Euromonitor International (2014a;b;c;d; 2016).

Global soft drink giants, like the Coca-Cola Corporation, as well as regional and local beverage producers have long competed for the markets of East Asia. Due to historical and geopolitical reasons, South Korea and Japan (as well as Taiwan) first received international marketing attention, the influence on the taste preferences of which could be subject to numerous further studies. Since the opening of the Vietnamese and Chinese economies in the late 20th century, people there also have quickly adopted the newly available beverages. As such it is not surprising that *carbonates*, including all household brand names, account for almost one quarter of non-water soft drink sales in China and Japan, 30% in Vietnam and even 54% in South Korea. Taiwan seems to be the exception with an 18% share. *Juice* is also very popular in the region, at varying degrees ranging from 34% in China, 20% in South Korea to 15% in Japan. Taiwan and Vietnam are rather exceptional here with only 11% and 7% respectively of non-water soft drink sales being accounted for by juice. The inexpensive and easy availability of

fresh fruit all year round might help explaining, since home made juices as well as informal street vendors might not be accounted for in the statistics.

A very interesting category is *RTD Tea* (ready to drink tea). The different bottled versions of the traditional drink of the region are ubiquitous, filling shelves and refrigerators at super markets, convenience stores and restaurants. The variety goes way beyond iced tea in Europe and North America. These drinks are produced by local drink manufacturers as well as international corporations, the latter marketing this product branch exclusively in the region. Common variants include ready made teas and herbal or fruit infusions, including barley, oolong, green tea, jasmine, black tea with and without milk, to name a few. In relation to the overall sales, Taiwanese buy the largest share of RTD Tea at 60%. Almost half (48%) the soft drinks bought in Vietnam are also accounted for by this category. Chinese and Japanese both chose it in almost one third of cases (32%), while South Korea appears carbonate-oriented (as shown above), leaving a mere 5% share to RTD Tea.

Apart from RTD Tea as described, *Asian Speciality Drinks* should be an interesting category for the purpose of this study. It combines the numerous health enhancing drinks found in the region, that are based on the idea(s) of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). While it is distinctive for the region, with 1% or less in South Korea, Vietnam and Taiwan, and only 2% in Japan, it remains much of a niche product in all markets. With the exception of China (6%), it is also overtaken everywhere by modern energy drinks.

For the latest addition to the bottled soft drink market, *RTD Coffee* (ready to drink coffee), Lee (2009a)'s three arguments for the East Asian wine trend as discussed in the respective section, might be well applicable. A Western oriented life style, trade facilitation and media presence in TV shows and films as well as through advertising, are increasingly fostering an East Asian coffee drinking culture. Starbucks is just one of the brands taking over prime resell locations. Again, Japan and South Korea have been the first to be exposed to their marketing campaigns. This is reflected in sales numbers: Where China and Vietnam show numbers of one or less than one percent, the market accounts to 11% in South Korea and 18% in Japan respectively.

While the consumption patterns in soft drinks, as elsewhere are showing signs of change through globalisation and adaptation, the numbers presented here give evidence of a shared appreciation of tea, although in its modern, RTD packaging for most of the region, rooted in the common cultural heritage. South Korea is

the stark exception. And for China, juices do play a comparatively important role.

To summarise the findings of this section, it can be said that tea continues to play an important role throughout East Asia. This is not only reflected in its particular cultural attribution. Moreover actual consumption numbers do reflect the region's tea thirst. Similar results can be drawn from the analysis of alcoholic beverages. Modern additions to the inventory of traditional liquors exist, but consumers accept it as addition rather than substitute. Locally acquired taste preferences should neither be ignored nor overly generalised. However, shared roots and cultural exchange produced comparable commodities, reflecting an East Asian regionality.

This chapter has analysed a number of 'ingredients', composing East Asian food (and drink) culture. While the list is by no means complete, it has nonetheless provided valuable insight and profound evidence for the culinary regionality of East Asia. Graphically, the findings are also summarised in table 4.1 on page 92. Rice and noodles are the staple dishes of the region. Soy beans provide an important share of protein in the form of tofu. In addition, it is the raw material for the ubiquitous soy sauce and soy paste seasonings and condiments. Pickled vegetables are much beloved for their umami taste characteristics and durability. With animal protein, the picture is less homogeneous. Terrestrial and marine animals account for varying shares of animal protein intake, as do eggs. The umami taste is the fundamental guiding principle for seasoning, enhanced either by soy-based or fish-based fermentation products, or a mixture of both. And in the field of beverages, tea remains highly popular, both in traditional and modern form. Alcohol also is enjoyed in traditional form (*baijiu*, *sake*, *soju*) with the popular modern addition of beer, and, to a lesser extend, grape wine.

Since this chapter has shown the culinary regionality of East Asia by means of *what* is eaten, the next chapter will continue by analysing what means are applied for preparing, serving and appreciating food.

3.2 In the Kitchen & At the Table

If the preceding chapter was concerned with *what* is eaten in East Asia, then this one deals with the *hows* of the East Asian culinary region. How a society eats the ingredients it chose, is not limited to methods of preparation. The wok might

have become a cultural symbol representing Chinese (and East Asian?) food. However, it is not only frying in a large, round pan that differentiates one region from another. Equally important are other aspects of eating. How are the dishes served and eaten, by means of which tableware and cutlery? And how does a typical meal look like? By answering such questions, this chapter is trying to analyse various of these kitchen and table aspects in order to continue the search for regionality among East Asia's culinary customs.

Most aspects presented in the preceding chapter 3.1 on ingredients bore the advantage of countability. Statistical data exists to what food is produced and consumed. For this chapter, measurement is a more difficult task. As introduced earlier, this has been accounted for in the diversification of sources consulted. By analysing origins and peculiarities under the framework of this research, again valuable insight can be gained into the versatile *hows* of East Asian food culture.

3.2.1 Methods of Preparation

Cooking food is one of the most basic cultural decisions mankind took. It is not *inevitable*, to use Hacking's word. And yet, it opened to us a substantial granary of food supply that would have remained out of reach and digestibility otherwise. Not to mention all the tastes and dainties, we would be missing. As such, the following pages are concerned with the methods of preparation found in East Asia, their joint heritage and how they are lived today.

Boiling, Stewing & Steaming

One of the earliest forms of preparing food, in East Asia and elsewhere, once suitable containers were developed, was to boil in broth or water. Bronze and pottery vessels for boiling, stewing and steaming date back to Shang China (approx. 1600 to 1000 BCE) and beyond. The preparation method even played a crucial role in the development of chopstick utensils, as discussed in 3.2.2. Zhou Dynasty texts list boiling, steaming and stewing among the most important preparation methods, with *geng* (meat soup or stew) the most common dish. (Chang 1977a)

Today, the hot pot is a close relative to this original stew. According to Chinese legend, the hot pot goes back to Kublai Khan (1215-1294), grandson of Genghis Khan and founder of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty in China. Even if he was not participating himself in the development of the method, it is easy

to trace the meat focus of the dish back to its nomadic origins. Mutton was the original choice of meat and still remains popular in the Northern regions of China. Other meats used for this kind of preparation cum dish include pork, beef, fish and seafood. Locally, horse meat and other speciality meats are not uncommon as well. Thinly sliced tranches of meat together with mushrooms and various vegetables are cooked in a broth over an electrical, gas or coal stove directly at the dinner table. (Wang 2015) Spices may vary according to local preference, with Szechuan or Chongqing *mala* hot pot being at the spicier end of the scale, often served as a deep red, chilli and Szechuan pepper laden stock. Korean *sinseollo*, Vietnamese *lau*, Japanese *yosenabe* and *shabu shabu* as well as Northern Chinese and Taiwanese (*huoguo*) versions of this dish usually are served more moderately seasoned. The stock, which boils at the table, with every piece of meat and vegetable added, gains flavour over the course of the meal. Sometimes the resulting rich soup is then consumed at the end of the meal. (Chan 2015; Dong 2014; Noriko & Yuko 2016a; Semin 2010; Taigu 2016) Again, from the early days of hot pot like meals, chopsticks have proven a suitable utensil for obvious reasons. Pinching a specific food item within a pot of boiling broth is easier than spiking it with a fork or scooping it with a spoon. The popularity of the dish and preparation method thus might have helped in maintaining chopsticks as the preferred table utensil. (3.2.2 and 3.2.4) At the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) Manchu-oriented imperial court, chopsticks were even laid out in addition to fork and knife for their specific advantages. (Wang 2015)

The hot pot is just one example of how methods of boiling, stewing and steaming evolved from their prehistoric origins. Throughout the region, noodles (3.1.1) are boiled and served with broth, that has simmered out the tastes and flavours of its ingredients. In Southern China and Taiwan, *lurou fan* is one of the most beloved dishes, combining simmered pork and a bowl of white rice. In Japan, to this day simmering usually takes place in ceramic pots with the help of *dashi* stock. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003; Judy 2015; Newman 2004)

Soups, boiled and simmered, are not to be absent from any East Asian meal. One could even argue, it is one of the three pillars of every East Asian meal (see 3.2.3), together with rice and side dishes. So even when there is no stew or simmered dish present, the soup is a constant reminder of the region's culinary origins. In Korea, the watery everyday soup is called *guk*. The Chinese and Taiwanese call it *tang*, however in the South and in Taiwan, soups tend to be somewhat thickened. In Japan, *suimono* is a refined and delicate form of soup made from fish stock that takes the place of *misoshiru* (miso soup) in more elaborate settings. The Vietnamese *canh* make use of the vegetables and meats

available in season. Popular recipes include taro, bean sprouts and leaf vegetables. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003; Carter 2003; Newman 2004; Vietnamese Food 2012) Most East Asians differentiate various kinds of soups and stews. The ones presented here, are usually light and more delicate in taste. They are ‘drunk’ as a supplement to the meal. Other forms of thick soup and stew, might be considered side dishes in the ‘rice, soup and side dish’ pattern of East Asian meals.

A late addition to most non-Asian cooking traditions, steaming is now praised globally for its vitamin friendly health benefits. In East Asia, it is one of the oldest forms of food preparation, second only to boiling and simmering itself. Popular dishes that require steaming in China are dim sum (*dian xin*) as well as various other forms of dumplings. But in addition to these, whole fish, meats and vegetables are steamed in bamboo and metal baskets. As elsewhere, the main distinction is made between direct (*zheng*) and indirect steaming (*dun*). For the latter, e.g. fish is put in a closed pottery container, which then is heated in a steaming vessel. In Japan, *mushimono* dishes are appreciated for preserving flavour and colour of the ingredients, usually fish and vegetables. *Chawan mushi* (savoury egg custard) is an especially celebrated steamed dish for its combination of blandness and flavour. Its equivalent is called (*zheng*) *jidan geng* in China and *gyeran jjim* in Korean. In Vietnam, *cha trung*, a steamed egg and meat dish, often accompanies the staple *com tam*. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003; Maangchi 2008; Newman 2004; Truong 2013; Yi 2016)

While boiling and stewing are basic cooking techniques elsewhere, in the form of hot pot and kindred stews they have achieved a special degree of culinary standing in East Asia. Soups are also eaten globally, but, in the watery everyday form again, they have a very distinct role in East Asian meals. A role that is further discussed in section 3.2.3. The egg dishes given here are further just an example of how, with the dissemination of a preparation method, comparable forms of recipes are initiated throughout the region.

Stir Frying & Deep Frying

The wok has become a universal symbol of Chinese food. Stir frying, the method most associated with its use however did not gain significance until the Ming Dynasty. (Newman 2004) In Chinese it is called *chaoguo* or simply *guo* (frying pot, or just pot). As with so many of Chinese derived English words, wok derived from the Cantonese pronunciation of an old term (*huo*) for the pan. While they

are ubiquitous in China, Taiwan and Vietnam, in Korea and Japan flat bottomed Western pans are more frequently used outside of Chinese restaurants.

Chinese chefs make a distinction between various types of pan frying depending on heat, additives and time. The most common form of which is stir frying (*chao*). Together with the wok, this technique is popular also in Vietnam and Taiwan. Most everyday meals are prepared in this fast and convenient way. Only one pan is needed and since preparation like cutting are finished beforehand, actual cooking is quick. (Cotterell 1987) In Japan, and to some extent Korea as well, stir frying is less omnipresent. The Japanese *yakimono* can summarise both grilled and dry fried dishes, which is the usual method for preparing fish and meats. Stir fry vegetables are an adaptation from Chinese cooking and are served as side dishes or placed in bento lunch boxes. Fried vegetables and meat, with the addition of eggs, are also served on top of *donburi* rice bowls. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003) The popularity of *yakisoba*, the Chinese style stir fried noodles, is also a constant reminder of the close culinary ties between the two countries. Similar dishes exist in Korea, the most prominent of which might be *japchae*, as discussed in chapter 3.1.1.

Coated deep frying is another foreign addition to the Japanese food culture. While it is believed that *tempura* was introduced by Portuguese sailors as early as the 16th century, breaded cutlet (*katsu*) or shrimp (*ebi furai*) became popular in the late 19th century. For the former, a light batter consisting of flour, egg and water is prepared, vegetables and seafood coated with it and immediately fried. The resulting dish crispy in texture and, despite the oil frying, remains much of its delicate taste. They are best eaten immediately after frying, while the batter is still crispy and hot. The latter is prepared by coating meat in flour, dipping it in beaten raw eggs and finally bread crumbs. While also crispy, the resulting deep fried dish is heartier. Thus, pork and chicken cutlet or whole shrimp are commonly used instead of vegetables or other seafood. The popular final product is served as part of a meal with curry sauce (*katsu kare*) or with egg on top a bowl of rice (*katsudon*). (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003; Noriko & Yuko 2016b; Saito 2016b)

In the deep frying sphere, Korean *twigim* dishes see the ingredients (vegetables, meat or seafood) covered in egg and a mixture of starch and flour to achieve a more “*substantial*” coating. (Jinjoo 2011) For China, Cotterell (1987) lists no less than nine different ways of deep frying, depending on the heat of the cooking oil, the preparation of the ingredients and the steps used in the process. The

most basic of which, coating in corn starch, has become a basic cooking technique preparing for stir frying in sauce throughout the region.

Stir frying in a wok might be the single largest dividing factor between China, Vietnam and Taiwan on the one hand and Korea and Japan on the other when it comes to cooking techniques. While stir frying does exist in the latter two countries, it does provide for a much smaller share of daily dishes. In reverse, the presence of deep fried battered dishes, as described, in daily Japanese meals might surmount the other four countries.

Raw Dishes

Eating raw meats and fish might be the original form of all animal protein intake by humans. Over the millennia, however, the reasons have changed radically. To our early ancestors, a lack of skills and knowledge, missing utensils and unsuitable settings for preparation, storage and consumption gave necessity to immediate raw consumption. Today on the contrary, it is less of a necessity and much more a question of choice. And, at least in the eyes of Japanese *sashimi* chefs and connoisseurs, it can be a very luxurious choice. Speciality meals are regarded a fine art, with every step of the way carefully taken.

With the exception of a few dishes, like oysters and steak tartare, hardly a fish or meat dish is served raw in the Western world. Or better said, was served. Since nowadays Japan's truly globalised *sushi* is both widely available and popularly consumed throughout the world. A distinction, that often is omitted in Western menus has to be made between *sashimi* and *sushi*. The former describes the carefully filleted, raw pieces of fish, seafood and sometimes meat. The latter stands for bite-sized preparations of rice served with pieces of fish or vegetable on top. And, despite popular believe, both do not originate in Japan.

This is not to say that sushi and sashimi are not 'Japanese' dishes. Similar to the case of kimchi in Korea, this would result in tempered reactions. But, it is to say that the Japanese imported already popular methods and through adaptation and variation turned it into the iconic Japanese dish we know of today. *Sushi* might have started out as a method of preservation for fresh fish. Once cleaned, fresh slices of fish meat were salted and, together with layers of cooked rice, 'pickled' for durability by lactic acid fermentation similar to kimchi production (see 3.1.2. When eaten, the rice was first cleaned off to reveal the soured fish meat. This process of preservation was introduced in South East Asia

from where it spread to Southern China, Korea and Japan, where it reportedly arrived in the Heian Period (794-1185). It took another 500 years for sushi to get its present shape, atop a handful of vinegary rice. (Newman 2003; Rath 2010)

Sashimi further outdates the aforementioned preservation of fish. Early Chinese records date the consumption of sliced raw fish in South Eastern China to about 500 BCE. By the Tang dynasty it was very popular and then, it abruptly disappeared from dining tables around 1600, for reasons not fully explored yet. (Newman 2003) Meanwhile, sushi and sashimi have made an East Asian comeback, by means of Japanese culinary export. In Taiwan, (*cishen*) is widely available even outside of specialised restaurants as a legacy of the colonial history. In Korea, pieces of raw fish and seafood, generally termed *saengseon hoe*, include the infamous *sannakji* (live baby octopus). *Hoe* dishes are usually described a little less delicate in texture than their Japanese counterparts, being served with *gochujang* and other aromatic condiments. (American in Korea 2012; Carter 2003; Simon & Martina 2013; Trifood 2016) In addition, there is *yukhoe*, thinly sliced raw beef served with egg yolk and seasoning. (Maangchi 2010) Believed to have its origins from horse or ox in the Joseon Dynasty (Eat in Korea 2014), it might be a reminder of the Mongol presence in Korea and thus share the same origin as steak tartare in the West. In Japan's mountainous regions it is also common to be served horse meat sashimi as one part in a multi-course meal.

The custom of eating raw fish is a very good example of the changeable and cyclic nature of food habits. Like a fashion trend, it once was popular in China, faded from the culinary tradition and recently is reintroduced as a Japanese 'export'. While the nationalist discourse likes to build on a timeless and unchanging culinary tradition, this shows its dependence on supranational tendencies.

This section has resulted in mixed evidence (summarised in table 4.2) towards the culinary regionality of East Asia. Hot pots and kindred stews go back to a shared history in most parts, they also enjoy an equally shared amount of popularity. Stir frying and its trademark utensil, the wok, are less equally distributed among the region, as does the enjoyment for raw fish. While both are exported to neighbouring countries and on a global scale as well, they are nonetheless not as naturalised in their host society as earlier additions to the regional food culture.

For the next section, this study will leave the kitchen and move to the dinner table for an analysis of the tableware culture of East Asia.

3.2.2 Tableware

Much effort has been given historically to the presentation of food at tables and banquets. Those who could afford it spent fortunes to establish collections of fine art, purposefully designed to present food. Porcelain production was supervised by the imperial eunuchs in China. Japanese daimyo lords regarded the best of lacquer artists as members of their family. But in addition to being a means of artistic pomposity, tableware is a necessity for transporting food from the kitchen to the table and on into the mouth. In this latter regard, chopsticks have become a strong cultural symbol of the region. In fact, as will be discussed in the next section, they have prompted the division of the world into three distinct culinary regions. Due to their cultural and artistic significance for the region, the discussion of tableware will be complemented by an analysis of the shared porcelain and lacquerware traditions of East Asia.

Chopsticks

If we divided the world into spheres according to their preferred traditional way of food intake, moving food from their plates to their mouths, three distinct regions would form: the fork (and knife) feeders of Europe, North and South America as well as Australia, the finger feeders of the Middle East, South and South East Asia, and the chopstick feeders of East Asia. ‘Traditional way’ has to be emphasised here since countries adapted and adopted foreign means in recent history: examples generally include the introduction of spoon and fork cutlery in traditional finger feeding societies, eg. the use of spoon and fork in modern Thailand. (Wang 2015) The two other spheres have remained rather traditionalist and conservative in adopting from each other. Until recently that is. Eaters at East Asian restaurants outside of the region and at fast food joints around the globe are seen handling the two sticks that have become to symbolise East Asian food culture.

The history of chopsticks, like so many stories in East Asian food culture, is believed to have started in ancient China. Pairs of sticks carved from animal bones have been unearthed in present day China dating back as far as the year 5.000 BCE, the Chinese Neolithic era. They rather must be understood as predecessors to present chopsticks, however. In early history, these sticks are thought to have been used as utensils for various tasks including the raking of the fires and as cooking device. (Wang 2015; Wilkinson 2000) Food still was mostly eaten

using fingers. With one exception: spatula formed spoons even outdate early chopsticks-finds, crucial when consuming early forms of porridges cooked from grains. By 400 BCE eating with utensils had become general custom. A custom that might have travelled southwards from northern China. In addition to preferring cooked, mostly boiled foods, climatic conditions with cold winters in the North made people enjoy food that was actually consumed hot. Thus the necessity of picking pieces of food out of a hot boiling broth and handle them while they are still hot, led to the general acceptance of chopsticks. In the moderate South, climatic necessity for hot food was not given, but eating with utensils was soon perceived culturally advanced and thus worth imitating. (Wang 2015) The advancement of noodles and dumplings during the Han Dynasty further promoted the use and spread of chopsticks over spoons. From there, the utensils took the cultural route of the day, spreading throughout the region in the luggage of Buddhist monks and pilgrims. By the 7th century, chopsticks were the widely accepted form of eating device they have remained ever since in Korea, Japan and Vietnam. Similar to the aforementioned spread southwards in China, Wang (2015) argues that the adoption of chopsticks by Japan and Vietnam was mostly culturally motivated, since their local cuisines and geographic circumstances would not have made their use inevitable. As a matter of fact, the use of chopsticks continued to be contested by the spoon in Northern China and Korea through the prevalence of other grain foods, mostly millet, as an important staple. Millet was rather cooked as porridge and thus unsuitable for picking with chopsticks. With the increased availability of rice even in the northern regions, the spoon altered from its initial spatula form and became confined mostly to soup at the dinner table. Only in Korea did the *bizhu*¹⁵ set of spatula spoon and chopsticks survive into present day. And while the use of only chopsticks in a family meal is common today, Korean etiquette, as recommended in the Confucian classics, still demands for using the spoon for the grain (rice) staple and chopsticks for the trimmings in formal occasions. (Lee 2009b; Wang 2015)

While the use of chopsticks as main conveyor of food from the plate, be it shared or one individual's, to mouth is deeply rooted in the culinary culture of all countries under study here, local 'taste' preferences gave distinction to shape and materials. Being, with the exception of Taiwan, "*the most Sinicized country*" (van

¹⁵*bizhu* (*sujeo* in Korean) is the classical Chinese for the spatula shaped spoon (*bi*) and chopsticks (*zhu*) set. The modern Chinese *kuaizi* is of much later origin, the character of which being a 20th century modification. The Japanese Kanji *hashi* and Korean Hanja *jeokkarak* being identical to the classical Chinese *zhu*, which is also still used in Fujian dialect. For the Vietnamese *dua* traditionally a different Chinese character was used. (Wilkinson 2000) The English *chopstick* is a late 17th century addition from pidgin-English. (The Oxford English Dictionary 2016)

Esterik 2008, 5), Vietnam's chopsticks are also most closely related to China's. Bamboo has been and remains the most common choice of material. (Wang 2015) Traditionally for those willing and able to afford it, the wooden chopsticks were covered with lacquer for protection, aesthetics and supposed health benefits. (Lillehoj 2004) Even more financially strong social strata in Vietnam and China sought after ivory carved utensils. (Wang 2015) Ivory white chopsticks are still widely found today in China, especially in the South. Thankfully, melamine plastics have taken the place of the endangered elephant populations of South East Asia as main resource for their production.

Form is another distinctive characteristic of the chopsticks' local origin. The preferred shape of Chinese, Taiwanese and Vietnamese chopsticks is round at the tip and square at the top. This might have been a practical enhancement of the original round design to prevent them rolling off tables, or as Wang (2015, 73) quotes from two Japanese researchers on the topic, Mukai and Hashimoto, an association with ancient China's "*cosmological belief of 'squared earth and round heaven'*". In addition, with 25 cm and more, they are usually longer than the ones common on Korean and Japanese tables.

Archaeological excavations in Japan showed that initially shapes and materials for chopsticks together with Buddhist practices have been copied from Sui and Tang China. Yet over the centuries, local influences like the native *Shinto* religion and the availability of indigenous wood have seen chopsticks develop differently than in neighbouring China and Korea. In Shinto, humans share the world with the spirits of nature that reside everywhere, in mountains, rivers and trees. Despite the elevated lacquerware traditions of Japan, most utensils, furniture and the building structure itself in Shinto shrines is made of uncovered wood, not to separate the spirits from the humans. While chopsticks of other styles existed, this practise is reflected in the polished whitewood chopsticks prevailing in Japan until today. This comparatively plain and natural style also went well with Buddhist principles of a simple and unpretentious life. (Wang 2015)

During the Muromachi period (1337-1573) an unprecedented sophistication was reached in Japanese cuisine, towering in the highly formalised and exquisite *kaiseki-ryori* meals. The diversity of preparation and presentation methods was also transcribed into the realm of chopsticks with highly specialised utensils being reserved for certain types of food. One such specialised pair was called *manabashi*, sharply tipped to facilitate the separation of fish meat and fish bones as well as of clam meat and shell. This sharp point design and the shorter length compared to Chinese/Vietnamese styles are continuing to characterise distinctively Japanese

chopsticks to this day. In addition, for private households they can come in two sizes, which are usually sold in pairs. So called ‘husband and wife’ chopsticks (*miotobashi*) generally include a slightly bigger, less decorated pair for the man and a somewhat shorter, more colourful pair for the woman. This habit is rather unknown in the other countries of the region, where, at private dinner tables, chopsticks are usually not attached to a specific family member. (Wang 2015) Maybe, the appearance of *miotobashi* as well as the various forms of children’s ‘training’ chopsticks, is more of a modern marketing addition to the Japanese *hashi* landscape.

In Korea, the relative abundance of metal and the Mongol-influenced barbecuing and boiling of meat traditions have sustained another locally unique form of chopsticks. Made from metal, they are more durable when handling tough meats. The Korean chopsticks in general are flat oval or flat rectangular at the tip, allowing to facilitate ‘cutting’ through foodstuffs. Coming with a matching spoon, the Korean *sujeo* set is the only resemblance to Tang Dynasty Chinese utensils still commonly in use. (Wang 2015) Archaeological findings in Korea also predate the use of spoons made from bone or lacquered wood to the use of chopsticks. By as early as the Korean Three Kingdoms period (53-668) bronze chopsticks and spoon sets of Chinese design might have become in vogue with Korean gentry and have spread widely popular by the late Kingdom of Goryeo (918-1392). (Wang 2015)

As mentioned initially, chopsticks are a unifying attribute of the East Asian food culture. They are also exclusive to the region in their traditional use. As do certain forms of Western culture, eating allegedly East Asian meals with the help of chopsticks becomes increasingly popular in the West. Apart from their actual use, many additional attributes in the form of table manners and beliefs are entangled with this cultural symbol. They will be discussed in the respective sections 3.2.4 and 3.3. The chicken and egg question of which came first, the chopsticks or the cuisine suitable for consumption by chopsticks?, might well deserve more detailed research in the future. Since the choice of utensils had such an inestimable impact on all aspects of food culture in the kitchen and at the table. In this context, Cotterell (1987) is mentioning the Chinese superstition that knives at a dinner table will invite trouble. Maybe the trouble of upsetting the host with scratching her precious porcelain and lacquerware dishes?

Ceramics

Pottery is one of the oldest forms of artistic expression and handicraft known to mankind. The technique produced both early examples of sacred objects and of everyday utensils, sometimes combining both. East Asia historically has especially thrived at porcelain manufacture. The name of its earliest centre entering the English language as a generic name for the product - china. A product sought after in such quantities, that early semi-industrialised centres developed to meet domestic and overseas demand. (Holcombe 2011; MOC PRC 2014; The Oxford English Dictionary 2016) Today, eating utensils (bowls, plates, spoons) and decorative art throughout the region are still made from porcelain, earth- and stoneware.

The blue and white decorated porcelain bowls synonymous with Chinese food, at least outside of China, are imitations of the praised 14th century work of the imperial kilns at Jingdezhen. History of ceramics use in China however dates back much longer. In Han times (206 BCE - 220 CE), the kilns at Jingdezhen were already producing pottery. (MOC PRC 2014) The Tang Dynasty (618-907) later saw an actual decline in pottery use, substituted for by precious metals by the social strata that could afford it. Common people were still mostly constrained to the use of wooden utensils and containers. Imported glass came in vogue during the later Tang, as did porcelain for use in tea and wine cups. (Schafer 1977) By the Song Dynasty (960-1279), porcelain was already well established among the rich, sharing the table with precious silverware. (Freeman 1977) The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) finally became synonymic with high quality porcelain, produced for and sought after by local, regional and global gentry alike. The Ming imperial household alone, according to one official account of the time quoted in Mote (1977, 214), held a stock of 307.000 pieces of porcelain. The European demand for Ming china not only created one of the largest pre-modern export oriented manufacturing centres. It also fuelled the development of a native European porcelain production in Meissen and Vienna as well as the adoption and replication of East Asian art (*chinoiserie*). The importance of ceramic during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) is also described by Yuan Mei (1716-1798). In his famous historic cookbook, *Suiyuan shidan*, the poet proclaims that fried food is to be served on Qing pottery plates and that metal dishes are to be replaced by ceramics for simmering. (as quoted in Spence (1977, 275)

In Korea, basic earthenware vessels for food and ceremonial purposes were used throughout the early history of the country. First prominence was achieved

with the improvement of Chinese celadon techniques during the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392). Korean celadon was a sought after luxury and art form throughout East Asia and beyond. (Pak & Whitfield 2002) The decline of the Goryeo Dynasty also saw the popularity of celadon fading, and, at the transitional phase to the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897), *buncheong* stoneware became the product of choice in Korea. Once established, the Joseon Dynasty and its revitalised Confucian culture found expression in the “*symbolized frugality and pragmatism*” (Kim 2002, 12) of the scarcely decorated Joseon white porcelain. Similar to other areas, the cobalt-blue painting methods imported from Ming China and other styles of porcelain were constricted to royal and upper class use well into the 19th century. (Kim 2002)

Some of the oldest pottery discoveries in the world are from ancient Japanese *jomon* pottery, dated to several thousand years before common era. Some of them were already intended for the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003) Japanese pottery developed much along its neighbouring Korean and Chinese styles, from where it adopted and adapted techniques and forms. In the 16th century, Sen no Rikyu (1522-1591) defined the principles of Japanese tea ceremony, and with it gave way to a new native interpretation of pottery. Leading principle became the Buddhist derived *wabi sabi*, the quest for beauty in the imperfections and inconstancies of nature. The subsequent isolation of Japan (*sakoku*, 1633-1853) might have further supported the refinement of a native style in all arts by minimising foreign influences. (Nagamine 2010) With the Meiji opening of Japan, many foreign influences came into the country, but pottery and culinary artists like Rosanjin (1858-1919) soon revitalised classical styles and shapes, proclaiming “*it has to fit*”. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003, 13) To this day, Japanese fine dining is accompanied by and served on a showcase of pottery art. Restaurant owners and chefs are known to take much pride and effort in matching each single dish with the adequate form of tableware for presentation. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003)

In Vietnam, blue and white cobalt ceramics production preceded the Ming invasion of 1406 and the subsequent Chinese domination over the country. During the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225) iron was used to decorate the pottery wares with Southern Chinese influences in style, but cobalt soon became the preferred colour choice. Archaeological evidence and Vietnamese pieces in art collections point to a case of apprentice overtaking the master with early Vietnamese export pottery a sought after good in South East Asian markets as well as in Japan. The significant increase in export oriented competition from China that arose in the

early 18th century, finally reduced the Vietnamese ceramics industry to “*a ghost of its former self*”. (Brown 2008)

Today, East Asia still boasts a number of renown ceramic artists. In addition, pottery of all types - earthen, stone and porcelain - maintain much of their significance in regards to food culture. With modern production techniques and rising income levels, more people are able to afford pottery tableware than ever before. And for those sticking to modern additions to the tableware market, melamine products are more often than not modelled on classic examples of pottery (and lacquerware as discussed below). East Asia shares a common ceramics heritage. As argued elsewhere throughout this paper, local taste preferences might vary, reflecting in shape and style, but the region unites in a joint appreciation and esteem for its ceramics past and present.

Lacquerware

“*[L]acquered objects are the most perfect works of art that have ever issued from the hands of man.*” (Gonse (1886) quoted in Mody (1940, 291))

Tableware made from lacquer, as praised in its Japanese form above, shares a common history with many other ‘ingredients’ of the East Asian culinary culture. Invented in ancient China by as early as the neolithic period, the art of coating objects of sacred or daily use¹⁶ in lacquer reportedly travelled with Buddhist monks of Tang China to Japan via Korea and the Ryukyu Islands (present day Okinawa) as well as south into present day Vietnam. But lacquer fragments found at excavation sites in Korea show that the method might have arrived there even earlier. Due to their location and important role as facilitator for trade between Japan and China when direct trade was restricted, the Ryukyu Islands also combined and blended neighbouring styles into their own distinct lacquerware. (Kopplin 2002)

The ‘true’ lacquer, often referred to as *urushiol* from a derivation of its Japanese name *Urushi*, is made from the resinous sap of *Toxicodendron verniciflua* trees found at specific places in China, Korea and Japan while *laccol* of *Toxicodendron succedaneum* is more associated with Vietnamese and Taiwanese lacquerware. (Schilling, Khanjian, Heginbotham, & Schellmann 2014). Both are however saps of trees, thus contrary to the insect-derived *shellac*-resins of India, Thailand and Burma. (Minney, O’Neill, Impey, & Umney 1996)

¹⁶For a comprehensive list of traditional usage see Mody (1940, 291-92)

While trade in lacquerware remained mostly outgoing from a Chinese perspective, by the 16th century Japanese methods produced lacquerware of such superior quality that it was re-imported into China. At this time, Chinese craftsmen also underwent the reverse journey to Japan in search for lacquer-enlightenment. Over the centuries a diversity of styles, methods and forms developed within the individual countries and throughout the region. (Minney et al. 1996) A rough classification of styles by their local origin might include (without being limited to):

- China: Ming-period red lacquers with carved scenes
 - Japan: ‘sprinkled’ images from gold and silver powders
 - Korea: inlays of metal and mother-of-pearl
 - Ryukyu: inlays of local shells
 - Vietnam: polished and varnished lacquerware
- (Kopplin 2002)

Despite their time consuming production method, the products gained rapid popularity for daily use, at least among those able to afford. The Daimyo lords of pre-Meiji Japan, connoisseurs and patrons of fine lacquer art, courted the lacquer artists, the best of whom would eventually even become members of their personal household. Mody (1940) Despite the aesthetics, the popularity of lacquerware had (and has) two reasons: Lacquerware of the urushol and laccol type is praised for its hardness and resists abrasion as well as acidity. (Minney et al. 1996) Secondly, the lacquer has been claimed to have beneficial influence on health through the food absorbing from the dish. (Lillehoj 2004) At one point, it has been argued, the popularity of lacquerware and the urge to protect its beauty facilitated the spread of chopsticks and hindered the introduction fork-style cutlery.

On an interesting side note, by the 18th and 19th century East Asian lacquerware became so popular in Europe, that an entire export oriented lacquer industry developed in southern China, comparable to the porcelain export industry of the Qing Dynasty. Numerous exhibits in European museums today are of export manufacturing origin. (Schilling et al. 2014) Soon European manufacturers wanted to participate in the promising business and began to forge East Asian products, a practise later to be known as *japanning*. (Minney et al. 1996)

Today, governments throughout the region are eager to preserve their (shared) lacquerware tradition by promoting the historical handicraft or investing in lacquer production. Despite their efforts, traditional lacquerware is more and more fading from everyday use. This is directly related to the time consuming na-

ture of production. Several layers of lacquer have to be applied in a slow and labour intensive process, giving the product days to dry in specialised humidified closets between each application. In combination with rising standards of living, industrial alternatives made from porcelain and later plastics made their ways into East Asian kitchens and onto the tables. (Kopplin 2002) The traditional art nonetheless left a lasting impression on the regional food culture. Many of the dishes and utensils made from plastics today are imitations of products traditionally produced using the lacquer techniques described above. The ubiquitous black and red bowls used for miso soup in Japanese restaurants within Japan and abroad are one such example, as are the omnipresent melamine chopsticks of China and Taiwan. In upscale restaurants and traditionalist households, food might well still be presented in original pieces of lacquer art, as it is in ceremonial occasions. (Mostas 2015)

As was the argument with ceramics before, the shared lacquerware tradition of East Asia has left a peculiar lasting impression on the region's food culture. Local tastes may vary, leading to the adoption of distinct styles and forms, that are however, mere expressions of a shared general gist.

In the case of Korea, one addition must be made to the two tableware materials presented. As was discussed in the sections above, metal tableware went out of style in China after the Tang Dynasty. In Korea, metal utensils prevail. Many arguments have been made for the continuous use of metal *sujeo* and bowls in Korea. (Joh 2010; Kim 2015) The economic answer, the durability of the product, paired with a certain desirability left from days less abound, might be the most evident. While rather unseen, yet, in China, Japan and Vietnam, some Taiwanese fast food restaurants have already introduced metal chopsticks because of their durability. This is in response to growing environmental concerns with the use of disposable chopsticks. Metal soup bowls are also seen. But in general, outside of Korea the other materials prevail. Some discussions argue for the antibacterial aspect attributed especially to copper. Copper bowls are still served in traditional restaurants, the everyday Korean meal, however, only gets in contact with stainless forms of metal by means of chopsticks, spoon and rice bowl today.

The historical analysis of this chapter was important in order to see the underlying commonalities of East Asian tableware. Today, Chinese produced off the shelf plates and cups dominate dinner tables not only in the region. Choice of style and shape however varies with local preferences. These common appearances may also vary throughout the countries. Korean metal dishes, Japanese wabi sabi pottery and china in China and Vietnam, nevertheless are expressions

of a joint cultural heritage. As such, the differences are superficial, declining with deeper analysis. The results summarised in table 4.2, page 93 are thus less different after this analysis than they might appear on first sight.

3.2.3 Meals & Menus

In post-Tang China, a transformation took place that lastingly shaped the culinary traditions of China, Taiwan, Vietnam and to some extent Korea and even Japan. It is argued, that with the growing availability of ingredients, the adoption of new and (at that time) foreign preparation methods as well as the general sophistication of the era, Chinese wanted to enjoy a larger diversity of dishes offered at all meals. Thus giving the rise to *heshizhi* (communal eating style) as opposed to the former *fenshizhi* (individual eating style). (Wang 2015) This is in stark contrast to European eating tradition, which saw a move away from shared eating and towards individual servings, starting from royal courts and disseminating down the social strata with growing wealth.

The custom of serving food on shared plates also initiated a transformation of dining tables in the region. In order to accommodate the growing number of plates and dinner guests, tables ‘grew’ bigger during the Ming Dynasty and contemporary reigns in the neighbouring countries. This is the supposed reason, why Chinese, Vietnamese and to some extent Korean chopsticks are longer in size than their Japanese counterparts. It suddenly, simply put, became necessary to cover greater distances. (Wang 2015)

A growing cultural independence from China might have been one reason why Japan did not adapt to this new trend. Wang (2015) brings forward the argument that the, then as now, common *tatami* floor seating has proven shared servings impractical. This however is in contrast to other food cultures, i.e. in South Asia and the Middle East, where shared meals and sitting on the floor both remain common to this day. Whatever the reason, Japanese retained their *meimeizen* (one meal per person) tradition until today, which is possible to experience by means of a boxed railway lunch (*eki bento*) as it is at a formalised *kaiseki* dinner. (Wang 2015) The resistance towards communal meals was not entirely exclusive though. While the Mongolians have failed invading Japan thanks to heavenly winds (*kamikaze*) twice, their culinary heritage in the form of shared hot pot and barbecue meals are omnipresent in today’s Japan.

A Japanese meal continues to be centred around a bowl of white rice. Usually around four side dishes are served to accompany the rice. Cwiertka (2006) quotes a Japanese media survey from 1997, asking 6,000 viewers of a television cooking show to name their favourite side dish for a Japanese style dinner. Besides *miso* soup and soy stews, the list also includes a number of ‘non-Japanese’ dishes like hamburger, *gyoza* dumplings and rice curry (*kare*). While foreign in origin, this shows how well they are introduced and naturalised into the traditional “*rice, soup and side dishes*” meal setting. (Cwiertka 2006, 7-8)

This setting, with the inclusion of noodles instead of rice at some meals, best summarises the quintessential East Asian meal pattern. It functions as the guiding principle for a basic working day lunch, as it does for a sophisticated feast at a festive occasion. The difference merely lies in the quantity of rice and the variety of side dishes served. As a basic rule, the share of rice and noodle staples decreases as quantity and quality of sides increases on par with the importance of the occasion. In the Chinese language, the differentiation between staple and side dish is clearly marked with the terms *fan* and *cai*. The former derives from cooked grains and has become identified with steamed rice. The latter initially meant vegetable but became synonymous with side dish, not discriminating its plant, meat or fish nature. (Newman 2004)

In its most basic form, a bowl or plate of rice comes already with the side dish put on top of it. The Chinese serve it *gai fan* (literally covering rice), the Taiwanese prefer to call it ‘rice in gravy’ (*hui fan*). In Korea, it is called *deopbap* of which *bibimbap* is among the most popular and most famous. The Japanese refer to it as *donburi*, which can include all kinds of meat and fish, the latter sometimes raw. In Vietnam, farmers historically sold the good rice, while they themselves had to nourish on the kernels broken during harvest and transport. Today *com tam* (literally broken rice) is a popular filling lunch or breakfast. Reflecting local taste preferences in the choice and preparation of toppings, the rice bowl everywhere is nonetheless usually accompanied by a small bowl of clear soup. (Carter 2003; Saito 2016a; Tom 2015) In its portable form, rice and side dish might even be rolled up in or without a sheet of dried seaweed (laver). This forms a particularly prominent snack and convenience food in Korea (*gimbap*), Japan (*maki* and *onigiri*) and Taiwan (*fantuan*). With the spread of 24 hour Japanese convenience stores in the region, it also became widely available in other countries.

Before the age of culinary globalisation, East Asian breakfasts differed a lot from Western ones. There was much less differentiation between breakfast dishes

and dishes for other meals. Rather the standard form of *rice, soup and side dish* also dominated the mornings. Again, noodles can take over the role of rice as the early meal's staple. The introduction of Western foodways and the convenience of the Western style breakfast have seen traditionally prepared breakfasts declining in home settings. Instead a cup of coffee or tea, a bowl of cereals and a piece of toast or other kinds of bread and pastry have become almost naturalised. When eating out, on holidays or weekends, traditional breakfast meals are nevertheless still popular. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003; Maangchi 2009a)

The traditional Japanese breakfast includes a number of pickles and fermented *natto*, a piece of grilled fish, and an egg, arranged around the standard bowl of white rice and a clear soup. The egg is usually served either raw or slightly poached to be mixed with the rice. Rectangular sheets of *nori* laver are presented to wrap the rice in. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003) Korean traditional breakfast is very similar. Instead of adding *natto* at the table, fermented soy bean paste (*doenjang*) is commonly used in preparing the light soups that come with the rice and a number of side dishes. (Maangchi 2009a) Carter (2003) attributes a unique characteristic to Korean meals, starting from the breakfast, which is a distinct sourness. This sourness can be found in soups and side dishes, including kimchi.

A particular dish worth mentioning here is rice gruel or congee¹⁷. Made with several times the amount of water used in cooking regular white rice, the resulting porridge is enjoyed as a breakfast staple throughout the region. In addition, it is appreciated for its warming and healing attributes, thus being the region's preferred culinary ailment remedy. While eaten elsewhere, it is the traditional breakfast staple in Southern China. The North, traditionally more contingent on wheat, starts the day with steamed dumplings (empty *mantou* or stuffed *baozi*), a bowl of noodles or a fried cruller (*youtiao*) for the staple centre. If not eaten 'on the go', these staples are accompanied by the typical assortment of side dishes, including pickles, vegetables, meat or fish prevail. (Newman 2004)

Vietnamese breakfast became influenced by Western bread long before toast and pastry became popular in the other countries. In their colonial Vietnam, the French introduced *baguette* from the late 19th century onward. Today, *banh mi* is one of the most popular breakfast items, combining french influences in bread and pate with East Asian preferences for spices (cilantro, chilli) and toppings (soy sauce). *Com tam*, the broken rice dish of impoverished farmers described earlier, is also enjoyed by many for breakfast, as are *xoi* (sticky rice bowls) with different toppings. The ubiquitous *pho* noodles are also commonly eaten in the mornings, to

¹⁷Chinese *zhou*, Vietnamese *chao*, Korean *juk*, Japanese *kayu*

give energy for the day. (Greeley 2002; Vietnam Online 2015) It can be argued, that all of these dishes again resemble the East Asian staple and side setting, despite not being served on separate plates. In the case of pho, including even the clear soup in a one bowl meal.

It becomes the guiding principle of this study, also applicable to the meal section discussed above: local variety exists in the choice of toppings and side dishes, but the general meal pattern remains unvaried throughout the region. And more so, it even remains unchanged throughout the day and throughout the different occasions of the year. Once supplemented by noodles to read *staple, soup and side dish*, the phrase coined by (Cwiertka 2006) about the standard pattern of Japanese cuisine might put East Asian culinary regionality in a nutshell in a similar way umami (3.1.4) and chopsticks (3.2.2) do. And while all societies depend on a staple of some sort in their diet, it is this centrality of the rice and noodle bowl in East Asia that clearly unites the region. Central not only in the perceived significance, but also in the ‘geographical’ position at the table.

With rice and chopsticks occupying such a pivotal place in East Asian food culture, they also shaped the social graces dictating food etiquette and meal time manners. The next section will compare a number of these social norms and conventions in order to further deepen our understanding of the East Asian food culture. The boundary between table manners or rituals on the one hand and religious ideas about food on the other often can be blurred. As such, the following part will look at the actual occurrences, while the later chapter (3.3), as the name implies, is more concerned with general ideas about food in the respective societies.

3.2.4 Table Rules, Manners & Rituals

Table manners and rules presumably exist since human ancestors first came together at an open fire to share their prey. They organise the way we eat in a socially acceptable manner. They are, as are many other characteristics of any given food culture, not naturally given but socially constructed. As such, conveying food from the table to the mouth using one’s fingers might be well accepted in one culture, while it is seriously frowned upon by others. Certain food customs, dietary prohibitions and table rituals also have their origin in considerations of health and sanitation, originated long before scientific discussion of germs and bacteria.

As the central utensil on all dining tables, a number of rules apply to the use of chopsticks in all East Asian countries. Wang (2015, 111-12) in his comprehensive study on the history, development and use of chopsticks, identifies three categories of chopstick “*not-to-do[s]*”: (1) those preventing unpleasant eating in general consideration of other diners, (2) those specific to chopsticks use, and (3) those deriving from cultural and religious meanings.

Among those preventing an unpleasant meal experience for others, Newman (2004, 109-110) lists a number of contemporary ‘don’ts’ that are traced back to the Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial, a Chinese Classic from the Spring and Autumn period (771-476 BCE):

- Do not eat audibly.
- Do not bolt your food.
- Do not roll the rice into a ball.
- Do not spread out rice to cool.
- Do not crunch bones with your teeth.
- Do not grab what you want.
- Do not replace fish and meat that you have already tasted.
- Do not draw items of food in the soup through your mouth; use chopsticks for this.
- Do not stir or add condiments to the soup in the common bowl.
- Do not throw bones to the dogs.
- Do not pick your teeth.

The use of chopsticks (plus spoon in Korea) required another set of regulations. Since spoiling food and spilling it on the table is generally frowned upon by all culinary traditions, different customs are adhered to therefore in East Asia. The desired outcome might be the same, but the different approaches are based on culturally slightly different interpretations of common actions. In China, Taiwan and Vietnam, where communal eating practices are strongly developed, using one’s own chopsticks, the food served on communal plates is first transferred to one’s own rice bowl. The bowl might be lifted and moved closer to the communal plate for picking the items up and then moved closer to the mouth for eating, thus minimising ‘unprotected’ distances where food could spill onto the table. In Korea, the spoon is used to transfer any dripping items, since lifting one’s rice bowl is considered inappropriate, resembling a beggar demanding for food. Instead it is acceptable to lower one’s head over the bowl to cut the distance while eating. In the aforementioned China, Taiwan and Vietnam as well as in Japan, this in return is regarded rude as it brings to mind pictures of pigs feasting over

their pits. In order not to look like beggars, the rice bowl when lifted is held with four fingers at the bottom and the thumb at the rim. For the same reason tapping the bowl is generally disapproved of. (Cotterell 1987; Levesque 2013; Wang 2015; WYWCA 1982)

One convention, the origin of which can easily be traced back to its religious roots, is not sticking one's chopsticks or other utensils into a bowl of food, especially rice. Instead it is expected to place the chopsticks on top of the bowl's edge or rather at a separate plate or chopsticks rest if provided. This is due to the resemblance with the upright incense sticks used in religious offerings and during funerals. (Levesque 2013; Wang 2015) Symbolising a bad omen, nobody wants to be reminded of the finiteness of life at a joyful dinner.

The way in which meals are served (3.2.3) also influenced the setting up of the tables. In all the countries that adopted shared servings, the standard of setting the table is with chopsticks pointing towards the middle of the table in anticipation of the food that will be positioned centrally. In Japan however, chopsticks are placed parallel to the table's edge in front of each diner. The exception being shared (foreign) meal occasions, like *shabu shabu* hot pot of Chinese/Mongol origin and the Korean style *yakiniku* barbecues. Here, chopsticks are laid out facing towards the middle of the table as well. (Wang 2015)

In these sharing occasions, *toribashi* (communal chopsticks) are usually provided in Japan. The idea is to use these to transfer food onto one's own plate or into one's own bowl, before picking it up from there with one's own chopsticks. Thus, the shared plates and pots are never touched with utensils that have been in contact with one's mouth before. (Wang 2015; WYWCA 1982) This method is gaining broader advocacy in the aftermaths of epidemics like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Avian Flu. In Taiwan, it is already quite a common practise at formal occasions, gaining ground in other countries as well. Zhao (2015, 52) goes one step further, advocating a "*reform*" of Chinese dining practices with the introduction of two separate pairs of chopsticks for every diner. One is to function as conveyor from the shared plates and pots to one's own and the second one exclusively for bowl to mouth transport. If this practice is going to become widely accepted or not is upon time (and the severity of future epidemics) to show.

Another ritual which survived in Japan, while fading in continental East Asia during the Ming Dynasty, is saying *itadakimasu* before starting a meal. While resembling the French *bon appetit* and the German *Guten Appetit* for 'enjoy

your meal’, the Japanese gesture goes beyond the mere words. Building on the Buddhist principle of respect for all forms of life, it is meant to thank all animals and plants as well as humans involved in the production of the meal. As such, while comparable, one could argue it goes further beyond the Christian saying of grace before a meal. (John 2012; Wang 2015; WYWCA 1982)

A last set of rules worth mentioning here are those concerned with seating arrangements. In Japan, the principal guest of honour is traditionally seated in front of the *tokonoma* alcove. While not explicitly or necessarily putting her/him opposite the door as it is common in China, in this way the honoured guest will nonetheless never have the door in her/his back. This seat is perceived the least desirable and thus reserved for the host across East Asia. (Newman 2004; WYWCA 1982)

A finally word to drinking rituals: Like elsewhere, drinking (alcohol) is a social event in East Asia. Celebrations and festivities are usually honoured with a few rounds of traditional alcohol, as discussed in chapter 3.1.5. Beer has become the preferred choice for less formal occasions. Some of the words used to raise a glass beautifully illustrate the shared culinary culture of the region. While the Chinese *ganbei*, Japanese *kanpai* and Korean *geonbae* all translate literally as ‘dry glass’, the Vietnamese *mot tram phan tram* means ‘one hundred percent’. Thus, all four languages point to the complete emptying of the glass, which is facilitated by the small glasses traditionally used.

Due to shared belief systems and the significance of rice and chopsticks in all five countries studied here, similar table manners, rules and rituals have evolved. Others were imported from one country to the other in an appreciation of a perceived cultural sophistication deemed worth of copying. Again, certain local variations remain, grounded in differential practices, like the placing of the chopsticks or the handling of the rice bowl. Additionally, many of the rules listed in consideration of other diners could well be translated into other culinary cultural realms. In general, a large number of table rules, manners and rituals are shared among the countries analysed here. They are summarised as (*shared*) in table 4.2, the brackets representing the limitations due to their local peculiarities beneath their regional patterns.

Having analysed the *what* and *hows* of East Asia’s food culture, the following chapter on ideas about food will complete this study. The findings are then summarised and interpreted in the final conclusive chapter (4).

3.3 Ideas about Food

“There is a widespread belief in ghosts, which has deeply affected the way people think and behave.” (Lai 1971, 161)

This last chapter is providing an insight into religious and health motivated ideas about food. Since food is such a substantial and eminent part of daily social life, it is always shaped and influenced by the philosophical and religious streams of thoughts prevailing in society. For Asia, this is on one hand a strong identification with ritual exchange between the spirits (of ancestors, nature etc.) and humans. On the other hand, traditional health concepts have been very specific in relating nutrition and diet to the well being of the individual. These two realms are shortly discussed below to compliment the afore analysis of ingredients and table and kitchen practices.

3.3.1 Religious Beliefs & Superstition

The importance of rice as a staple throughout the region has been highlighted before. (chapter 3.1.1) In addition to its nutritional importance, or better exactly because of its nutritional importance, rice from early history onwards has taken a significant role in festive and ritual celebrations. Glutinous rice is made into rice cakes of various forms during (Chinese) Lunar New Year in Southern China and Vietnam. The first day of the first month of the lunar calendar (between late January and mid-February in the Gregorian calendar) celebrates the start of spring and the new farming year. It remains an important annual holiday in China and Taiwan (*Chunjie*), Vietnam (*Tet*), Korea (*Seolnal*) and Japan (*Oshogatsu*). Since the Meiji Era adoption of the Gregorian Calendar, New Year in Japan is celebrated on December 31 though. In Korea a pasta-like form of rice cake is served in soup (*tteokguk*) on this occasion. In Japan and China, eating noodles at this occasion and on birthdays resembles the wish for longevity. (Ashkenazi & Jacob 2003; Maangchi 2009b; Newman 2004)

Religious believes and superstition are not limited to the ingredients and dishes of East Asia. Certain established table manners, rules and habits have their origin in religious considerations, as has been demonstrated in chapter 3.2.4. Chopsticks, as the ubiquitous utensil on East Asian dining tables carry a number of symbolic meanings. First and foremost, due to their nature they always appear in pairs, which made them a symbol of love and partnership. Chopsticks thus,

in one form or another, played important roles in matchmaking and traditional wedding ceremonies throughout the region. While ‘husband and wife’ chopsticks in Japan are distinguished among each other by size and decorum, in China they always should be as close to the other as possible, in order to symbolise closeness among family members or guests and hosts. (Wang 2015)

Moreover, chopsticks are accompanying a person from cradle to grave. In Japan, at a ceremony called *ohashizomeishiki* the child is fed from a bowl using chopsticks at a very young age to, symbolically, introduce her or him to the world. Artisan chopsticks are a familiar present for birthdays or a souvenir to bring home from an area renown for its handicrafts. At the funeral, a bowl of rice with a pair of chopsticks stuck vertically into it, is presented to the deceased as a ritual farewell. This also explains why sticking chopsticks into food is not considered proper table etiquette as described in before. The close relationship Japanese have to the *kamis* (spirits) of the natural world is also expressed in the preferred choice of chopsticks material (3.2.2). While lacquered or plastic chopsticks are common today for durability, festive occasions demand for plain wood ones. *Ryokuchibashi* (two-ended chopsticks) have a round body with pointed ends on both sides. It is believed that one side is for the humans to eat, while the spirits can join the meal using the other side. (Wang 2015) Such a distinct use of chopsticks is unknown in the rest of East Asia, food offerings for spirits and gods nonetheless usually come with a pair of chopsticks for the worshipped to indulge with.

In Japanese Shinto, sake plays an important role. Approaching a larger Shinto shrine, one usually passes a, symbolic because empty, storage of sake barrels. Actual sake is presented to the *kami* together with offerings of food. In certain festivities, the faithful are presented a cup of sake each to close a ceremony. The rice wine thus is not only an offering to the spirit but also a form of sacrament received by the believers. Antoni (1988, 201) has described this dual essence of sake as mode of communication between the two realms. An exchange which is not practised with other forms of eat- and drinkable oblation.

In Buddhism, tea, in addition to its cordial benefits, can have a similar function. Focusing exclusively on the beverage, one can withdraw from the self-created distractions of existence. The resulting ‘emptiness’ allowing to catch a glimpse of the true nature of things. The same thing can be achieved by meditation, to the facilitation of which tea was initially developed. But also in religious offerings did tea play an important role. In Korea, as in other East Asian countries, this latter role has mostly been transferred to alcoholic beverages. However, the name of one type of *jesa* ancestor memorial rituals to this day bears resemblance to the tra-

ditional practice. Called *charye*, translating as ‘tea rites’, they are traditionally held on major Korean holidays. (of Taize et al. 2010)

While this study is limited in its means for discussing comprehensively the role of religious belief in shaping culture, the analysis above has nevertheless produced evidence for a shared role of food in religion and of religion in food. While the nature of the spirits might differ, the presumed relationship between human and spirit world is identifiable across the region, as is the importance of food and drink in maintaining this relationship. The role of food in this relationship might be best summarised (in table 4.2 as sacrificial offering to the spirits of ancestors and nature respectively in the five countries studied.

3.3.2 Health

In the traditional East Asian view, food was not only a means of resisting hunger, but moreover the most important method for balancing the inner health and preventing ailments. Reference to this traditional medicine is made within the oldest texts available, and throughout history, cookbooks also have been medicinal works of reference. (Cotterell 1987; Newman 2004; Yang & Guo 2011) To this day a Chinese bookshop will hold two sections on food related works, the cookbook section and the health care area, including titles on nutritional therapy (*shi liao*) and medicinal meals (*yao shan*). Throughout the region, this understanding of a relationship between diet and health can be traced back to the aforementioned early medical records. Many of which originated in China. (Farquhar 2005) Here, the traditional medicine has been ‘nationalised’ as *guoyi* (literally national medicine), as it has been in Vietnam (*y hoc dan toc*) and Korea (*hanuihak*). (Wahlberg 2014) In Japan the Chinese origin of the concept behind is commemorated in the name *kanpo*, which translates as Chinese medicine. Behind all these lies the understanding, that an illness is a disharmony within one’s body. Since all food items, depending on their nature, preparation or combination, do influence the body, they can be used to rebalance the human system. In choosing the various dishes that comprise any East Asian meal, as much thought is given on the balancing of the tastes, as is on the balancing of the acknowledged effects on the body. These adjustments are thus made preventative. To heal prevailing ailments on the other hand, herbal preparations that increase the positive effects can be prescribed by a traditional practitioner. (Newman 2004; Wahlberg 2014; Yang & Guo 2011) Tea is also believed to have health enhancing attributes. Cotterell (1987, 44-45) lists a number of conditions, tea can produce relief for. These include clearing

mucus, stimulate the digestive system, enhance concentration and eye-sight as well as lower the blood pressure and relief diarrhoea.

The region has long fought with famine and scarcity, evidence for which can be found in the ‘waste not’ ideology of its traditional recipes and the diversity of foodstuffs deemed edible. As elsewhere, however, recent additions to the regional food culture and the modern economic prosperity have marked a rise in diseases of affluence. Industrially produced food items also have been subject to adulteration and contamination leading to alarming food scandals. For people in East Asia, as elsewhere, it appears increasingly difficult to keep the “*proper balance*” (Newman 2004, 188) of food consumption fundamental to the region’s health concept.

Without wanting to stir up national(ist) sentiment, this study uses the TCM (traditional Chinese medicine) acronym to summarise this section in the conclusive table 4.2. This is to express the finding, that behind modern day deviations, the region shares a long history of health related guidance to food choices and an inseparable relationship between food and health.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Summary of Findings					
Category	Country				
<i>Ingredients</i>	China	Korea	Japan	Taiwan	Vietnam
Staples	rice	rice	rice	rice	rice
	noodles	noodles	noodles	noodles	noodles
	leaf greens	leaf greens	leaf greens	leaf greens	leaf greens
	seaweeds	seaweeds	seaweeds	seaweeds	seaweeds
	tofu	tofu	tofu	tofu	tofu
Plant Foods	pickles	pickles	pickles	pickles	pickles
	terrestrial (70%)	terrestrial (50%)	terrestrial (50%)	terrestrial (60%)	terrestrial (60%)
	aquatic (30%)	aquatic (50%)	aquatic (50%)	aquatic (40%)	aquatic (40%)
	eggs	(eggs)	eggs	(eggs)	
	(milk)		milk	(milk)	
Seasonings & Condiments	soy/fish-umami	soy-umami	soy-umami	soy/fish-umami	fish-umami
	green tea	green tea	green tea	green tea	oolong
	trad.alcohol	trad.alcohol	trad.alcohol	n/a	beer
	juice/RTD tea	carbonates	RTD tea	RTD tea	RTD tea

Table 4.1: Summary of Findings: Ingredients
Own illustration

Summary of Findings					
Category	Country				
<i>In the Kitchen & At the Table</i>	China	Korea	Japan	Taiwan	Vietnam
Methods of Preparation	hot pot stir fry	hot pot	hot pot	hot pot stir fry	hot pot stir fry
Tableware	chopsticks	sashimi (hoe) chopsticks (& spoon)	sashimi chopsticks	sashimi chopsticks	chopsticks
Meals & Menus	china staple, soup & side dishes (shared)	metal staple, soup & side dishes (shared)	wabi sabi staple, soup & side dishes (shared)	china staple, soup & side dishes (shared)	china staple, soup & side dishes (shared)
Table Rules, Manners & Rituals					
<i>Ideas about Food</i>					
Religious Beliefs & Superstition	offering	offering	offering	offering	offering
Health	TCM	TCM	TCM	TCM	TCM

Table 4.2: Summary of Findings: Continued

Own illustration

The analysis represented by chapter 3 of this paper is entitled an ‘enquiry into the culinary regionality of East Asian eating and drinking’. As such, the guiding question has been whether there is (or is not) a homogeneous East Asian culinary region. A region that consists of diverse de-facto states, including China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, but at the same time is sharing a common food culture.

The evidence presented here strongly points to the existence of such a region. Rice and noodles are the region’s staples, having fed the people for centuries and continue to do so. Among the plant foods, that accompany these staples, leaf greens are the most common throughout. Seaweeds play an important role in providing a nutritious as well as umami taste addition to the dinner table. As with seaweeds, the use of soy has long been particular to the region, resulting in a variety of products of soy bean origin, most notably tofu (bean curd). In Buddhist temples and beyond, for centuries it has provided an important protein substitute to animal products. Pickles, as elsewhere, have been an early form of conservation. Further, they also play an important role in achieving umami, the leading taste principle of the region.

In animal products, the region is less homogeneous than in plant foods. Meats of terrestrial animals, pork, beef and poultry among the most prominent, make up varying shares of animal protein intake. The individual countries’ shares varying between 50% for Japan and Korea, 60% for Taiwan and Vietnam, and 70% for China respectively. The remaining animal meat protein is taken in the form of fish meats and other seafood. Eggs play an equally diverse role in the countries studied. While present in all cuisines, Chinese and Japanese diners consume the most. Milk traditionally has been of limited importance to the region. In recent years, Japan has become a milk consuming nation, with China and Taiwan picking up on its consumption.

In seasoning and condiments, the region follows the guiding umami taste principle. Various sauces of soy and/or fish origin are to be found throughout East Asia, enhancing the savoury protein taste. A plethora of spices and herbs exist, leading to varying degrees of spiciness, saltiness and other local taste preferences. But the umami taste and its achievement through specialised seasoning preparations is a marker for East Asia’s culinary regionality.

Tea traditionally is the beverage of East Asia. With the exception of Taiwan, green tea in its leaf or powdered form remains the produce of choice throughout the region. Taiwanese consumers prefer their renown mountain oolongs. In al-

coholic beverages, a number of rice and grain based traditional alcoholic drinks continue to dominate Chinese, Korean and Japanese diner tables. Vietnam, on the contrary, appears to have fully adopted Western beer culture.

Summarising the ‘ingredients’ section, it can be said, that the rice and noodle staples as well as the umami taste preference strongly point to an East Asian culinary regionality. With other ingredients, including the source of animal meats, the region is less united.

When it comes to preparation methods, hot pots and related stews are highly popular throughout the region, while the wok stir frying of China, Taiwan and Vietnam is of less significance in Korea and Japan. The latter two on the other hand share a liking of raw preparations called *hoe* and *sashimi* in their respective languages.

Tableware and table culture throughout the region can be described as chopsticks culture. The pair of utensils very distinctively represents East Asian culinary regionality. New materials and industrially produced tableware are gaining significance in East Asia as they do elsewhere, traditional shapes and styles however continue to guide the local taste, like the wabi sabi appreciation of nature represented in Japanese tableware.

The assemblage of meals and menus in the staple, soup and side dishes pattern is another distinctive argument for East Asia’s culinary regionality. While on the surface the shared servings of China, Taiwan, Vietnam and to some extent Korea differ greatly from the individual servings of Japan, the underlying principle is represented throughout. A bowl of staple in the form of rice or noodles is supplemented by a clear soup and any number of side dishes, depending on the actual occasion.

In table rules, manners and rituals, the region also shares distinctive features. These unifying features are founded in the region’s meal pattern and staple choices, as they are in shared religious and philosophic ideas. Local interpretations of these shared ideas do result in certain differences in local actualities.

In conclusion, the section ‘in the kitchen and at the table’ of this study has presented strong evidence for East Asia’s regionality in the design of its dominant eating utensil as well as in the pattern of its meals. In other aspects, the region remains less homogeneous.

The final section has touched upon ‘ideas about food’ in order to include this third sphere of food related analysis. Here, food throughout the region is an important means of upholding the relationship between human and spiritual realm, most notably in the form of offerings. Building upon the ancient Chinese understanding of food as the basic conveyor of good health, a traditional understanding of medicine has evolved in all of the countries of the region. This understanding continues to guide the health related perception of food beyond its basic nutritional value.

The evidence summarised here and in tables 4.1 and 4.2 points to the regionality of East Asia’s food and drink culture. This culture is constantly changing and adapting as it has from the earliest days of history. To many, their ‘national’ food is loaded with sentiments of belonging and home, helping to differentiate ‘them’ versus ‘us’. While this paper does not try to stir up nationalist sentiment, it has contributed to a supranational understanding of East Asian food culture, rooted in manifold peculiarities of a shared history and heritage. Many of its ‘ingredients’ have originated in China, have become adapted and adopted elsewhere in the region and sometimes made it back in their new form to China. This paper is nonetheless not about Chinese food culture. It is about the exchange and interaction that has, in the realm of food, created regionality before and across national borders.

This paper has attempted to close a gap in research by combining the manifold peculiarities that make up a food culture. Instead of describing in detail one characteristic, it analysed the culinary region East Asia as a whole and in all its flavourful features. Limitations in depth had to be accepted to achieve perspective. A perspective that has produced a profound picture of East Asia’s food culture. This culture may not be limited to the countries studied here. Future research is invited to further expand the scope of this analysis, broadening from the inside the area influenced by East Asian culinary regionality.

Appendix A

Abstracts

A.1 Abstract in English

In the representation of its foods, the various culinary traditions, countries and regions of East Asia are merely moulded into a singularity, represented in- and outside of the region by 'Asian Foodcourts' and 'Asian Chefs'. These alleged fusion kitchens are serving the overly saturated putatively exotic treats. Thus, to a general public, the geographic and/or cultural borders between Sushi, Sweet and Sour Pork and Kimchi are fading. In reply to this trend, the paper at hand seeks to contribute towards answering the question if there actually is something like an East Asian food culture, basis for a transregional culinary identity, developed out of historical context, interdependencies and interrelations? Mennell (1985) has called it the civilising of appetite, the process of building a cultural identity and a sense of belonging through the things we eat and how we eat them. The idea of this paper therefore is not only to help answering the above question, but also to serve as a testing ground a for socio-anthropological theory. As such, by looking at household works of the study of food, it arrives at following Chang (1977b), drawing an analytical cross-cultural research framework from his historical account of China's culinary tradition, applying it to the various countries of East Asia. Evidence, as diverse as cooking utensils, staple foods and table manners, is drawn from various sources on the region, not so much to be analysed and dissected itself, but to function as stepping stone on the path towards an understanding of unifying culinary patterns across East Asia. The paper thus contributes as much to the ways in which we discuss the various foods and foodways of East Asia as it does to a broader discourse on food as a means of cultural distinction.

A.2 Zusammenfassung in Deutsch

In der Repräsentation ihres Essens scheinen die Grenzen zwischen den einzelnen Ländern Ost-Asiens zu verschwimmen. Anstelle der unterschiedlichen gastronomischen Traditionen tritt eine kulinarische Singularität, welche durch ‘asiatische’ Restaurants und ‘asiatische’ KöchInnen global geprägt wird. Diese vermeintliche Fusionsküche vermittelt den beiläufig Essenden ein Bild der Grenzauflösung in geographischer wie kultureller Hinsicht zwischen Sushi, Schweinefleisch Süß-Sauer und Kimchi. Als Antwort auf diesen globalen Trend versucht die vorliegende Arbeit der Frage nachzugehen, ob es so etwas wie eine ost-asiatische Esskultur, Ausdruck einer transregionalen kulinarischen Identität, gewachsen aus historischem Kontext, Abhängigkeiten und Beziehungen, überhaupt gibt. Mennell (1985) hat es als Zivilisierung des Appetits bezeichnet, den Prozess der Bildung einer kulturellen Identität und des Gefühls der Zusammengehörigkeit mittels der Dinge, die und wie wir sie essen. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es also nicht nur die Frage nach der Regionalität ost-asiatischer Esskultur zu beantworten, sondern auch einen sozial-anthropologischen Studienansatz an der Realität zu testen. Diesen Ansatz bezieht diese Studie in Anlehnung an die Arbeit von Chang (1977b). Beweise für die Existenz einer ost-asiatischen Esskultur reichen von Essutensilien und den Grundnahrungsmitteln hin bis zu Tischgebräuchen und Manieren. Diese kulturellen Ausprägungen sollen jedoch nicht um ihrer selbst Willen analysiert werden. Stattdessen dienen sie dieser Studie zur Darstellung und den Lesenden zum Verständnis einigender kulinarischer Muster in Ost-Asien. Diese Arbeit ist demnach nicht nur ein Beitrag zum Diskurs über Ost-Asiens Gerichte und Essweisen, sondern auch zum Studium des Essens als Ausdruck kultureller Distinktion im Allgemeinen.

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