Embodying nation in food consumption : changing boundaries of "Taiwanese cuisine" (1895-2008)

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Chapter Three

Taiwanese Cuisine as a National Symbol:

State Banquets and the Proliferation of Ethnic Cuisine

1. Political transformation toward democratization and indigenization

The authoritarian regime of the Nationalist government faced serious setbacks in the international community and drastic changes in domestic society during the 1970s. While the Chinese Communist Party had consolidated its power on the Chinese Mainland, the international community recognized the need to make the People's Republic of China (PRC) a legitimate member of that community. In 1971, the delegation of the Republic of China (ROC), which was led by the Nationalist government, withdrew from the United Nations, marking the growing diplomatic isolation of the ROC.[1] When the most important partner of the Nationalist government, the US government, built a diplomatic relationship with the PRC in 1979, the Nationalist government could not rely on international support to maintain its authority and claim of being the legitimate government of China.

Along with these international changes, challenges to the Nationalist government came from domestic society. Increasing numbers of Taiwanese people had organized groups to engage in political activities since the late 1970s, expressing dissenting opinions and challenging the hegemony of the Nationalist government. These activities resulted in several violent encounters between the activists and law enforcement during elections and demonstrations[2]; and these activities ended up strengthening popular support for the activists. The opposition camp outside the Nationalist Party, which was termed *Dangwai* (outside-the-party),

[1] As one of the founding members of the United Nations (U.N.), the ROC government represented the Chinese seat in the U.N. until 1971, when the representation of China shifted to the PRC authority in Resolution 2758. Regarding the issue of the Chinese delegation in the U.N., see Hickey, 1997.

[2] Among these demonstrations, the Kaohsiung Incident is particularly remarkable. In the summer of 1979, some activists started to publish the magazine *Formosa* (*Meilidao*) and built it up as a platform where the opposition camp could come together. The "Formosa group" organized a demonstration in Kaohsiung on Human Rights Day (December 10), during which violent conflicts erupted between police and demonstrators. Although the publishers of *Formosa* were arrested and sentenced, these publishers and their lawyers became founding members of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) established in 1986, including Chen Shui-bian, the man elected president in 2000.

grew up gradually in line with election campaigns after the mid-1970s and acquired approximately 30% of the popular vote. Through their acquired elected offices and their increasingly popular electoral campaigns, the activists put more pressure on the Nationalist government to drive political reform and, hence, to broaden popular support and legitimacy for the cause.[3]

Diplomatic failure prompted the Nationalist government to seek new bases of legitimacy in domestic society, and domestic challenges required that there be more liberalization (Chu, 1992; Hood, 1997; Wakabayashi Masahiro, 1994; Wang 1989). Consequently, the government led by the new leader Chiang Ching-kuo, the son of Chiang Kai-shek,[4] accelerated political reform in the late 1970s, leading to a shift "from hard to soft authoritarianism," which refers to more open electoral competition and less repression by security police (Winckler, 1984, pp. 481-482). With increasing deregulation during the early 1980s, important steps toward liberalization were taken in 1986 and 1987. The first opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was established on September 28, 1986, while the Nationalist government began adopting an attitude of toleration instead of suppression. On July 15, 1987, President Chiang Ching-kuo lifted martial law, which had effectively operated to maintain the dominance of the Nationalist government over society since 1949. Following the end of martial law, the government lifted the ban on new newspaper and new political parties, passed a law regulating political marches and assemblies of citizens, and ended the ban on visits to the Mainland. All these policies were implemented between 1986 and 1989, showing condensed progress in political transformation and the loosening of legal and institutional control exerted by the authoritarian regime. These steps are also viewed as a turning point that further transformed the political system into a "representative democracy" (Myers, 1987, p. 1003).[5]

During the process of change undertaken by the political regime, indigenization was a crucial political-reform policy. The indigenization or the Taiwanization policy was implemented by Chiang Ching-kuo when he became the Premier in 1972 (Rigger, 1999, pp. 111-112). He widely recruited native Taiwanese into the political system and administrative offices, including his nomination of Lee Teng-hui, a native Taiwanese, as the Vice President in 1984. Indigenization

[3] Regarding the electoral politics since the late 1970s and its influences on the democratization in Taiwan, see Dickson, 1996; Huang, 1996; Rigger, 1999.

[4] Chiang Ching-kuo became the Chair of the Nationalist Party after the death of his father in 1975 and assumed the presidency in 1978.

[5] The shift from being an authoritarian regime towards democracy is one of the most important issues in political research on Taiwan. Concerning detailed accounts of the institutional changes by the political regime, see, for example, Cheng & Haggard, 1992; Rigger, 1999; Tien, 1989; Wakabayashi Masahiro, 1994.

increasingly became a crucial direction of Taiwan's political development during the presidency of Lee Teng-hui that began in 1988.[6] The members of the political leadership were gradually replaced by native Taiwanese, and the opening of elections was crucial for the advancement of indigenization. The Legislative Yuan elections in December 1992 produced a new parliament wholly elected for the first time ever by the people of Taiwan. Before this election, the legislators were the individuals who had been elected on the Mainland prior to 1949 and who had immigrated to Taiwan with the Nationalist government.[7] Also, indigenization was highlighted as a principle in education, cultural development, and language use during the 1990s. Corcuff (2004) notes that indigenization during the presidency of Lee Teng-hui was reflected in changes regarding at least eight areas: (1) the makeup of politicians, public servants, and high-ranking military officers; (2) political symbols, such as the leader on bank notes; (3) political institutions and the electoral system; (4) official assertions regarding Taiwanese identity and cross-strait relations; (5) political socialization; (6) the emphasis on native language in policy and daily language use; (7) emergence of local culture; and (8) the native content in movies and TV programs (pp. 76-92). The above eight areas were sites where changes highlighted native Taiwanese culture, manifesting a shift from a China-centered paradigm to a Taiwan-centered paradigm (Wang, F-c., 2005, pp. 58-73).

In this context, Taiwan was increasingly considered a "distinctive nation" during the 1990s. While the DPP, the main opposition party, gradually established its grounds in local and national elections and claimed its pursuit of Taiwanese independence, both issues of "independence from or reunification with the Mainland" and "Taiwanese or Chinese national identity" became the main issues entangled with democratic reform and the indigenization policy. It is suggested that Taiwanese identity or Taiwanese nationalism became prominent during the process of democratization, revealing an intimate association between these issues (Tien & Chu, 1996, pp. 1145-1148; Wachman, 1994; Wu, 2004). Political scientist Wu Yu-shan (2004) argues,

> Since Taiwan began its democratization in the late 1980s, and particularly since Lee Teng-hui assumed paramount power in 1993, Taiwanese nationalism has been on the rise. The result is a deep identity

[6] Chiang Ching-kuo died in January 1988, with Vice President Lee Teng-hui succeeding Chiang in the office of the president and winning election to the presidency in 1990. On March 22, 1996, Lee won the first direct presidential election in Taiwan, with his term ending in 2000.

[7] These legislators who were elected before 1949 stayed in the position until 1992. Before the election in 1992, only limited new legislators were elected in the "supplemental elections."

> crisis on the island, as the emergent new exclusive Taiwanese identity combats the old Chinese identity. (p. 614)

Although there are different understandings about the origins and foundation of so-called Taiwanese nationalism, that is, when and why Taiwan has been a nation,[8] Taiwanese nationalists generally present an ideology sharply opposed to Chinese nationalism. As Wu states, Chinese nationalism treats the Taiwanese people as a constituent part of the Chinese people and Taiwanese culture as a branch of Chinese culture. In contrast, Taiwanese nationalism rejects this viewpoint and treats China as an alien entity, asserting that Chinese is at most a cultural or ethnic designation (Ibid.). Taiwanese nationalists insist that Taiwan is an independent sovereignty whose distinctive national culture is different from the Han Chinese culture; moreover, the historical memories of the Taiwanese are said to be different from those of the Chinese people on the Mainland.

With the development of Taiwanese nationalism and an increasing emphasis on the distinctive features of Taiwan, some members of the DPP raised the concept of "four major ethnic groups" (*sida zuqun*) in the late 1980s (Wang, 2003, p. 3).[9] It was argued that the "four major ethnic groups" constitute the Taiwanese people and make Taiwan a distinct nation. The four main "ethnic groups" refer to Haklo, Hakka, Mainlanders, and Aborigines.[10] Aborigines are the indigenous people of Taiwan who belong to the Austronesian language family. Mainlanders are those Chinese people who migrated to Taiwan from the Mainland after 1945, as introduced in Chapter Two. The Haklo and Hakka indicate those Han Chinese whose ancestors emigrated from the Chinese Mainland to Taiwan mainly during the period from the early 17th to the late 19th century. The Haklo concerns those who came from Fujian Province in China, and the Hakka from Guangdong Province. According to an official survey by the Taiwan Government-General in 1926,[11] 88.4% of the total population in Taiwan was Han Chinese. Among those Han, 83.1% were from Fujian and 15.6% from Guangdong. In other words, 70% of the Taiwanese population was Haklo during the Japanese colonial era. In the latest survey conducted by the Council for Hakka Affairs (CHA) in the summer of 2008, 69.2% of the total population in Taiwan chose Haklo as their single "ethnic identity," with 13.5% choosing Hakka,

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[8] For some representative publications on Taiwanese nationalism, please see Chen, 1993; Shi, 1998; Shi, 1994.

[9] Rudolph (2004) suggests that the concept was proposed in 1989 (p. 98), whilst Chang (1997) suggests that the concept was asserted by 1991 (pp. 60-63).

[10] This thesis capitalizes "Mainlander" and "Aborigines" as well as "Haklo" and "Hakka" when indicating their equivalence in ethnic discourse.

[11] *Taiwan zaiseki kanminzoku kyôkanbetsu chyôsa [Survey of the Hometown of the Han People in Taiwan]*, 1928, pp. 4-5.

1.9% regarding themselves as Aborigines, and 9.3% as Mainlanders (CHA, 2008, p. 77).[12]

The definition of the "four main ethnic groups" reveals that the term "ethnic group" in this concept is used more as a political classification than an anthropological classification. Haklo, Hakka, and Mainlanders are mainly Han Chinese, with Mainlanders actually including people from various provinces in China, including peoples other than the Han, such as Manchu and Hmong. The sociologist Wang Fu-chang (2003) has analyzed the origin and formation of the categorization of ethnic groups in Taiwan, suggesting that the development of this concept was based on three kinds of oppositional categorizations of people that took place during different historical periods: [Han and Aborigines], [Mainlander and native Taiwanese] (within the Han category), and [Haklo and Hakka] (within the native Taiwanese category) (pp. 56-63). He thus argues that such an "ethnic group" is essentially an ideology of categorization. Rudolph (2004) further argues that this categorization has been created by Haklo politicians as an alternative to the dichotomy of "Taiwanese and Mainlanders," aiming at gaining the support of other "ethnic groups" in addition to the Haklo. Although the concept is a simplified categorization that neglects differences within each "ethnic group," it has become a dominant frame of reference adopted generally by Taiwanese politicians and media in discussions on ethnic and nationalist issues. Through this categorization, the population in Taiwan is not divided by differences among the Chinese "provinces" to which Taiwanese citizens can trace their origins; this division of Chinese provinces implies a common Chinese origin. In contrast to the common Chinese origin, the distinction of the "four major ethnic groups" highlights the different languages and cultures existing only within Taiwan, which thus shifts the focus away from the "Chinese nation" to a new "Taiwanese nation."

In summary, through drastic political transformation during the 1980s and 1990s, it has been popular to argue that Taiwan has been a distinctive nation, showing a sharp contrast with the emphasis on traditional Chinese culture during the 1950s and 1960s. These transformations created an institutional and discursive environment for claiming the nationhood of Taiwan. It was in such a context that the presidential candidate of the DPP, Chen Shui-bian got a surprising success in the 2000 presidential campaign, ending the nearly half-century-long rule of the Nationalist government (1945-2000). After Chen's victory, the state banquets became highly charged with symbolic references to indigenization and ethnic integration.

[12] In this survey, 4% of the interviewees did not choose any "ethnic group" but regarded themselves as "Taiwanese." The outcome of this survey can be acquired on the website of the Council for Hakka Affairs: http://www.hakka.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=43944&CtNode=1894&mp=1869&ps= (retrieved 3/20/2009).

Furthermore, Hakka cuisine and Aboriginal cuisine emerged as "ethnic cuisine," showing a parallel development with the political transformation. This chapter will focus on state banquets after 2000 and the proliferation of "ethnic cuisine," examining how Taiwanese cuisine became a symbol of nationhood after the political transformation toward indigenization and democratization was implemented.

2. Post-2000 State Banquets Relative to Indigenization and "Ethnic Integration"

A state banquet is an official banquet exclusively for the heads of state of those countries having diplomatic relations with Taiwan.[13] Before 2000, state banquets were hardly a public issue. They were held in special venues, such as the Office of the President, the Grand Hotel, or *Zhongshan* Hall, where only important politicians could be in attendance. For example, the state banquet for the King of Iran in May 1958 was held in the Office of the President, with the participants including the leaders of the five branches of the government, ministries, and diplomatic officers, totaling approximately 50 people.[14]

During the presidency of Chiang Kai-shek (1950-1975), Chiang and many government officials usually wore a traditional long Chinese robe and mandarin jacket to state banquets. The hall for a banquet would be decorated with Chinese antiques, with Chinese classical music serving as background music; the Chinese classical music was labeled "national music" at that time.[15] Furthermore, some of the banquet menus would be printed in the characters used during the Qin Dynasty of ancient China around B.C. 221-207.[16] From clothes and music to the furniture and decoration, all these components constituted a space where the Chinese characteristics were significant. These Chinese characteristics also corresponded to the political reality: the Nationalist government, as led by Chiang Kai-shek, was still the legitimate government of the ROC and a member of the United Nations.

The Chinese characteristics could also manifest themselves in the banquet cuisine. During the presidency of Chiang Kai-shek, the first dish of a state banquet was conventionally a "plum blossom assortment" (梅花拼盤), which was a cold dish assembled in the shape of plum blossom, the national flower of the ROC.[17]

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[13] It is the definition of the Office of the President: please see the website: http://www.president.gov.tw/1_art/act/banquet.html (retrieved 3/28/2009).
[14] *UDN*, 5/14/1958(1).
[15] *UDN*, 3/11/1959(1); *UDN*, 6/1/1969(1).
[16] The image files of early banquet menus can be accessed in the database established by the Foundation of Chinese Dietary Culture (http://ttsgroup.com.tw/newpage1/db16.htm).
[17] The cuisine served in the state banquets before the mid-1960s were mainly Western dishes, while those afterwards were Chinese dishes.

After the cold dish, there was often a soup, a Chinese snack,[18] a shark fin dish, some meat and vegetable dishes, and a rice or noodle dish. A banquet would end with a Chinese dessert, such as walnut pudding (核桃酪), eight treasure rice (八寶飯), and red date cake (棗泥拉糕), which were snacks from Beijing or Zhejiang Province on the Mainland. Among the banquet desserts, the most famous one was steamed red bean rice cake (紅豆鬆糕) made by the Grand Hotel, which was propagated as the favorite dessert of Madam Chiang, the wife of Chiang Kai-shek.

The mode of state banquets changed gradually. During the 1980s, conventional Chinese banquet dishes such as bird's nest soup, abalone, and pigeon were served frequently. During the presidency of Lee Teng-hui beginning in 1988, the state banquets still served a selection of Chinese haute cuisine, taking the value and quality of the foods as the main consideration of the banquet cuisine.[19] However, the emphasis has changed significantly since the transition of power to the new DPP government in 2000.

Two prominent characteristics of the inauguration banquet of Chen Shui-bian on May 20, 2000 were the adoption of local snacks (*xiaochi*, literally meaning "small-eating") and the symbolic cuisines of "ethnic integration."[20] Two local snacks from Tainan, the hometown of Chen Shui-bian, were served at the banquet: milkfish ball soups (虱目魚丸湯) and bowl cakes made of rice (碗粿). It was the first time that local snacks were served at an inauguration banquet. Media reports highlighted that local snacks were receiving a national honor insofar as they were a main course at the state banquet, and the media praised the choice as an effective way to raise the status of local Taiwanese snacks.[21]

In addition to the emphasis on local snacks, the idea of "ethnic integration" was presented by the dessert "taro and sweet-potato cake" (芋薯甜糕), because taro used to be regarded as the mark of Mainlanders and the sweet potato represented native Taiwanese. Food is both a substance and a symbol; it is a way of communication that carries with it lots of messages (Counihan & Esterik, 1997; Wilk, 1999). The symbolic meaning of food can be shaped in a historical process, or it can surface in a specific social context, and the dessert "taro and sweet-potato cake" is a combination of both. Whereas taro and the sweet potato have been popular ethnic symbols, the

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[18] For example, curry dumpling (咖哩餃), spring rolls (春捲), and steamed beef buns (牛肉包子).

[19] For example, in Lee's inauguration banquet in 1996, some of the main dishes included lobster salad, shark fin, seafood dumplings, and giant oysters with abalone. However, the selection of "Chinese cuisine" during the 1990s has been hybridized and indigenized, as shown in Chapter Two.

[20] Other principles of this inauguration banquet include indigenization, popularization, and environmental protection, resulting in the disqualification of such dishes as shark fin and bird's nest.

[21] See for example *UDN*, 5/15/2000(38); *PLN*, 5/18/2000(38).

dessert transformed their implicit meanings into explicit and edible ones, which further made the state banquet a field where national rhetoric was expressed.

Both the banquet cuisine and the banquet settings were designed elaborately, reflecting an attempt to be distinct from any other previous state banquet held by the Nationalist government. Named the Four Seasons Banquet, the menu for the inauguration banquet was designed as a booklet with 39 pages, including both Chinese and English versions. In the prelude article "President Chen Shui-bian's Wish for This Four Seasons Banquet," Chen claimed that the banquet aimed to present the culinary culture of Taiwan to all people. He said that he had been born on the island and had acquired the same eating habits as those of the island's people; therefore, all the ingredients at this state banquet were products chosen from Taiwan, including local snacks. Chen emphasized that these dishes reflected not only his own lived experiences but also those of most Taiwanese people.

In contrast to the Nationalist government, which had been transplanted from the Mainland, Chen's government was the first one to stem from a political party created in Taiwan. Therefore, "being born on the island" became an important theme that was repeatedly underlined at this banquet. To highlight the local snacks of Tainan, the menu introduced the history of milkfish ball soup and bowl cake made of rice. It was also the first time that the menu introduced the flowers and liquors used in the banquet – both being Taiwanese products – and the five "national chefs" who were responsible for the banquet.

The symbolic importance of the state banquet became further significant at the inauguration banquet of 2004, when Chen won the controversial presidential campaign after having survived an assassination attempt on the eve of the election. Bathed in an intense atmosphere, the 2004 state banquet highlighted the same themes as the 2000 banquet, indigenization and ethnic integration, and applied them to every dish. Each dish at the banquet was given a specific name and meaning, such as "integration and peace among ethnic groups," "everyone is united to support a strong nation," and "a strong nation and peaceful society," as Table 3.1 shows.

Table 3.1 Menu of the inauguration banquet in 2004

Name of cuisine	Food ingredients	Meaning
Family of the south and north	Dried duck from Yilan (宜蘭鴨賞), mullet's eggs from Kaohsiung (高雄烏魚子), *Sergia lucens Hansen* from Donggang (東港櫻花蝦), smoked tea duck from Tainan (台南燻茶鵝)	Integration and peace among ethnic groups
Dragon leaping over the sea	Lobster produced along the eastern seashores of Taiwan	The nation is full of pleasure
Pride and happiness	Local lamb and asparagus with cheese, baked tomato, and plum sauce	Feeling pride and happiness
Plentiful harvest and storage	Sea fish from Penghu with spinach sauce	Enjoying a rich life every year
All civilians' celebration of their reunion	Soup with Tainan milkfish ball (台南虱目魚丸), spray ball (花枝丸), and vegetables	All people are united as a circle
Deep emotion toward hometown	Rice and meat dumpling, Hakka style (客家粽)	Everyone is united to support a strong nation
Sweet taste of home	Desserts: taro cake from Dajia (大甲芋頭酥), Aboriginal millet mochi cake (原住民小米麻糬), almond tea (杏仁露) with fried bread sticks (油條)	Sweet reunion at home
Fresh fruits of Taiwan	Pineapple from Guanmiao, bell fruit from Linbian, muskmelon from Pingdong, watermelon from Taidong	A strong nation and peaceful society

Source: "520 Guoyan caise chulu, Taiwan bentu shicai weizhu [Dishes of the state banquet on May 20, local food plays the main role]," *Central News Agency*, 5/13/2004

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The banquet menu was a selection of famous Taiwanese local delicacies, such as the dried duck from Yilan and taro cake from Dajia. The emphasis on "locally produced" food was intended to echo the slogan "indigenization," with the adoption of "ethnic cuisines" following another principle of ethnic integration. These "ethnic cuisines" included Hakka dumplings, Aboriginal millet cakes, and fried bread sticks (*youtiao*), the last of which constituted a normal food for breakfast in northern China and became popular in Taiwan after 1949. In contrast to the 2000 inauguration banquet that emphasized the integration of Mainlanders and native Taiwanese, the 2004 inauguration banquet strongly conformed with the discourse of "four major ethnic groups." At the state banquet, the image of Taiwan was composed of the four main ethnic groups and local counties, which were marked by local agricultural products. Additionally, the menu repeatedly called for peace and unity, which made the banquet a feast of symbolic and political rhetoric, speaking more to the domestic audience than to the ambassadors and foreign guests who participated in the banquet.

In general, the emphasis on locality is not only crucial to the claim of indigenization but also closely related to domestic politics and commercial interests. The close connection can be exemplified by the "localized state banquet" (*guoyan xiaxiang*) policy after 2000.

The "localized state banquet" policy

Since 2001, state banquets have been frequently held in different counties along with the capital Taipei, a shift in policy that was innovated by the DPP government. From 2001 to the end of 2004, all eleven counties in Taiwan hosted a state banquet at least once, with the only exception being the outlying islet Penghu County. The first "localized state banquet" took place in Kaohsiung City, whose mayor was Hsieh Chang-ting, a leading member of the DPP. Just ten days later, another state banquet was held in Yilan County, which was the hometown of the Premier at that time.

The most significant feature of all the localized state banquets has been the emphasis on locally produced foodstuff and specialties. All counties deliberately chose, for state banquet dishes, such local delicacies as ricecake strips (粄條) from Meinong, "rice with shredded chicken" (雞肉飯) from Jiayi, and peddler's noodles (擔仔麵) from Tainan. In addition, ethnic integration is still a common symbol presented in these banquets. For example, the banquet held in Pingdong County included *Minnan* (Haklo)[22] cuisine, Hakka cuisine, Aboriginal cuisine, and local cuisine, which were well orchestrated with the official discourse of ethnic groups and indigenization. However, it is not a formula that cuisines from all "ethnic groups"

[22] *Minnan* means "south of Fujian Province," which is the region where the Haklo originated.

have to be presented at a banquet. Instead, as the ethnic-population ratio in each county varies, so the dishes presented in each county differ. For example, in those counties such as Xinzhu and Miaoli where Hakka people occupy a larger proportion of the population, Hakka cuisine plays a main role at a banquet. The food and guests of these state banquets are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 State banquets held in cities other than Taipei (2001-2004)[23]

Date	Location	State banquet guests	Local delicacies
Mar. 16, 2001	Kaohsiung Grand Hi-lai Hotel	Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso	Ricecake strips from Meinong (美濃粄條)
Mar. 25, 2001	Yilan Stadium in Sport Park	Mejía Domínguez, President of the Dominican Republic	Dried duck (鴨賞), salty liver (膽肝), *gaozha* (糕渣),[24] meat sausage (肉捲)
Jul. 2, 2001	Taizhong Grand Formosa Regent Hotel	Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal	Hakka bowl cake (客家碗粿), authentic Taiwanese dessert: sweet taro paste (芋泥) and almond tofu (杏仁豆腐)
Jul. 16, 2001	Xinzhu Ambassador Hotel	H. E. Dr. Arnoldo Aleman Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua	Hakka cuisine: boiled chicken (白斬雞), shrimp cake (蝦泥餅) with orange sauce (桔子醬), Hakka bean sauce (豆醬), Hakka style rice dumplings (客家粄粽)
Mar. 13, 2002	Jiayi County Jia-yuan Restaurant	Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad	Rice with shredded chicken (雞肉飯)
Apr. 6, 2002	Tainan Tayih Landis Hotel	Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, President of the Republic of Guatemala	Peddler's noodles (擔仔麵), rice bowl (米糕), lotus-root cake (蓮藕餅), lotus tea (蓮花茶), local seasonal fruits
May 21, 2002	Taoyuan City Monarch Plaza Hotel	Enrique Bolanos Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua	Bean curd (豆干), Hakka-style fish (客家石斑), local-produced mulberry cheese dessert (桑椹乳酪)
Jul. 17, 2002	Zhanghua County Leader Landmark Hotel	Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President of the Republic of Haiti	Crispy oyster (蚵嗲), stir-fried rice vermicelli (炒米粉)

[23] The "localized state banquet" policy was implemented mainly during the first presidential term of Chen Shui-bian (2000-2004). From 2001 to 2004, every county (except Penghu) held at least one state banquet. During Chen's second term (from 2005 to 2008), state banquets were held in only a few major cities, including Taipei, Tainan, and Kaohsiung.

[24] *Gaozha* is a deep-fried dish made of mashed pork, shrimp, and chicken.

	in Lugang		
Aug. 20, 2002	Yunlin County Janfusun Prince Hotel	Luis Ángel González Macchi, President of the Republic of Paraguay	Bamboo-cooked rice (竹筒飯)
Oct. 7, 2002	Kaohsiung City National Kaohsiung Hospitality College	Abel Pacheco de la Espriella, President of the Republic of Costa Rica	Seafood from Kaohsiung port
Oct. 21, 2002	Nantou County Taiwan Provincial Administration Information Hall	Ricardo Maduro, President of the Republic of Honduras	Local agricultural products, smoked plum juice (烏梅汁), local wine, local mineral water and Oolong tea
Aug. 23, 2003	Hualian County Farglory Hotel	Francisco Guillermo Flores Perez, President of the Republic of El Salvador	Local agricultural products, local lobster, wild chicken, wild vegetables, bamboo-cooked rice
Oct. 8, 2003	Jilong city Evergreen Hotel	Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of Gambia	*Dingbiancuo* (鼎邊趖),[25] deep-fried fish in batter (天婦羅)
Oct. 11, 2003	Miaoli County West Lake Resortopia	Dr. Bakili Muluzi, President of the Republic of Malawi	Local chicken and lamb, Hakka rice dishes, local fruits
Jan. 7, 2004	Pingdong County Taiwan Indigenous Peoples Culture Park	Fradique de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe	*Minnan* cuisine: bell fruit with mullet eggs (蓮霧配烏魚子), deep-fried local onions (洋蔥圓) Hakka cuisine: spiced pig's knuckle (豬腳), "United four ethnic groups" (rice noodles with Chinese yam)(淮山粄條卷) Aboriginal cuisine: heart of betel palm and chicken stew (檳榔心燉

[25] *Dingbiancuo* is a noodle dish made on the margins of a kind of special wok. It is a famous local snack from Jilong Night Market.

			雞盅), local fish with white wine (白酒櫻哥魚) Local cuisine: local paprika (小青龍辣椒) and local mushrooms (雨來菇) Dessert: local snack "green mung bean sweet soup" (綠豆蒜)
Feb. 12, 2004	Xinzhu Lai-fu Resortopia	Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati	Hakka cuisine: Sautéed local persimmon fruit with scallops (柿餅醬干貝), local grass jelly in black-boned chicken soup (仙草燉烏雞)
May 23, 2004	Tainan Tayih Landis Hotel	Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay	Broth of milkfish soup (浮水虱目魚羹), peddler's noodles (擔仔麵) from Tainan, rice bowl (米糕), and An-ping bean dessert (豆花)
Dec. 16, 2004	Taidong City Naruwan Hotel	H.E. Dr. Kessai Note, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands	Local sugar apple (釋迦), sailfish, heart of betel palm (檳榔心), boar, wild lobster, wild chicken, local-produced milk, local "moon rice" (月光米)

Source: collected from the newsletters of the Office of the President (http://www.president.gov.tw/1_art/act/banquet.html) and the UDN news database (http://udndata.com) (retrieved 3/17/2009).

In his e-newspaper, Chen Shui-bian explained his intentions underlying the "localized state banquet" policy,[26] arguing that there are three advantages: foreign guests can have opportunities to understand local Taiwanese customs; the guests can taste local Taiwanese delicacies; and finally, local leaders also would get a chance to interact with these foreign guests. He underlined the assertion that state banquets in Taiwan are characterized by the *bando* style, which was a popular method of feasting in Taiwan particularly before the 1990s.[27] Chen further claimed that a state banquet is "for eating and for improving friendships," which is a common saying in Hokkien, the language of the Haklo. However, although Chen argued that his state banquets were

[26] From October 18, 2001 to May 15, 2008, the Office of the President published the "E-Newspaper of A-Bian President" every Thursday.
[27] On *bando*, please see Section 4.2 of Chapter One.

similar to *bando*, there were actually many differences between them, involving such aspects as cuisine, location, and dining manners. Among these state banquets, most were held in grand hotels, with the cuisines served individually and not shared by the guests seated at the same dining table.

In such "localized state banquets," an important characteristic is the change of both the dining venues and the participants, changes that transformed a state banquet from a diplomatic event to a domestic and commercial competition. While there were few official venues suitable for state banquets in counties other than Taipei, localized state banquets had to be held in local hotels or restaurants. Therefore, state banquets started to involve competition among local restaurants and grand hotels, particularly as holding a state banquet could bring fame and more revenue to a winning business. Since the "localized state banquet" policy commenced in 2001, state banquets have become an advertisement for hotels and cuisines. Restaurants and shops participating in the preparation of state banquets have promoted themselves as "state banquet hotels" and "state banquet restaurants," with their food re-named "state banquet snacks." It was reported that the revenue for a restaurant hosting the state banquet in Jiayi increased 20-30%, and the manager of another hotel in Tainan agreed that the term "state banquets" had become a brand for their snacks.[28] Following the fashion, some hotels and county governments started to promote a "state banquet menu." For example, Kaohsiung Grand Hotel promoted the "State banquet menu of Southern Taiwan," which remained at the high price of NT$2,200 for each individual.[29] In contrast, the Zhanghua County Government cooperated with a hotel to promote a "normalized state banquet menu from Zhanghua," emphasizing that it was as cheap as NT$5,000 for ten people and thus affordable to most consumers.

In addition to changes in dining venues, there were changes in the participants at state banquets held at the local level. For state banquets in Taipei, the participants were restricted to officials from ministries and diplomatic circles; in contrast, the participants expanded considerably in those state banquets outside Taipei. Legislators, university principals, local political leaders, and business representatives were also invited to attend these local state banquets.[30] As a result, the opportunity to participate in a state banquet became a field where local politicians and businessmen

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[28] *UDN*, 8/22/2002(20).

[29] *PLN*, 7/14/2000(30).

[30] For example, in the banquet at Hualian, the guests included "representatives from all occupations in Hualian"; see the newsletter from the Office of the President: http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/shownews.php4?Rid=8624 (retrieved 3/17/2009). In another banquet in Taipei County, the participants covered local administrators, councilors, university principals, and business representatives; see the newsletter from the Office of the President: http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/shownews.php4?Rid=8627 (retrieved 3/17/2009).

competed. For example, a Nationalist councilor from Taoyuan County protested that she was not invited to the state banquet at Taoyuan on May 21, 2002; there was even a rumor that the invitations to "business representatives" at that state banquet had been decided according to the amount in taxes that they paid.[31] Such a protest and such a rumor indicate that state banquets have become a local competition, involving not only commercial interests but also political exchanges.

Nevertheless, it is too narrow a view to regard state banquets as merely a field of political struggle, ignoring the banquets' influence on a wider range of consumers. As Chen Shui-bian frequently claimed, his principle was to popularize the banquets and to eliminate their elitist nature. With the "localized state banquet" policy, he could take state banquets from northern Taiwan to the south and from Taipei to local towns. The "localized state banquet" policy effectively popularized state banquets and commercialized them as a specific brand for the promotion of local tourism. With the increasing emphasis on local delicacies in state banquets, more restaurants highlighted their products as state banquet cuisine, state banquet dessert, or state banquet wine in the early 2000s. The proliferation of "state banquet food" reveals the popularity of local specialties among consumers. For example, Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are advertisements for some dishes served at state banquets. Figure 3.1 advertises a State Banquet Set Menu of a noodle shop in Tainan, whilst Figure 3.2 promotes the "bamboo-shoot bun" which has been a banquet dessert. During the process of popularizing state banquets, the government claimed that the combination of local agricultural products and culture and tourism resources could help build a new hometown with which local people could identify.[32] In other words, the government argued that local food is the link bridging people and the land, and cultural resources can further strengthen this link. Through the production of local food and the development of tourism, the relationships between local people and the land are more intense so that people's sense of belonging to the land could deepen. As the sense of belonging to a given territory is important to the political claim of nationhood, the connection between people and land is crucial.

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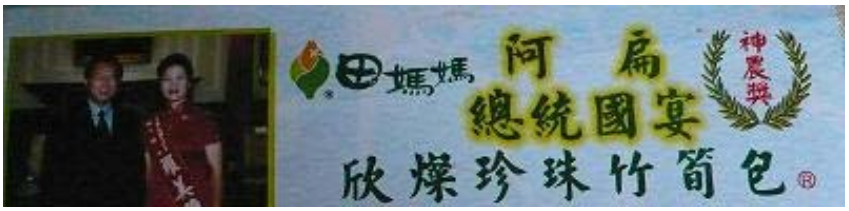
[31] *UDN*, 5/22/2002(18).

[32] This claim was stated in the accounts of the official project "Local Agricultural Industry and Culture," which is a sub-policy under the policy "Challenging 2008: National Development Project" of the Executive Yuan. Accounts of the policy can be acquired from the website of the Council for Economic Planning and Development:
http://www.cepd.gov.tw/m1.aspx?sNo=0001568&ex=2&ic=0000153 (retrieved 8/30/2007).

Figure 3.1 Advertisement for the State Banquet Set Menu in a restaurant in Tainan

Figure 3.2 Advertisement for the bamboo-shoot bun (the left side is a photo of the chef with President Chen Shui-bian)



In sum, the policy of localized state banquets transformed both the concept of "locality" and the concept of "ethnic integration" from political tools to an edible reality, with the process of transformation involving competition between local governments, grand hotels, and local politicians. On the one hand, a localized state banquet is a deliberate performance disseminating political claims top-down; on the other hand, it creates an occasion for the general populace to experience the asserted ethnic integration by consuming these state banquet dishes and by becoming acquainted with local products.

Among the cuisines served in state banquets, Hakka cuisine and Aboriginal cuisine play important roles as two pillars supporting the ethnic-integration discourse. However, the framing of the two cuisines as "ethnic cuisines" occurred late in this process and can be traced back to the 1990s.

3. The framing of "Hakka cuisine"

3.1 Hakka and "Hakka cuisine" discourse

Hakka, literally means "guest people" and refers to a Chinese ethnic group whose ancestors were Han Chinese originating from northern China. After several large-scale migrations resulting from war and famine beginning in the fourth century A.D., tens of millions Hakka people have come to reside in southeast China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia countries (Constable, 1996, p. 3; Wang, 2007, p. 876). Initially, they were called Hakka (guest people) by local inhabitants because of the former people's status as newcomers to these regions; however, the term has been gradually transformed into a term of their self-assertion (Leong, 1997; Luo, 1965).

The Hakka people in Taiwan migrated mainly from Guangdong Province in southeast China three hundred years ago, comprising approximately 13.5% of the total population in Taiwan.[33] However, the "ethnic consciousness" of Hakka was the least intense among all "ethnic groups" in Taiwan during the mid-1990s (Huang, 1993, pp. 218-224), and some Hakka intellectuals called themselves an "invisible ethnic group" (Luo, 1993; Xu, 1991, p. 4). The "invisibility" of ethnicity reflected a variety of reasons. First, Hakka are not distinct from other Han Chinese in appearance; second, their residential neighborhoods are joined with or surrounded by those of other ethnic groups. In addition, Hakka people seldom spoke their language in public before the Hakka movement; this was partly because the Nationalist government discouraged the use of native languages before the 1980s and partly because Hakka had a practical need to communicate with other ethnic groups (Zeng, 2000, pp. 78-96). Therefore, their ethnic boundary was quite vague until the Hakka movement started during the late 1980s.

In Zeng's (2000) research on the Hakka movement, she points out that it was political liberalization and the proliferation of social movements that triggered the emergence of the Hakka movement in 1987. Following the Aboriginal movement that started in 1984, Hakka activists actively organized themselves. On October 25, 1987, some young Hakka created the first Hakka magazine *Kejia fengyun [The Hakka Storm]*, aiming to promote Hakka people and to guide them into a more central position in Taiwanese society. This is viewed as the beginning of the Hakka movement.[34] In the first issue of the magazine, they argued that there were four

[33] According to the latest survey conducted by the CHA in 2008, 13.5% of the population in Taiwan chose Hakka as their single "ethnic identity," while 18.6% regarded themselves as "Hakka" when they had multiple choices. In contrast to the earlier survey by the CHA conducted in 2004, single-choice identity was selected by 12.6% of respondents and a multiple-choice identity was selected by 19.5% of respondents.

[34] See Wang, 2007, p. 880; Xu, 1991, pp. 7-8. The magazine was renamed *Hakka* in January

million Hakka people in Taiwan but that their voices were ignored, so the magazine and its supporters intended to raise the ethnic consciousness of Hakka people by struggling for the common interests of Hakka (*Kejia fengyun*, 1987, "Opening Statement").

After setting up the magazine, Hakka communities organized a movement to "return to our mother-language" in December 1988, demanding that society pay more attention to the Hakka language and challenging the language policy of the Nationalist government.[35] In December 1990, the Association of Taiwanese Hakka Public Affairs (*Taiwan Kejia Gonggong Shiwu Xiehui*) was established, transferring their main concern from language policy to the political participation of the Hakka and to a more consolidated Hakka identity. Its core members criticized that the Haklo and Mainlanders monopolized most social resources and political positions and that political participation should be a fundamental way in which the Hakka advance their rights and change their marginal position in Taiwanese society (Association of Taiwanese Hakka Public Affairs, 1993). They also argued that although Hakka are "native Taiwanese," Hakka culture is often excluded from the definition of "Taiwanese culture." For example, the term "Taiwanese language" (*Taiyu*) exclusively refers to Hokkien, the language of the Haklo, which totally neglects the Hakka language. Such a usage was widely accepted because the Haklo constituted about 70% of the population in Taiwan. Many Hakka felt excluded and marginalized by this situation, criticizing that the Haklo monopolized the meaning of Taiwanese-ness (Li Qiao, 1993, pp. 7-9).

It was in this context that the "four major ethnic groups" concept spread during the 1990s, partly as a response to the criticism from non-Haklo people. Spontaneously, the central government was urged to establish institutes charged with administering the affairs of the two "ethnic groups" (the Hakka and Aborigine groups). Following the establishment of the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP) in 1996, the Council for Hakka Affairs (CHA) started operations on June 14, 2001. The CHA claimed that its establishment was a response to the vociferous demands of the Hakka people, and that the CHA's goal was to perpetuate the Hakka language and Hakka culture, which had been "expelled and suppressed by mainstream culture."[36]

1990.

[35] Their concrete demands included lifting the ban on Hakka broadcasting and TV programs, promoting bilingual education in school, and establishing a language policy that treated all native languages equally.

[36] Their goals also include fighting for the rights and future of the Hakka, and ultimately helping advance Taiwan to the status of a modern society respecting all races and ethnic groups. See the official statement by the CHA on the website: http://www.hakka.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=7008&CtNode=529&mp=212&ps= (retrieved 3/22/2009).

From the Hakka's status as an "invisible ethnic group" to the establishment of the CHA, the ethnic boundary of the Hakka has become progressively clearer in public discourse, with cuisine being one of the most recognizable Hakka symbols in the building of the Hakka image. The CHA actively organized activities to promote Hakka cuisine, treating it not only as a crucial component of Hakka culture but also as an effective way to attract public attention to Hakka culture. For example, the CHA (2003, 2004) published two introductory books on Hakka cuisine, paying particular attention to Hakka history and dietary culture.[37] In their respective first sections, the two books introduce the history of Hakka immigration, the features of Hakka food, and the food's association with Hakka ethnicity. Following these articles written by scholars is an introduction to restaurants and illustrations of representative Hakka dishes, such as Hakka stir-fries (客家小炒) and pork with preserved mustard stew (梅干扣肉). Hakka history, ethnic characteristics, and specific dishes compose a discourse on Hakka cuisine, and this discourse has spread widely through other Hakka cultural activities. For example, both the Hakka Food Festival (2005, 2006) and the Hakka Exhibition (2006) emphasized the same characteristics and dishes of Hakka cuisine, underlining that these culinary features originate from their immigration history, and that these features can symbolize Hakka ethnicity: frugality, hardship, hard work, and toughness (*yingjing*, literally meaning "hard-neck").[38] In addition to official activities, Hakka cookbooks are an important means to reproduce the discourse. All Hakka cookbooks in Taiwan have been published after 1996, and the writers of these cookbooks have tended to encourage readers, when enjoying traditional Hakka dishes, to recall their pasts and ancestors.

The typical introductions to exhibitions and cookbooks on Hakka cuisine underline three main characteristics of the "Hakka cuisine discourse":

(1) Salty, fatty, and aromatic characteristics

Hakka dishes are salty because dishes can be preserved for a longer time in this way. Salty dishes can replenish the body's salt after Hakka's hard work on farms as well. Hakka dishes are fatty because they can supplement the physical strength that Hakka need for heavy work. Hakka dishes are fragrant so that they can induce the appetite to eat more. (CHA, 2006, p. 10)

[37] The two books are publications of the "Hakka talent chef cultivation" project by the CHA.
[38] According to Wang's survey (2005) in 15 towns where Hakka's dwelled, "hardworking and frugal" is the first impression of the Hakka that people have, whether they are inhabitants (42%), shopkeepers (39%), or tourists (25%), and "tough" is often used to describe their stubbornness. See Wang, 2005.

The above official interpretation is tied to the immigration history of the Hakka people. Hakka intellectuals claim that they are late-comers in southeast China as well as in Taiwan; therefore, the Hakka could not live in the plains but lived in mountainous regions, struggling hard to survive in such a tough environment (CHA, 2003, p. 18; CHA, 2004, p. 13). Living in mountainous regions is a decisive factor influencing Hakka dietary habits. In official publications, it is argued that Hakka people had to expend much more labor to earn their living, thus, they needed more calories to maintain physical strength (CHA, 2003, p. 25). Consequently, they had to eat salty and fatty dishes to survive. Moreover, it is also stated that because Hakka people have been diligent and frugal, they used to add more salt and oil when cooking in order to preserve food for a longer time.

(2) Dried and preserved ingredients

Hakka live on every mountain. Due to the difficulty of finding food in mountainous regions, the frugal Hakka have developed all sorts of pickled foods. These pickled foods are very tasty and can be preserved for a long time. (CHA, 2006, p. 10)

For the same reasons as those explaining their frequent immigration and struggles in tough mountainous regions, Hakka people are good at preserving vegetables and meat (CHA, 2003, pp. 19-20, 35-36; CHA, 2004, pp. 29-31). Representative pickled foods by the Hakka range from vegetables and fish to sauces such as mustard, radish, bamboo shoot, ginger, cucumber, plum, pork, red yeast, perilla, and sour citrus sauces. On the one hand, pickled food can be carried with ease, making it suitable for the Hakka's frequent resettlements. On the other hand, because fresh food is difficult to acquire in mountain regions, Hakka people pickle food to adapt to the hard environment. The official introduction asserts that their sophisticated pickling skills demonstrate the ability of Hakka to make good use of natural resources. Furthermore, they preserve food for future use instead of wasting it, which also reflects the Hakka virtue of being thrifty.

(3) Not delicate but practical and tasty

What is important in Hakka dishes is its substance but not appearance. Hakka dishes are large, simple, and undecorative. It reflects the ethnic characteristics of the Hakka: being practical but not being fancy. (CHA, 2003, p. 35)

The official introductions to Hakka cuisine in cookbooks and exhibitions often stress that Hakka people emphasize the quality of foodstuffs rather than the appearance and

decoration of dishes, leading to Hakka cuisine's being characterized as simple but delicious (CHA, 2003, p. 55). It is claimed that although most Hakka dishes look plain, they are delicious and substantive.

These features together constitute an ideal type of Hakka cuisine and articulate the image of the Hakka people as wandering, endeavoring, frugal, painstaking, and diligent, which is in conformity with the "image of the Hakka" shown in the survey by the CHA (2004) and Wang's research (2005). The survey by the CHA shows that frugal (33.2%), painstaking (30.0%), and united (12.5%) are considered traditional characteristics of the Hakka people (CHA, 2004, pp. 4.29, 4.30). Wang's survey (2005) explores the most impressive and explicit image of the Hakka in society, concluding that diligent and frugal (34%) are the most significant characteristics of the Hakka. The second and third most significant characteristics in this survey are Hakka cuisine (23%) and hardworking (18%). This outcome shows that there has been an explicit impression of Hakka ethnic characteristics, which serves as a boundary that distinguishes them from other ethnic groups. Hakka interviewees in this survey considered "diligent and frugal" and "hardworking" the most significant characteristic (45%) of the Hakka. In contrast, only 10% of the Hakka interviewees considered Hakka cuisine significant. This difference shows that "diligent, frugal, and hardworking" have become features that Hakka people self-consciously use to distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups. Hakka cuisine, in contrast, is more important for other ethnic groups' efforts to define the boundaries of the Hakka.

"Classical Hakka cuisine"

The establishment of boundaries involves demarcation and identification. Whereas the above features of Hakka cuisine serve as a form of demarcation from other ethnic groups, the CHA provides an explicit definition of "Hakka cuisine." The definition is a conclusion drawn by nine specialists of Hakka culture and cuisine in 2005. They agree that "Hakka cuisine" refers to

> Dishes which Taiwanese Hakka families are used to preparing; classical regional Hakka cuisine; and dishes cooked using Hakka ingredients. (CHA, 2006, pp. 8-9)

Following this definition, these specialists present a list of "Hakka ingredients," which include 28 pickled vegetables, organs, and processed foods made of tofu.

Based on this definition and characteristics, eight dishes comprising four stews and four stir-fries are highlighted as classical Hakka cuisine.

Four Stews

Pickled vegetables and pig belly stew (酸菜炆豬肚)	Pork stew (炆爌肉)	Spareribs and radish stew (排骨炆菜頭)	Rich broth stewed with dried bamboo shoots (肥湯炆筍乾)
			

Four Stir-fries

Hakka stir-fry (with squid and pork) (客家小炒)	Pig intestine stir-fried with shredded ginger (豬腸炒薑絲)	Duck blood stir-fried with leek (鴨血炒韭菜)	Pig lung stir-fried with pear and tree fungus (豬肺黃梨炒木耳)
			

Figure 3.3 Four stews and four stir-fries

Source: The website of the Council for Hakka Affairs. (retrieved 3/25/2007) http://www.hakka.gov.tw/lp.asp?ctNode=1711&CtUnit=161&BaseDSD=7&mp=1699

According to the introduction by the CHA, these "classical dishes" are served during important Hakka festivals and life-cycle rituals such as weddings, funerals, and deity-worshiping ceremonies. The four stews combine fatty meat with diverse vegetables, whilst the four stir-fries mix vegetables and internal organs of pigs or other ingredients that are only eaten during festivals. However, although these dishes

are served on important occasions, they are not complicated in their cooking methods and do not use expensive ingredients.

Concerning cooking methods, stewing is a cooking method that enables dishes to be repeatedly heated so that the food can be preserved for a longer time; stir-frying is a cooking method that mixes various ingredients with a little cooking oil, so that leftovers are easily dealt with and so that the use of cooking oil is efficient (CHA, 2003, pp. 18-19). For example, the dish "Hakka stir-fry" is an invention that incorporates the leftovers of the Chinese New Year, mixing streaky pork and dried squid, which are eaten only at festivals. Furthermore, as internal organs of pigs are used in many of the above dishes, the CHA suggests that the Hakka make full use of pigs, which again reflects and embodies the Hakka virtue of "being frugal and practical" (CHA, 2006, p. 19).

Not only do the CHA actively define and reproduce "Hakka cuisine discourse," but so too do local governments such as Miaoli County, whose Hakka residents amount to 60.6% of the population (CHA, 2004). The Miaoli Government started its certification of Hakka restaurants in 2003, issuing official marks for those restaurants passing the "authenticity" examination, which is conducted by specialists including chefs from grand hotels and college teachers who visit the restaurants without advance notification and give scores.

Nevertheless, ironically, while the boundaries of Hakka cuisine are becoming clearer through identification, promotion, and certification, the culinary characteristics of "salty, fatty, and aromatic" and their ties with the Hakka image of being "frugal, painstaking, and hardworking" are facing challenges from the trend of healthy and modern cuisine. For example, in the first year of certification, 30 local restaurants received certification for being an "authentic Hakka restaurant," and the number rose to 39 in the certification of the second year. However, the number decreased to 28 in the third year. The restaurant owners who had received certification acknowledged that the mark only had limited help for their business, so their interests in certification diminished.[39] In 2007, although the certification of authentic Hakka restaurants continued, the Miaoli Government started a new certification scheme for "healthy Hakka cuisine," placing more emphasis on nutrition, hygiene, and innovative recipes that "use less oil and salt, but keep the authentic Hakka taste."[40]

The two certification schemes reveal the dilemma that arises when the CHA tries to define the boundaries of Hakka cuisine. Traditional cuisine, with its salt and oil, serves as a link to Hakka history and to Hakka ethnic characteristics, but the cuisine may turn off potential consumers. Furthermore, while the CHA draws the

[39] Interview: the Hakka restaurant owner Mr. Huang (6/19/2008, Miaoli).
[40] See the Miaoli County Government website: http://www.miaoli.gov.tw/index/policy/policy6_02.asp?memoir_id=1519 (retrieved 12/11/2007).

boundaries for Hakka cuisine by highlighting its connection with the common ethnic experience of suffering and cultural values, the boundary carries with it the danger of locking Hakka into a position defined by a relatively low social-economic status. Although oily and salty dishes were previously considered precious food, they no longer symbolize fortune and hospitality nowadays. Instead, when scientific knowledge discourages people from eating too much fat, internal organs, and salt, consumers take increasingly negative attitudes towards oily dishes, viewing them as foods from backwards times. Small servings of healthy and delicate foods have become the new trend. To resolve this dilemma, the CHA has started to describe Hakka cuisine as "sour, sweet, and aromatic" and not "salty, fatty, and aromatic" in their official advertisements (CHA, 2006, p. 8). This reveals that the dispute about "tradition or modernization" has been entangled with social-hierarchy issues.

3.2 The debate about tradition and modernization

The fundamental intention of the CHA to promote Hakka cuisine is not only to highlight Hakka traditions but also to transform Hakka cuisine into haute cuisine, which will strengthen its reputation and elevate its price. As a CHA committee member claimed, the CHA attempts to promote Hakka culinary culture by modernizing it and making it healthier (CHA, 2003, pp. 22-23). The former Vice Councilor of the CHA, Zhuang Jin-hua, confirmed this intention overtly: "Culture and business must be connected. The proliferation of business can bring fortune and then self-confidence to Hakka people. It is impossible to have self-confidence without fortune."[41] Zhuang emphasized that the intention of the CHA is to build a more elegant and modern image of Hakka cuisine and make it popular in dining markets. Dining business can boost the local economy of Hakka counties, and increase the self-esteem and social status of the Hakka, contributing to the building of a stronger Hakka identity. In other words, the emergence of innovative Hakka cuisine is an active claim for a desired ethnic identity, and such an emergence is encouraged by political elites.

In order to modernize Hakka cuisine and preserve its ethnic characteristics simultaneously, some Hakka restaurants use the strategy of working with those traditional "Hakka ingredients" defined by the CHA but changing the cooking methods. Such new dishes are identified as "innovative Hakka cuisine." For example, Figures 3.4 and 3.5 present "innovative Hakka cuisine" from the 2006 Hakka Cuisine Festival. They both adopt traditional ingredients for the Hakka dishes but arrange the

[41] Interview: the former Vice Councilor of the CHA, Zhuang Jin-hua (11/17/2006, Taipei).

food in fashionable ways, revealing a sharp contrast between themselves and rather simple traditional dishes presented in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.4 Salty roasted chicken without bone (去骨鹽焗雞)

Figure 3.5 Ginger chicken with mushrooms (溫中薑茸雞)

Source: Taken at the 2006 Hakka Cuisine Festival by the author

Grand hotels have played an important role in the innovation of Hakka cuisine. Chefs from grand hotels cooperate with the CHA in various promotional activities, such as teaching classes (e.g., Hakka Chef Cultivation) and designing innovative Hakka recipes. When these innovative Hakka cuisines were introduced at the first national Hakka Cuisine Carnival (in 2005), the CHA asserted that Hakka cuisine had been modernized and upgraded because it was now available at five-star hotels.[42] In other words, the CHA regards "being sold at grand hotels" as an important criterion for haute cuisine. By doing so, the CHA has underlined that these haute Hakka cuisines served in grand hotels mark the higher status of Hakka people.

However, not all Hakka restaurants agree that traditional cuisine can or should be changed in this way. Some restaurateur-defenders of traditional cuisine insist that their restaurants serve only dishes with the traditional Hakka characteristics of being oily, salty, and aromatic, emphasizing these dishes' connection with ethnic characteristics such as being hardworking, thrifty, diligent, and practical. These defenders argue that these dishes are never Hakka cuisine when cooked with less oil because the connection between "innovative" dishes and the past vanishes. Although people who advocate modern Hakka cuisine argue that giving up traditional oily dishes symbolizes the elevation of Hakka from their lower status in the social

[42] Official website of the CHA: http://www.hakka.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=10201&CtNode=735&mp=200&ps= (retrieved 3/25/2007).

hierarchy, people who insist on traditional tastes still regard these characteristics as important ethnic marks.

For example, Mr. Liu, the owner of the restaurant Old Hakka Cuisine in Meinong, a famous Hakka town in southern Taiwan,[43] asserts,

> My restaurant is a quite traditional Hakka restaurant. All the dishes served here are those our ancestors ate during their time. True, they are oilier and saltier by today's standards, but they are our characteristics, I do not want to change them…they are not delicious if they are not so oily and salty…well, people do not eat these dishes every day, so it will not influence their health too much.[44]

Mr. Liu ended his antique business to establish this restaurant in 2001, when Meinong started to attract many native tourists. He decorated it with old furniture and antiques, such as wooden tables, cow carts, and old cooking utensils. The restaurant is designed to be a nostalgic space that reminds customers of a typical farmer's house from several decades ago. In addition to the space, most dishes feature the above characteristics of Hakka cuisine, despite some changes in ingredients. For example, the menu does not feature duck blood and pig lung because customers dislike them nowadays. However, in contrast with "innovative Hakka cuisine," dishes here are oily and fatty, which is also a characteristic underlined by Mr. Liu. He argues that these old dishes are embedded in Hakka history and should therefore be remembered by and conveyed to descendants. He adds that most of his customers are not Hakka and that they come to try Hakka cuisine for the first time; hence, his restaurant can popularize Hakka cuisine by preparing it according to the original approaches.[45]

While Mr. Liu's traditional Hakka dishes appeal to tourists, Mr. Lin's restaurant in Taipei attracts Hakka customers who miss that food from their childhood. Mr. Lin rejects changing either the ingredients or the tastes that customers are accustomed to, emphasizing that cooking methods and ingredients are both crucial to maintaining authentic Hakka flavors.[46] For example, in the typical Hakka dish "Hakka stir-fry," Lin rejects the popular addition of bean curd and celery; he sticks to the recipe he used to know during childhood, and criticizes other approaches as being

[43] According to the surveys conducted by the CHA (2004, 2008), the Hakka residents in Meinong were 85.8% of the population in 2004 and 78.3% in 2008.
[44] Interview: Mr. Liu (12/17/2006, Meinong).
[45] Other restaurants in Meinong are also "traditional" ones, serving oily, salty, and fatty dishes; and the taste "has not changed for several decades," according to local inhabitants (12/17/2006, Meinong). Although these restaurants are not highlighted as Hakka restaurants, local inhabitants recommend these small and old restaurants as conveyors of "authentic Hakka cuisine." There are few restaurants serving innovative Hakka cuisine in Meinong.
[46] Interview: Mr. Liu.

"inauthentic." Such criticism comes from the connection between food and memory, revealing that sensory responses to food can often serve as the site where the notion of authenticity is contested. In this sense, changes in these sensory responses to food "encode broader societal changes and provide reference points between then and now, here and there" (Choo, 2004, p. 209).

The development of traditional and innovative Hakka cuisine not only relates to tradition and modernization, but also to ethnic politics and changing social hierarchies. Traditional Hakka cuisine is defined to highlight the distinctive ethnicity of the Hakka, and the value of tradition is particularly significant in modern times; therefore, traditional Hakka cuisine is adopted as a symbol of Hakka ethnicity. However, because the Hakka movement since the late 1980s has aimed to elevate the status of the Hakka, and because the degree of modernization is viewed as a marker of social status, modern and innovative Hakka cuisine has become an important symbol that highlights the tastes and the distinctiveness of the Hakka. In short, Hakka cuisine symbolizes either ethnicity or social status. "Tradition or innovation" becomes a choice between ethnicity and social status. Restaurants and consumers make choices according to their different emphases on identity and social status.

4. Aboriginal cuisine: in the center or on the margins?

4.1 The Aboriginal movement and "Aboriginal cuisine"

Aborigines are the indigenous peoples of Taiwan who belong to the Austronesian language family, accounting for approximately 2% of the population in Taiwan.[47] Since the immigration of the Han – mainly Haklo and Hakka – to Taiwan in the late 17th century, some Aborigines moved to mountainous areas and others assimilated to Han Chinese culture and intermarried with Han Chinese. During the Qing Dynasty, the Aborigines were officially classified as "barbarians" (*Fan*), including "wild" or "raw" Aborigines (*Sheng Fan*), and "civilized" or "cooked" Aborigines (*Shou Fan*). The former refers to those who dwelt in mountainous regions and who did not accept Han customs, while the latter indicates those who were living in plains regions and who were more assimilated into the Han culture; the latter were known also as "plains tribes" (*Pingpuzu*) (Li, 1982).

[47] According to statistics by the Interior Ministry, the population registering as Aboriginals in 2000 was 408,030, accounting for 1.83% of the total population, while by the end of 2008, there were 494,107 Aboriginals, an increase to 2.14% of the population. See the Interior Ministry website: http://www.moi.gov.tw/stat/news_content.aspx?sn=2084 (retrieved 4/1/2009).

Although consisting of more than 10 tribes living in different mountainous regions and having different languages, customs, and social structures, those Aborigines living in the mountainous regions were given a general ethnic name during the Japanese colonial era: *Takasagozoku* in Japanese or *Gaoshazhu* in Mandarin, literally meaning "high mountain tribes."[48] After the Second World War, they were termed "mountain compatrio" (*shandi tongbao*, shortened to *shanbao*) in the Constitution of the ROC, indicating "people living in the mountains." Until the late 1980s, it was common in Taiwan to call the Aborigines "barbarians" in Hokkien and regard them as poor, unreliable, lazy, and drunk.

The Aborigines' endeavor to fight discrimination started with the establishment of the Association for Promoting the Rights of Taiwanese Aborigines (*Taiwan Yuanzhumin Quanyi Cujinhui*) in 1984. Aboriginal intellectuals called for the replacement of the term *shanbao* (mountain compatrio) with the term *Yuanzhumin* (Aborigines), and for a reversion from Han personal names to original personal names, pronounced in their native languages. Between 1988 and 1993, Aboriginal groups held three "Return Our Land Back" demonstrations, demanding the return of their traditional lands in the plains areas.

The Aboriginal movement made significant progress during the 1990s. The second constitutional amendment was passed on June 28, 1994, replacing the name *shandi tongbao* with the name *Yuanzhumin*. Furthermore, the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP) was established in December 1996, earlier than the Council for Hakka Affairs. The Aboriginal movement and the Hakka movement both emerged in line with political liberalization during the second half of the 1980s. They were reactions against a nationalistic Chinese high culture (Chang, 2003, p. 48) and against the emerging dominant "Haklo culture" at that time. Both of the movements demanded the right to use their own languages and to have more participation in public affairs, denouncing the dominance of the Mainlanders and Haklo.

As shown earlier in this chapter, it was in this context that the discourse of "four main ethnic groups" emerged and gained wide acceptance. The discourse served to build a discourse uniting all people under the notion of a "Taiwanese nation," and to highlight Taiwan as a consolidated community distinct from China. At this point, the Aborigines played a particularly crucial role among the four ethnic groups in establishing the distinction of Taiwan on both genetic and cultural levels (Rudolph, 2004). On a genetic level, Aborigines' proximity to the Austronesians created a connection between Taiwan and the Pacific region, weakening the relationship

[48] In the late 1960s, the Aborigines were categorized as nine tribes, but the number of tribes gradually increased. According to the Council of Indigenous Peoples, now there are 14 tribes: Amis, Atayal, Paiwan, Bunun, Puyuma, Rukai, Tsou, Saisiyat, Yami, Thao, Kavalan, Truku, Sakizaya, and Sediq. Concerning the categorization of the Aborigines, see Hsieh, 1994.

between Taiwan and the Mainland China. On a cultural level, the Aboriginal culture was a factor in distinguishing Taiwanese culture from Han Chinese culture. Many Taiwanese nationalists argue that the existence of the Aborigines serves as proof that Taiwan has its own historical and cultural roots and that Taiwan belongs to a cultural circle other than the Chinese culture. In other words, although the Aboriginal population is tiny and their social position is marginal, their Austronesian heritage plays a crucial and central role in building Taiwan up as a distinct nation.

Cookbooks on Aboriginal cuisine

The Aborigines' status of being "marginal but crucial" has been exemplified in the discourse of Taiwanese cuisine since the second half of the 1990s. Aboriginal cuisine is listed as a crucial ingredient of Taiwanese cuisine in textbooks on culinary culture (Lin, 2004; Zhang & Yang, 2004), and in cookbooks on Taiwanese cuisine (Liang, 1999). An example of the typical definition of "Taiwanese cuisine" nowadays is:

> It refers to all tastes of those people on the island. … Its cooking methods were passed down by pioneers from Fuzhou, Zhangzhou, and Xiamen who crossed the Taiwan Strait…. People of the island include not only the aforementioned settlers, but also the Hakka, Aboriginal groups, and people from every province of China (Liang, 1999, p. 3).

Although this cookbook's preface mentions Aboriginal groups, the cookbook itself introduces no Aboriginal cuisine, and this method of presentation is similar to the methods in other culinary textbooks. In short, Aboriginal cuisine is an integral part of Taiwanese cuisine, even if it is only in a marginal position and never a focal subject.

The first cookbook focusing on Aboriginal food was published by the CIP and the National Kaohsiung Hospitality College in 2000, including both traditional and innovative Aboriginal cuisine. The publication was financed by an official project aiming to promote tourism, and cuisine was viewed as "a good tool to promote tourism," as the CIP Councilor puts it overtly (CIP, 2000, p. 3). In this cookbook, the Councilor further claims that the aim of this book is to "integrate Aboriginal cuisine and local specialties so as to create more commercial benefits" (Ibid.). To illuminate the cultural distinction of Aboriginal cuisine, the cookbook emphasizes that Aborigines enjoy a pure life in mountainous environments and have a great passion for nature. Arguing that their dishes are characterized by natural, clean, and original tastes, this cookbook introduces some representative Aboriginal dishes, as summarized in Table 3.3:

Table 3.3 Aboriginal cuisine from the nine main tribes

Tribe	Cuisine	Tribe	Cuisine
Bunun	*Bunun* cake (made by local millet) (布農粿) Millet rice (小米飯)	Puyuma	*Yinafei* mountain cake (以那霏山地粿) Fried wild rat with basil (九層野鼠)
Amis	*Alivongvong*[49] (阿里鳳鳳) Stir-fried wild vegetables	Atayal	Grilled meat on stone (石板烤肉) *Langying* (steamed sticky rice cake) (朗應)
Paiwan	Millet *Qinafu* (millet and pork meat-ball) (小米奇那富) *Jinbole* (Sorghum and pork dumpling packed in a banana leaf) (金伯樂)	Yami	Boiled taro and crab (芋泥加蟹肉) Grilled fish Steamed dried fish (蒸魚乾)
Tsou	Bamboo cooked rice (竹筒飯) Banana cake (香蕉糕)	Rukai	*Qinabu* (taro and meat dumpling) (奇那步) Grilled boar
Saisiyat	Grilled boar with papaya (木瓜拌山豬肉) Assorted wild flowers (野花拼盤) Cassava and spareribs soup (樹薯排骨湯)		

Source: *Yuanzhumin chuantong shipu [Traditional Aboriginal Cookbook]*, CIP, 2000.

The cookbook introduces the Aboriginal cuisines of the nine major tribes. These dishes have certain common characteristics in both food ingredients and cooking methods, and these characteristics differ from those typical of Han Chinese cuisines. Concerning the ingredients, these dishes depend strongly on millet, taro, various wild greens, and game such as wild rat and boar. This cookbook argues that because these foodstuffs are grown or acquired chiefly in mountains, Aboriginal dishes are truly natural. In contrast, it suggests that Aborigines seldom eat the main

[49] Alivongvong is the *Amis* name of this dish, which is a meat and sticky rice dumpling packed in leaves. Because it is easily transported, it was nicknamed "the *Amis* lunch box."

ingredients used by Han Chinese, like rice and chicken, owing to the different lifestyles between the plains-based Han Chinese and the mountain-based Aboriginals. Concerning cooking methods, there are no complicated cooking skills in Aboriginal dishes; Aborigines tend to cook by steaming, grilling, and boiling instead of stir-frying and stewing, which are often adopted by the Han. Therefore, Aboriginal dishes are described as "simple and original." Moreover, many cuisines introduced in this cookbook maintain their local names and feature a guide to pronouncing them, all of which strengthens the exoticism of Aboriginal cuisine.

Natural, clean, and environment-friendly are the common features repeatedly underlined in other cookbooks about Aboriginal cuisines. For example, an official cookbook published by the Tourism Bureau emphasizes that despite including no extraordinary dish like shark fin, Aboriginal cuisine possesses a "back to nature" dietary culture by adopting food from the sky and from the land (Huadong Zonggu Guojia Fengjingqu Guanlichu, 2001, p. 55). It also describes Aboriginal cuisines as environment-friendly:

> The Aborigines get food by planting, hunting, fishing, and collecting. When planting, they use neither pesticides nor fertilizer so their planting is good for our environment. In addition, hunting, fishing, and collecting do not change the ecological system and are therefore more nature-friendly. (Huadong Zonggu Guojia Fengjingqu Guanlichu, 2001, p. 6)

However, the description above is far from the reality. The Taiwanese government has made it illegal to hunt freely in the mountains, with many animals that the Aborigines used to hunt listed as endangered species; therefore, hunting is hardly a viable way of gathering food ingredients in the contemporary world. According to the Economic Survey of the Aborigines, only 27.5% of Aborigines still live in mountainous areas (CIP, 2006b). Although these Aborigines eat some wild animals such as snails and flying squirrels, and although some of these Aborigines run the risk of being arrested for hunting, most of their food comes from local markets and only wild vegetables can be collected easily.[50]

In addition to the emphasis on "being natural," these cookbooks of "Aboriginal cuisine" connect culinary characteristics to the Aborigines' ethnicity, as Hakka cookbooks relate Hakka cuisine to Hakka ethnicity. While most descriptions of Aboriginal cuisine relate it to nature, mountains, and primitiveness, the interpretation of this cuisine is strongly associated with enthusiasm, optimism, and

[50] Interview: Ms. Bai, *Bunun* tribe (1/10/2008, Taidong).

friendliness. For example, one cookbook states, "The *Amis* are fond of various wild vegetables. Their strong bodies and tempered personalities seem to be associated with their preference for these wild vegetables" (Huadong Zonggu Guojia Fengjingqu Guanlichu, 2001, p. 11).

The above image of Aboriginal groups in cookbooks is similar to the image presented in exhibitions at the Taiwan Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Formosan Aboriginal Culture Village (Hsieh, 1999). Having analyzed the content of exhibitions, Hsieh concludes that the "mountain people" are presented as "a group of happy primitive people who inhabit remote mountainous areas, living in straw or stone houses. They hunt and fish for a living; the young girls show enthusiasm to visitors, old women are tattooed, and the daily work is dancing and drinking" (p. 104). Both the exhibitions and the cookbooks aim to promote tourism, with their introductions to Aboriginal culture being simplified. There is little explanation about the differences among tribes and there are no words introducing their current daily lives. Instead, the description of Aboriginal lifestyles, uses of food, and ethnic characteristics, are more like a romanticized version than reality.

Aboriginal cultural heritage plays an important role in the romanticized imagination. In 2001, the CIP held an Aboriginal-cuisine cooking contest, requesting participants to prepare dishes that corresponded to specific stories. As a result, the stories presented in the contest closely concern Aborigines' ancestors and histories. For example, the story of the dish "roasted snails" states that because it was rather difficult for *Amis* ancestors to procure meat, many families raised snails as a substitute. A story from the *Thao* tribe describes a legend about their ancestors finding fish in a meadow. These legends, myths, and symbols further etch Aboriginal culture in actual dishes. In this regard, this affair resembles the promotion of Hakka cuisine by the CHA, the two efforts articulating cultural tales about cuisines and highlighting the traditional roots of dishes from long ago.

Another similarity between Aboriginal and Hakka cuisine lies in the differentiation between traditional and innovative cuisine. While traditional cuisine underlines historical and ethnic roots, the CIP employs innovative cuisine as an important way to upgrade Aboriginal cuisine to the level of haute cuisine. According to their own press, the CIP has two goals for promoting Aboriginal cuisine. The first is to promote the Aboriginal cuisine to the global market by using ingredients and cooking methods from Chinese and Western cuisines. Second, the CIP aims to upgrade the status of Aboriginal cuisine by highlighting the wisdom of Aboriginal culture (CIP, 2006a, p. 3). To achieve these ends, the CIP invited chefs from grand hotels to design new menus, adapting Western cooking methods and decorative approaches to innovative Aboriginal cuisines. This type of development was similar

to that of Hakka cuisine, viewing Westernization and modernization as important ways to upgrade to achieve "haute cuisine" status.

Another symbol marking the upgrade of Aboriginal cuisine is its presentation at state banquets. The Pingdong County Government published the cookbook *Yuanzhumin guoyan shipu [Aboriginal Cuisine for State Banquet]* in 2004, introducing "modernized Aboriginal cuisines" to "provide the President with choices for holding state banquets" (Pingdong University of Science and Technology, 2004, p. I). These dishes feature ingredients that the Aborigines have used for cooking and that include millet, sticky rice, pumpkin, river fish, boar, and various wild vegetables, but the cooking process depends on modern cooking facilities, and the decoration is fashionable. However, despite the title *Aboriginal Cuisine for State Banquet*, the book's dishes presents only those from the *Paiwan* and *Rukai*, which are the main Aboriginal tribes located in Pingdong County. In this way, local politicians have used Aboriginal cuisine to echo the calls for ethnic integration and calls for a "localized state banquet" policy. For local governments, Aboriginal cuisines are distinctive resources that attract tourists while helping to articulate ethnic integration.

4.2 Aboriginal cuisine in restaurants: imagination and adaptation

Ethnic restaurants are important sites for presenting ethnic differences (Ferrero, 2002) and for enabling consumers to have convenient contact with other ethnic cultures. The first restaurant characterized as "Aboriginal" was established in Taipei in March 1994. A Han youth who was enthusiastic about the Aboriginal movement established the restaurant with a co-investment from a *Bunun* youth and a *Puyuma* anthropologist, who had just created one of the most important Aboriginal magazines, entitled *Shanhai wenhua [Culture of the Mountains and Sea]*, in January 1994. Located in the neighborhood of Taiwan University, where many intellectuals and social activists assemble, the restaurant appeals to students, intellectuals, and urban Aborigines. It provides a venue for exhibitions and lectures about Aboriginal culture and serves as a platform where minority groups can present themselves and gather for activities; thus, the site has been a potential cauldron "for ethnic cultural resistance."[51]

However, even in such a culturally oriented restaurant, its cuisine has to be adapted to consumers, most of whom are Han Chinese. Therefore, some dishes preferred by the Aborigines were removed from the menu, such as the internal organs of flying squirrels and a typical *Amis* dish, *silau* (希烙), which is salted meat with a particularly strong flavor. When some Aboriginal dishes were criticized as "too simple, too original" by consumers, the restaurant changed its cooking methods from

[51] This term is used by Ferrero (2002) to describe U.S.-based Mexican restaurants.

steaming and boiling to stir-frying with seasoning that the Han are accustomed to (Zeng, 2002, pp. 54, 63). After the adaptation, the menu's dishes exhibited a strong similarity to those dishes presented in Aboriginal cookbooks, featuring various wild vegetables, bamboo cooked rice, and grilled boar. However, the restaurant has preserved the original Aboriginal-language pronunciation of some dishes' names, such as *Pinapilan* (taro sausage), to create an exotic impression (Zeng, 2002, p. 63).

As previous studies have shown, ethnic restaurants are sites serving selective dishes that have been adapted to the tastes of local consumers and that provide an "exotic" eating experience within the boundaries of cultural expectations (Abarca, 2004; Ferrero, 2002; Lu & Fine, 1995). Consumers look for genuine but still tasty foods in ethnic restaurants, and the criterion of tastiness is based largely on one's lived experiences and eating habits. In this context, ethnic restaurants have created an "imagined pseudo ethnicity of the Other" (Ferrero, 2002, p. 200). The situation can be observed not only in Aboriginal restaurants in Taipei, where only 0.49% of its population are Aborigines, but also in Taidong, where its Aboriginal population accounts for 34% of the population.[52] The example of restaurants in Taidong can further highlight the fact that the client base of Aboriginal restaurants consists largely of other ethnic groups.

Aboriginal culture is the main tourist attraction of Taidong County, with Aboriginal cuisine playing an important role. Among the Aboriginal restaurants that tourists prefer in Taidong, *Mibanai* is a representative one that appeals to many urban tourists who expect a comfortable dining environment and special "mountain dishes." The restaurant is quite modern in its architecture, furniture, and tableware. Only the paintings on the wall and waitresses wearing traditional Aboriginal clothes imply that the restaurant features Aboriginal cuisine (Figure 3.6). The owner, a Han Chinese, explained that his intention was to change the "backward" stereotype of Aborigines and create a delicate dining venue. Therefore, he did not choose icons regarded as "primitive," such as a stone oven and wooden furniture, to decorate his restaurant. Instead, his clientele use British-style tableware and oil paintings in a bright space.[53]

[52] The Aboriginal census data was collected by the Interior Ministry (published on 2/13/2009). See: http://www.moi.gov.tw/stat/news_content.aspx?sn=2084 (retrieved 4/1/2009).
[53] Interview: the restaurant owner Lin Hui-yao (1/9/2008, Taidong).

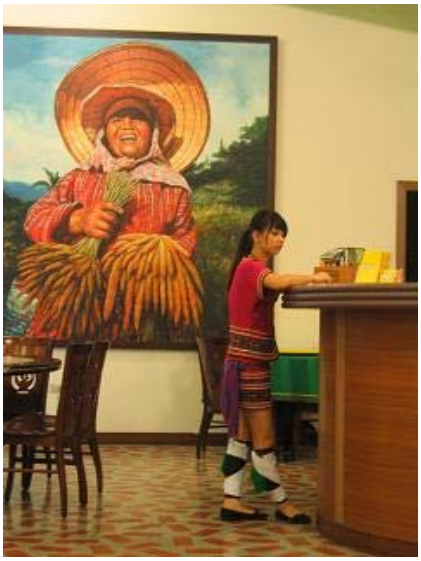


Figure 3.6 The *Mibanai* restaurant in Taidong
Source: Taken by the author (2008)

Although the space does not fulfill consumers' expectations of Aboriginal culture, the restaurant presents an "Aboriginal impression" through its menu. The first page of the menu declares that the restaurant deals in the *Simple, Plain, Natural Life,* followed by a short description:

> The sky is turning bright. Men go into the mountains to hunt and women collect wild greens, mushrooms, and bamboo shoots. Young girls go to the sea for seaweed and fish…. The elderly women rush to ferment millet wine.

Such a description confirms the image presented in Aboriginal cookbooks, showing a primitive and natural scene in mountainous areas. However, a glance at the dishes reveals them to be obvious adaptations and innovations. The menu consists of various wild vegetables and game, such as boar, Formosan muntjac, and mountain rabbits, but most dishes are quite innovative in the cooking methods used. The owner pointed out that it is important to serve delicious food but not those that Aborigines really eat. Therefore, most dishes have been created from his own inspiration, like "wild orange and meat stew," "roasted pumpkin with cheese," and "non-oily knuckle." It is manifest that the ethnic purity of the food is not the major consideration of the

restaurant owner; instead, he makes adjustments or creations in the ingredients and cooking methods to meet most consumers' tastes.

Despite these innovative dishes, the restaurant is recognized by consumers as a good Aboriginal restaurant. It is recommended by local people[54] and by some consumers who left messages on the restaurant's website. These consumers consider wild vegetables, boar, and pigeon as the characteristics of Aboriginal cuisine. The consumers either seldom seem aware of any alterations made to these cuisines or just neglect the alterations.

In contrast, other Aboriginal restaurants in Taidong create Aboriginal images by making a more prominent and obvious connection to Aboriginal culture. For example, the *Primitive Tribe* is a restaurant near the mountains and is characterized by a natural and primitive atmosphere. It consists of several wooden houses with thatched roofs and a square in the center, where Aboriginal music and dances are often performed (Figure 3.7). Some iron ovens are set in the corner of the square so that the consumers are able to see how chicken and fish are grilled. The restaurant has an exotic environment distinct from urban restaurants, and consumers sit on bamboo chairs and check the menu, which is made of bamboo and written by hand. The dishes served here are those supposedly most popular in Aboriginal communities, such as stir-fried wild vegetables, boars, heart of betel nuts, and river fish. By using primitive buildings, tribal songs, and dances, as well as various "wild" foods, the *Primitive Tribe* creates an atmosphere that fits many people's imagination of Aboriginal culture.

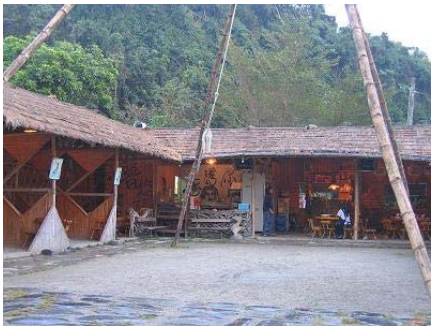


Figure 3.7 The restaurant *Primitive Tribe*
Source: Taken by the author (2008)

[54] During my fieldwork in Taidong, local inhabitants often recommended me the restaurant when I mentioned the attempt to try Aboriginal cuisine; curiously, many of these recommenders had never eaten there. According to the owner, only about 20% of their consumers had been Taidong inhabitants.

Although most clients of the restaurant are urban inhabitants who spend their holidays in Taidong and hope to try something with exotic tastes,[55] some consumers expect to learn about Aboriginal culture in their dining experience. Ms. Bai, the chef at another restaurant, *Bunun Tribe*, which has a similar atmosphere to that of *Primitive Tribe*, observed that consumers from northern Taiwan have a stronger interest in Aboriginal culture and cuisine than those from southern Taiwan:

> Our customers from northern Taiwan are more interested in our Aboriginal cuisine, while those from the south prefer to share a table featuring various dishes, not just Aboriginal dishes…. These people seem to think that mountain dishes are not so special, but the northerners have great interest in that. Northerners often ask the names of foodstuffs and inquire into the exact cooking methods used for these dishes…they even try to cook these dishes at home.[56]

Ms. Bai observed that many northern visitors have a stronger motivation to understand Aboriginal culture, with Shi Wen-yu, a consumer from Kaohsiung, making a similar point. He articulated a distinction between the northerners and southerners of Taiwan:

> Northerners seem to have a more sympathetic attitude toward Aborigines. They think Aborigines are a romantic people; their culture is exotic and worth preserving. Yeah…I agree that the preservation of culture is important, but I think some northerners have too strong a romantic imagination, especially young students.... Maybe there are more Aborigines in southern Taiwan, so we have become accustomed to them, and…we can see the other side of them.[57]

The differentiation between "north and south" shows that consumers may have diverse responses to and diverse conceptions of Aborigines and their culture. Aboriginal culture, including Aboriginal cuisine, is a field in which different social agents interact. Among these agents, first the governments and colleges drew the boundaries of Aboriginal cuisine in cookbooks, describing it as natural and primitive, characteristics that echo Aborigines' perceived ethnic features. Second, owners of Aboriginal restaurants are the agents selecting ingredients and presenting them as "ethnic cuisines." Such a presentation involves adaptation to financial burdens and to

[55] Interview: Ms. Bai, *Bunun Tribe*.
[56] Interview: Ms. Bai, *Bunun Tribe*.
[57] Interview: Shi Wen-yu (1/9/2008, Taidong).

consumer expectations. Third, Aboriginal cuisine is a convenient way for Han consumers to have contact with the culture of "ethnic others" and thus attracts those who feel interested in Aboriginal culture. Consequently, the presented Aboriginal cuisine reflects official discourse, the presentation of restaurants, and the imagination of consumers. It is a closed system with only a loose relationship to Aborigines' traditional foods and to Aborigines' contemporary daily lives. The critical issue in this closed system is not "what is Aboriginal cuisine" but "what should Aboriginal cuisine be."

The outcome of this closed system can be exemplified by the Aboriginal cuisine served in *Bunun Tribe*. As Ms. Bai mentioned, the most popular Aboriginal cuisine among northern consumers is the individual set meal shown in Figure 3.8.

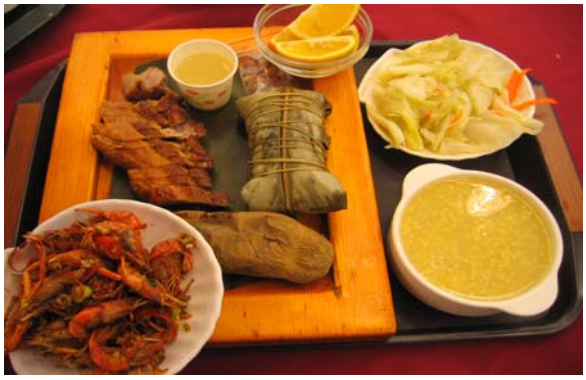


Figure 3.8 The "Aboriginal cuisine" set meal at the *Bunun Tribe* restaurant
Source: Taken by the author (2008)

Consisting of boar, deep-fried river shrimp, baked sweet potato, millet porridge, mountain cake, and stir-fried vegetables, the set meal presents a tasting sample of various Aboriginal ingredients with a typical meal pattern common in urban restaurants. With such a meal pattern, consumers can enjoy various foods in one meal. However, many ingredients in the meal have been transformed and are quite different from their original style. For example, the cooking method of the millet porridge is taken from northern China. The restaurant also removed from the menu some dishes that did not fit consumers' preconceived images of Aborigines, such as taro dishes. Ms. Bai explained that her restaurant does not serve taro "because clients considered it neither special nor 'Aboriginal'," despite her argument that they ate taro and sweet potato frequently in daily life and that her lunch box often contained a sweet potato when she was a child.

In sum, the dishes served in Aboriginal restaurants are largely dependent on the imagination and innovation of their owners. The interviewed restaurant owners were not paying attention to the origins and traditions of Aborigines. The owners had established Aboriginal restaurants to create venues where consumers could have an Aboriginal experience and make a profit. Similarly, the government has been promoting Aboriginal cuisine with the intention of developing tourism.

5. "Taiwanese cuisine" as a national symbol and a commodity

After the establishment of the DPP government in 2000, Taiwanese food grew highly charged with symbolic meanings, an outcome that is prominent in two regards. First, "food produced in Taiwan" became prominent at state banquets, and state banquets articulated political demands regarding indigenization. With the growing Taiwanese consciousness regarding Taiwan as a distinctive nation, local delicacies and snacks have become representative of Taiwanese culture and have helped to build connections between the Taiwanese inhabitants and the native land. Second, Hakka and Aboriginal cuisines are framed as "ethnic cuisines" that display ethnic characteristics, echoing the categorization of the "four major ethnic groups." On the one hand, the concept of "four major ethnic groups" underlines Taiwan's status as a consolidated community that is distinct from China. On the other hand, this concept has integrated itself into food-consumption practices, alongside the development of Hakka and Aboriginal cuisines. The government promotes ethnic cuisines as convenient symbols to present specific features of ethnic groups, such as frugality and painstaking endurance for the Hakka and purity for the Aborigines. Through the mechanism of exhibitions, certification, and other forms of propaganda, these ethnic characteristics have spread to a wider population.

When Taiwanese local dishes and ethnic cuisines are shaped as political symbols, they also function as commodities in the marketplace, and the government has actively played the role of a market agent in the process. This was manifest in the cooperation between local governments and grand hotels in the promotion of state banquet menus and ethnic cuisines. The government was no longer merely establishing the rules and enforcing regulations. Instead, the DPP government not only formulated local food as an expression of "native consciousness" but also made it a product representing local or ethnic characteristics.

Although the government played an active role in the market, the market-based agencies did not passively follow or cooperate with this promotion by the government. Their negotiation is clear in the struggle between tradition and

modernization. While traditional cuisine is regarded as a symbol of ethnic authenticity, the emergence of modern cuisine reflects changing social conditions and a longing for the upgrading of social status. Since eating traditional oily, fatty, or plain dishes has been viewed as a mark of backward times, both Hakka and Aboriginal restaurants seek to present a modern ethnic cuisine, emphasizing healthy and delicate dishes. Eating healthy and delicate dishes is a new dining fashion and, moreover, a mark of the upgraded social status of Hakka and Aboriginal groups.