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

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## **Chapter Four**

### **Taiwanese Cuisine as “Tastes of Home”:**

#### **Changing identification of home and cultural memory**

Chapters One through Three placed emphasis on the history of “Taiwanese cuisine”; but what is the role of consumers in shaping “Taiwanese cuisine”? How do consumers conceive these changes in the meaning of “Taiwanese cuisine”? Chapters Four and Five will examine how Taiwanese cuisine became meaningful for consumers and how consumers’ emotional attachment to specific local dishes took root through bodily practices. Chapter Four focuses on the changing identification of “tastes of home” in food memoirs.

Food memoirs are literary writings concerning food and personal themes. It is a genre consisting of recipes, cooking methods, descriptions of taste, eating contexts, and personal stories about food. They not only provide detailed descriptions of eating experiences but also reveal the emotional investment of writers, such as the nostalgia, suffering, and pleasure related to eating. Among other themes, “tastes of home” is a dominant theme in the literary works of this genre, particularly in those written by migrant writers. Thus, this chapter will examine such works to explore the changing notions of “tastes of home.”

#### **1. “TASTES OF HOME” AND FOOD MEMORY**

##### **1.1 Home, tastes of home, and cultural memory**

The idea of home or homeland has both physical and symbolic meanings. Regarding physical meanings, it refers to a house, neighborhood, town, or city, which is an environment where people live and grow up. Symbolically, the idea of home is relevant to shelter, family, and sense of security. These symbolic meanings of home are shaped by repeated practices and experiences. As Kenyon (1999) reveals, home is a place that we have “rights to return to,” with one’s understanding of home being the result of repeated practices over years (p. 89). A long-term process of going out and coming back makes home a site where one nests in the world, and this type of site can bring people not only a sense of security but also a sense of belonging. This symbolic home thus often serves as our point of reference in the world.

In addition to being a place that provides a sense of security, home is a site where emotional exchanges take place. Home is an idea based on the accumulation

of memories about past experiences, which involve numerous interactions and emotional attachments that characterize relationships with, for example, parents, neighbors, and local friends. As an essential element of daily experience, ritual, and specific occasions, food is often a marker of these experiences, a clue that can trigger one's memory and feelings of home. Many scenes revolving around food can be recollected around the family: looking forward to dinner, waiting for the snack stall on the corner every afternoon, or even sharing holiday meals with family in the midst of jovial discourse. As such, food memories of home consist of various social interactions. In the words of Assmann and Assmann,<sup>1</sup> it is "communicative memory" that refers to "the social aspect of individual memory" (Assmann, 2006, p. 3) and "those varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications" (Assmann, 1995, p. 126). According to their interpretations, emotion plays an essential role in defining "communicative memory" and inscribing memory into one's mind. Imbued with the emotions of love, attachment, hatred, or anger, events that happened in the past have been registered in the mind and are remembered.

While the temporal horizon of communicative memory is limited to between approximately 80 and 100 years, "communicative memory" can become part of "cultural memory" after ceremonial or organized communication has objectified the communicative memory (Assmann, 1995, pp. 127-128). Once cultural memory is shaped and maintained, it can serve as grounds where a group of people become conscious of their distinction and unity. Cultural memory is thus an important means by which a community can maintain its distinctive customs for generations and reproduce its group identity (Assmann, 1995, pp. 128-131). Assmann terms the connection between groups and identity the "concretion of identity," arguing that "a group bases its consciousness of unity and specificity upon this knowledge and derives formative and normative impulses from it, which allows the group to reproduce its identity" (Assmann, 1995, p. 128). In this way, Assmann conceptualizes "tradition" as a form of cultural memory, "a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation" (Assmann, 1995, p. 126).

According to these two concepts, food memories are "communicative memories" of individuals built on the basis of everyday communication. Individuals have their own memories, eating habits, culinary preferences, and identifications

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<sup>1</sup> "Communicative memory" and "cultural memory" here are concepts formulated by Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann in their book written in German *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archiologie der literarischen Kommunikation* (Munich: Fink, 1987). Some of their works have been translated into English.

concerning “tastes of home,” and these attributes are closely related to one’s interactions with family, friends, and neighbors. However, once food habits or conventions are crystallized as dietary traditions that can be circulated widely in a society and transmitted from generation to generation, they have been transformed into “cultural memory.”

The textualization and intellectualization of food memories are important ways in which the objectification of communicative memory can be achieved. Through culinary textbooks, cookbooks, and other types of gastronomic writings, food memories and eating habits can be objectified, spread, and studied. As Ferguson’s (1998) study on the formation of French cuisine shows, various gastronomic writings have been crucial in establishing “French cuisine” as a cultural field. “French cuisine” as a cultural field consists of French court history, complicated manners during feasts, knowledge of geography and climate, the art of tasting dishes, and historical stories about cuisines. Food critics, journalists, and novelists have written articles about these topics; at the same time, readers and consumers have exchanged these texts among one another and have added their own opinions. Ferguson argues that it is through textual consumption and cultural mediation that French cuisine is articulated as a gastronomic field. The composition and the exchange of gastronomic writings diffuse dietary traditions and their corresponding values. By doing so, Ferguson suggests that gastronomic writings can nationalize culinary discourses and further secure the autonomy of the field (Ferguson, 1998, p. 630).

Studies of cookbooks and food memoirs also reveal the influence of food writings on collective identity. Naguib (2006) analyzes the cookbook memoirs of two Jewish Egyptians, showing that recipes about the homeland are an important means by which people in exile can remember and understand historical moments. In food memoirs, dishes are invested with nostalgia for the past, revealing powerful recollections of previous days. Naguib concludes that the recollection of the past is influential in building the collective identity of people who shared the same experiences and witnessed the same historical events. A similar argument is made by Roy (2002), whose research focuses on the linkage between food and national diaspora. He argues that when gastrophilic histories are tied to conditions of diaspora and migration, they are saturated with the idioms of national belonging and national purity.

In sum, food memories can be textualized and food writings can contribute to transforming communicative memory into cultural memory, where collective identity is rooted. This chapter explores the changing notions of “tastes of home” in food memoirs about Taiwanese cuisine, particularly concerning those works written by Mainlanders who moved from the Chinese Mainland to Taiwan after the Second

World War. The aim is to clarify (1) the changing identification of “tastes of home” and how writers identified “Taiwanese cuisine” as their “tastes of home”; and (2) how food memories were transformed from personal communicative memory into cultural memory. By exploring these two questions, this chapter can further examine the relationship between cultural memory and the identification of home.

## 1.2 Literary works concerning food memoirs in Taiwan

Literary texts on food first appeared as late as the 1970s in Taiwan. Before the 1970s, only a few related articles were published in newspapers or as part of a collection of prose. Among these food writers, the vast majority of those whose writings concern “tastes of home” were migrants moving from the Mainland to Taiwan after 1945.<sup>2</sup> Their common experience is of leaving their homeland owing to war and of being unable to return home for several decades. This shared experience makes the “nostalgia for the food of the homeland” a major topic in the aforementioned writers’ food memoirs. Some famous literary authors who never wrote about food on the Mainland started to write articles about their memories of food after moving to Taiwan. For example, a well-known literary critic and specialist on Shakespeare, Liang Shi-qiu (1903-1987), started to write articles on food after moving to Taiwan in 1949, with the main topic in his writings being the food from his hometown, Beijing (Chen, 1999, pp. 450-452).

Among these food-memoir writers, Tang Lu-sun (1908-1985) and Lu Yao-dong (1932-2006) are two representative figures. Tang Lu-sun is the first writer of culinary literature in Taiwan, with his 12 books making him the most productive. Lu Yao-dong is a prestigious historian and the first professor to teach the topic of Chinese dietary history at the university level.<sup>3</sup> Both Tang and Lu came to Taiwan during the late 1940s; however, while Tang had no chance to return to the Mainland, Lu went back to visit the Mainland for many times and most of his articles on food were written after his visits.

In addition to these writers who moved from the Mainland, there are a few authors who wrote about Taiwanese cuisine and identified it as their home food. To such writers are Lin Hai-yin (1918-2001)<sup>4</sup> and Lin Wen-yue (1933- ), who had

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<sup>2</sup> For example, *Jiixiangwei [Tastes of Home]* is a collection of articles written by newspaper readers who submitted them to a newspaper to introduce food from their homeland. Of all 409 articles in this book, only ten are about Taiwanese food. Most authors in this book came from various provinces and showed great enthusiasm for the food from their hometown, expressing a strong wish to return to the Mainland. See Cai, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Lu studied history comprehensively, specializing in Chinese history from the third to sixth centuries A.D. and Chinese historiography.

<sup>4</sup> Lin Hai-yin’s original name is Lin Han-ying, with Hai-yin being her pseudonym, but because of her great reputation in literature, she is known as Lin Hai-yin nowadays.

similar family backgrounds. Born into Taiwanese families, they both studied and lived on the Mainland during their childhood or teenage years before permanently taking up residence in Taiwan after 1945. Lin Hai-yin was a prestigious writer and editor and the creator of an important publishing company that nurtured many Taiwanese writers. Lin Wen-yue is a professor of Chinese literature and is also known as the granddaughter of Lian Heng, a famous historian. Their writings on food account for only a tiny percentage of all their publications: Lin Hai-yin has only written a few articles focusing on food from Taiwan and Beijing, whilst Lin Wen-yue published one food memoir in 2000. Although their food writings are less numerous than those by Tang and Lu, these articles express complicated emotions toward two different homes: one on the Mainland, and the other in Taiwan. Their experiences make Taiwan a peculiar “homeland” with which Lin Hai-yin and Lin Wen-yue became familiar only after they grew up. As this chapter will show later, although these two writers have written about Taiwanese cuisine as their “tastes of home,” the formation and the meanings of their “tastes of home” differ from those of Tang and Lu.

## **2. TANG LU-SUN’S SEARCH FOR THE NATION IN “TASTES OF HOME”**

### **2.1 Purity of tradition in Chinese cuisine as cultural memory**

Tang Lu-sun was born in 1908 in Beijing, the capital of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the last dynasty of Imperial China. Growing up in an aristocratic family in Manchu, he enjoyed the dishes made by private chefs and had the chance to taste various precious foods. Furthermore, Tang had been a financial officer in his youth, a position that had enabled him to travel around China. Owing to these experiences, the main themes of his food memoirs are the court life of the Qing Dynasty, the various foods of Beijing, and different Chinese regional cuisines.

Tang Lu-sun came to Taiwan in 1946 and his first article, “Dining in Beijing,” was published in 1974, right after his retirement from his position as senior officer of the National Tobacco Company in 1973. In the following twelve years, he wrote twelve books (see Table 4.1),<sup>5</sup> all being his memoirs on various Chinese foods and dining experiences across China. Among these books, Tang paid particular attention to the recipes, restaurants, specialties, anecdotes, eating habits, and other related customs of Beijing, his hometown.

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<sup>5</sup> Among all these publications, the final two books, *Tang Lu-sun tan chi* and *Lao xiangqin*, were published after his passing in 1985.

**Table 4.1 Tang Lu-sun's books on culinary writing**

1976	<i>Zhongguo chi</i> (Chinese Eating)
1976	<i>Nanbei kan</i> (Watching South and North)
1977	<i>Tianxia wei</i> (Tastes of the World)
1978	<i>Guyuan qing</i> (Affections for the Lost Home)
1980	<i>Lao gudong</i> (The Antique)
1980	<i>Suan tian ku la xian</i> (Sour, Sweet, Bitter, Spicy, and Salty)
1981	<i>Da zahui</i> (The Stew)
1982	<i>Shejin pinpan</i> (Assorted Dishes)
1983	<i>Shuo dong dao xi</i> (Talking about East and West)
1983	<i>Zhongguo chi de gushi</i> (The Story of Chinese Eating)
1988	<i>Tang Lu-sun tan chi</i> (Tang Talks about Eating)
1988	<i>Lao xiangqin</i> (My Old Fellow)

Tang's food memoirs have two important characteristics. First, as a member of the royal family, Tang possessed a background that provided him with not only sufficient writing material about court life but also a strong sense of pride in the Qing Dynasty of Imperial China. He presents China as a wealthy nation with a broad and sophisticated culture through his vivid descriptions of food, and the Chinese capital Beijing comes across as a particularly vibrant gathering place for the wealthy. His food memoirs rest on Beijing; and his memories form the basis for his comparisons of regional cuisines, including Taiwanese cuisine.

As a descendant of an aristocratic family, Tang could craft highly detailed narratives about court life, highlighting the delicate manners that were indeed requisite in the daily lives of aristocrats. His topics include royal feasts, the life of court ladies, games, ceremonies, the royal kitchen, and chefs. Although these topics do not constitute explicit political affairs, it is often through these seemingly trivial matters that widely regarded cultural and political themes can surface. In his vivid descriptions, he places greater emphasis on the cultural than on the material aspects of court life. For example, once a Japanese TV program spent US\$20,000 to prepare a famous Chinese banquet, called the "Manchu-Han Banquet" (*manhan quanxi*),<sup>6</sup> which included dishes made from elephant nose, shark belly, and whale. Tang criticized the banquet for being both too luxurious and uncivilized to qualify as a

<sup>6</sup> The banquet included four feasts and 70 cuisines in total. See Tang, 1988 [1978]-a, pp. 145-146.

genuine Chinese banquet. Although Tang himself never enjoyed a “Manchu-Han Banquet,” he proclaimed that “if the banquet was indeed as luxurious as this, then we Chinese have become a nation that spends extravagantly to have fun but not a great nation with an admirable culinary culture” (Tang, 1988 [1978]-a, p. 146). Similarly, Tang defended the Empress Dowager *Cixi*, arguing that her life was not so luxurious as suggested by the rumor that she had indulged in 128 dishes for a dinner. Instead, according to the menu he had read, her meals were much simpler and austere. The archive showed that even at her birthday banquet, there were only two pots, four large dishes, four middle dishes, and six small dishes—far fewer than the alleged 128 dishes (Tang, 1988 [1978]-a, pp. 148-149).

In his writings, Tang emphasizes that, rather than from “excessively luxurious and uncivilized” dishes, Chinese dietary culture stems chiefly from cuisine ranging from haute banquets to normal snacks. Tang claims that “the Chinese are talented people who know how to taste food; Chinese people can eat, love to eat, and understand how to eat” (Tang, 1984 [1980], p. 197); in this same regard, Tang wrote many passages introducing Chinese regional cuisines and local snacks, covering various banquets, dishes, tableware, rules of seating, banquet entertainment, and the tastes of food. He also made subtle comparisons about fish, buns, noodles, and festival foods from different regions, explaining the differences among them from both geographical and historical perspectives. In his introduction to court life and various Chinese regional cuisines, Tang characterizes Beijing as a “royal capital” that enjoyed all the best dishes of the Chinese nation. Tang’s articles frequently stress that Beijing has been the capital of China for more than six centuries and is thus a city where all the best foods can be found.

In his first article “Dining in Beijing,” from which he gained great attention and popularity,<sup>7</sup> Tang first claimed that there were nearly one thousand restaurants in Beijing during the 1910s and that these restaurants could be categorized into three groups; then he introduced these restaurants and their signature dishes. Some restaurants and dishes he introduced are truly amazing. For example, one restaurant could serve dishes for more than one thousand tables at the same time, serving around 10,000 people. Another restaurant was famous for its “ice-bowl assortment” (什錦冰碗) that used a lotus leaf as the container. This dish was made from eight kinds of newly picked nuts or fruits that were all irrigated with spring water. In addition, some of the described dishes, such as “deep-fried osmanthus” (桂花皮炸), are rarely found nowadays. Despite the beautiful name, this dish was actually “fried pigskin” (炸肉皮) made according to a long and complicated process: frying a piece

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<sup>7</sup> Tang Lu-sun, “Chi zai Beiping [Dining in Beijing],” *UDN*, 11/23/1974(12).



of pigskin and sealing it in a can for one year, boiling it in chicken soup to soften the pigskin during the next year, and finally cutting and stir-frying it with egg and ham.

In his works, Tang introduces hundreds of cuisines made according to complicated processes, particularly underlining dishes that could be found only in Beijing. For example, his favorite Beijing snack was “milk pudding” (*nailuo*), which originated in Manchuria, the homeland belonging to the Manchu, who established the Qing Dynasty. Tang emphasizes the assertion that various sorts of milk snacks could be found in Beijing along with the best milk pudding, such as roast milk, milk rolls, milk cakes (*naibobo*), and *naiwuta*.<sup>8</sup> In the royal kitchen, there was even a “milk kitchen” responsible for milk snacks and other snacks. Tang proudly describes that the wife of a Spanish ambassador had taken many roast-milk snacks back to Spain because she had considered them superior to all Dutch cheeses with bread (Tang, 1976, p. 66).

Tang’s writings express his pride living in Beijing and his strong sense of belonging to the city in his books. His works make frequent use of the term “Beijing-er” (*Beijingren*, the inhabitants of Beijing) and emphasize that Beijing is distinctive from all other Chinese cities. He describes food conventions, rituals, and customs in detail, stressing that the inhabitants in Beijing have much greater respect for manners and rituals than people in other Chinese provinces. For example, when discussing seasonal eating, he states,

Beijing-ers are used to leading a life of leisure; therefore, we stress that people should eat everything “in season.” That is, if it is not the right time, we just do not eat it.... This rule of the right time for food is hardly understood by people from other provinces. (Tang, 1988a, pp. 2-3)

Tang emphasizes not only the right time to eat but also the correct cooking methods and seasoning:

Cooking should follow the rules. If not, “style” and “standard” will be lost. For instance, beef should be cooked with a large green onion; lamb pastry should be cooked with cucurbit, and shrimp should be cooked with leeks. If you do not follow these rules, the “style” of the dish will be absent, and the dish itself will definitely lack its delicious qualities. (Tang, 1988 [1978]-b, p. 43)

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<sup>8</sup> *Naiwuta* is the Manchu name of the snack, which is made from milk and Chinese yam. For Tang’s introductory remarks on these milk snacks, see Tang, 1976, pp. 65-68; Tang, 1977, pp. 119-122; Tang, 1988 [1978]-a, pp. 23-25.

In terms of “correct eating,” dining manners are cultural codes that have normative power according to Tang. There are rules governing the times and the occasions for eating, with these rules functioning not as law but as a semi-formal way of distinguishing one time or occasion from others. For Tang, there are rules to being an “authentic Beijing-er,” with the legitimacy of these rules coming from the cultural framework of Chinese society that has been shaped over a long history. After accumulating over centuries and receiving confirmation from social elites, these rules still command respect from contemporary people, who follow them as a form of distinction. In Assmann’s cultural memory theory, these rules are cultural memories that group members respect and transmit to the next generation. For Tang Lu-sun, the cultural memory of Chinese cuisine, or Beijing cuisine, should be transmitted from one generation to the next, and neglect of these rules is unacceptable.

The normative power of cultural memory is explicit. When Tang introduces the conventions, rituals, and customs of Beijing food vividly, on one hand it is Tang consciously selecting the food stories that he considered a crucial part of Beijing culinary culture, whilst on the other hand, it is Beijing culinary culture that is embodied in Tang, guiding him to obey these norms and values. As Assmann argues, society inscribes itself in these memories with all its norms and values and creates in the individual an authority, which has traditionally been called “consciousness” (Assmann, 2006, p. 7). Individual behavior is directed by specific cultural frameworks whose function is to embody cultural values and norms in individuals, encouraging them to remember and diffuse these values so as to shape cultural memory.

Once Tang, drawing from his experiences and memories, accepted Beijing culinary culture as the standard way of dining, he regarded Taiwanese food as alien in the sense that its quality seemed inferior to the quality he was familiar with in Beijing. Although Tang agreed that people in different regions have different food tastes, his works feature many complaints about his difficulties in trying to find authentic Beijing food in Taiwan. For example, after praising “chicken with bean tofu” (雞絲拉皮) in Beijing, he notes with regret, “Shops in Taiwan are able to prepare Chinese cuisines from all provinces now, but I have not found one good ‘chicken with bean tofu’” (Tang, 1976, p. 21). When introducing a specific white mushroom *koumo* (口蘑, *Tricholoma matsutake*) produced in northern China, he laments, “Do not mention eating real *koumo* in Taiwan, for I am afraid that nobody here has ever seen it” (Tang, 1976, pp. 50-51). Similar criticism is readily observable in Tang’s books, which frequently compare the food in Taiwan with that on the Mainland, and which just as frequently criticize the paucity of authentic Chinese

cuisine in Taiwan. Such insistence on “authenticity” is the second pronounced characteristic of Tang’s food memoirs.

Tang’s dissatisfaction with Taiwanese food focuses, in large measure, on Taiwanese restaurants’ unorthodox cooking methods and the phenomenon of “hybridity” in restaurants—Tang argues that a restaurant should concentrate on one regional cuisine and not on many. According to Tang, both the hybrid mixture of cuisines and the heterodox cooking methods are mistakes that might hurt dining conventions and rules that are well established. In other words, unorthodox cooking methods and hybrid cuisines contradict the cultural memory of Chinese food, with any violation damaging the terrain of Chinese culture. For example, when Tang discusses *Da-lu* noodles (大滷麵, stewed noodles), he argues that the correct name of this noodle should be *Dar-lu* noodles (打滷麵) because *Dar-lu* refers to the cooking method of this noodles and that *Da-Lu* is a meaningless term that only has a similar pronunciation and that was likely introduced by people who were ignorant of this cooking method. Tang notes with disappointment,

I have stayed in Taiwan for several decades. During these years, I have never tasted good *Dar-lu* noodles, and now even the name has been changed! ... In recent years, most patrons at restaurants have been Taiwanese; they think that “*Da-lu* noodles” is easier to remember than “*Dar-lu*”... Since the recipes of various regional dishes have been mixed and changed like that, how is it possible to eat something delicious? (Tang, 1984 [1980], p. 21)

Tang reveals his wish that authentic cooking methods, ingredients, and presentations of dishes be remembered and transmitted to future generations. For him, reproducing the experienced tastes in memory is a means of preserving dietary culture, and the preservation of China’s authentic dietary culture is important to the preservation of Chinese culture. Tang repeatedly asserts that Chinese dietary culture is a crucial part of Chinese culture, and that therefore, the components of the dietary culture, such as cooking methods, ingredients, and presentations of dishes, are important constitutive parts of Chinese culture. Tang’s complaints that the taste and even the name of a given traditional dish have suffered distortions are reflective of his worry that traditional dietary culture would be lost.

Tang’s worries resulted not only from changes in dietary culture but also from his emotional attachment to the Chinese nation, to which he belonged and with which he identified both politically and culturally. His insistence on the authenticity of Chinese culture is consistent with his cultural identity. When, in his works, he criticizes the lack of culinary knowledge in Taiwan, he is actually criticizing

disobedience to legitimate Chinese culture. The Mainland had become an inaccessible home, and Tang could only search for the reproduction of Chinese cultural traditions in Taiwan; his failure in this search is the main reason for his disappointment.

Tang's disappointment emerged as early as 1946, when he arrived in Taiwan. His memoirs claim that the dishes served in public canteens were terrible and that he could find a taste of home only in some Mainland restaurants.

In the early years of retrocession, there were few restaurants serving inland (*neidi*)<sup>9</sup> dishes. In some restaurants, like *Penglai Ge*, *Xin Zhonghua*, *Xiaochun Yuan*, and *Xin Penglai*, the buildings were nice, the waitresses were enthusiastic, and even the dishes were diverse, containing ingredients harvested from land and sea; nevertheless, the tastes were poor. We could get together to appreciate dishes consistent with our tastes of home only after restaurants serving Mainland cuisines were established in Taipei, such as *Laozhengxing*, *Zhuangyuan Lou*, *Sanhe Lou*, *Qionghua Lou*, *Yuyuan*, and *Yinyi*. (Tang, 1982, p. 136)

This quote refers to the restaurants that operated during the colonial era and the post-war period. As shown in Chapters One and Two, the restaurants mentioned by Tang, such as *Penglai Ge* and *Xin Zhonghua*, were prestigious dining establishments at that time. Following the conventions established during the colonial era, these Taiwanese restaurants advertised that they served “all the best of Chinese cuisine,” including dishes from many provinces. However, according to Tang, it is unprofessional and even ridiculous for a restaurant to serve diverse regional cuisines. Tang argues that each restaurant should concentrate on only one regional cuisine; that is, Shangdong restaurants should serve only Shangdong cuisine and Zhejiang restaurants should serve only Zhejiang cuisine (Tang, 1976, p. 80).

Such criticism was not unique to Tang's personal opinion but was commonly raised by writers from the Mainland at that time. Another writer, Liu Bing, termed the hybridity of restaurants a “strange phenomenon” in Taipei, regarding it as a mistake of both consumers and restaurants (Liu, 1980, pp. 3-6). These comments suggest that it was uncommon for a restaurant on the Mainland to serve various regional dishes, at least before 1945. The comments also suggest that the hybridization of dishes has been an important feature of “Taiwanese cuisine” that was shaped during the Japanese colonial era. However, this feature apparently failed

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<sup>9</sup> While “inland” (*neidi*) meant “Japan” during the Japanese colonial era, it refers to “Mainland China” in Tang's usage.

to gain the approval of migrants from the Mainland, who believed that a restaurant should specialize in a regional cuisine and even only specific dishes. This difference reveals the specific social conditions by which Taiwanese dietary culture developed.

For Tang Lu-sun and other writers who criticized hybridity as “strange,” the hybridity wreaked havoc on some important features of Chinese culinary tradition, such as correct use of eating seasons, correct cooking methods, and clear restaurant boundaries. Chinese dietary culture, particularly Beijing dietary culture, comprised valuable customs that became important in maintaining Tang’s Chinese and Beijing identity. Therefore, changing the name of a dish (*Dar-lu* to *Da-lu*) and serving a heterodox assortment of dishes were unacceptable practices for Tang and other like-minded writers. Their criticism that Taiwanese food was “alien food” and that Taiwanese restaurants amounted to “a strange phenomenon” reflects their sense of detachment from Taiwan and the condition of their diaspora.

## **2.2 Diaspora as a loss of home, nation, and cultural memory**

Diaspora is an analytical category that has been applied to research on post-colonial societies. The term “diaspora” was originally exclusively reserved for Jewish people who were dispersed outside of their putative ancestral homeland (Baumann, 2000; Boyarin & Boyarin, 1993; Ho, 2004). As Baumann shows, since the 1970s, the use of the term “diaspora,” in various disciplines of the humanities, has become increasingly generalized in reference to peoples who live far from their homeland (Baumann, 2000, p. 314). With the connotations of rootlessness, nostalgia, and homesickness, the term has frequently appeared opposite such other terms as “dispersion” (Beinin, 1998), “displacement” (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996), and “de-territorialization” (Papastergiadis, 2000). These terms’ shared meanings under the umbrella of “diaspora” constitute a solid reference to people who are living far from their perceived homeland, but who retain a connection with this “point of origin” (Sanjek, 2003, p. 323). As Clifford asserts, “Diaspora consciousness is entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue... Diasporic subjects are, thus, distinct versions of modern, transnational, intercultural experience” (Clifford, 1994, p. 319). The term “diaspora” has come to refer to a specific type of approach and of experience, supposedly a characteristic of people living “here” and relating to “there” (Baumann, 2000, p. 324; Clifford, 1994, p. 322).

Tang’s writings often reveal strong emotions stemming from the China-to-Taiwan diaspora. The diaspora is not only for a lost home but also for a lost nation and cultural memory. Tang’s food memoirs typically start with his memory of specific food, restaurants, or customs in Beijing or other regions on the Mainland, and end with his disappointment that he could not find similar food in

Taiwan and thus will have to wait for the recovery of the Mainland. On the one hand, Tang paints a rosy picture of home through his recollections of food, which function as a nostalgia-laced invitation tempting Tang's readers to enter the landscape of an iconic, wealthy, and prosperous Beijing. On the other hand, the disappearance of this rosy home reminds him and readers of the loss of a prosperous age, generating the sense of diaspora. For example, Tang recollects the pleasure of enjoying delicious smoked ribs with Chinese liquor. In the last paragraph, he states,

I have asked all Beijing restaurants in Taipei [about the ribs dish]; only a few knew the dish ... I am afraid that only when we recover the Mainland and have a celebration banquet in Beijing will I be able to partake of smoked ribs and drink the "white lotus" (蓮花白)<sup>10</sup> produced in Haidian. (Tang, 1984 [1980], p. 63)

Tang's food memoirs often draw a connection between the unavailability of food and the Mainland as a lost home. He worries not only about the loss of traditional Chinese dietary culture in Taiwan but also about the collapse of it on the Mainland. Tang admits that the tastes of home always stimulated his yearning to return home and that an important motive of his writing was to lend strength to the ambition to recover the Mainland (Tang, 1988 [1978]-a, p. 2). In other words, although concentrating on food, Tang's food memoirs are embedded with a strong emotional attachment to a united and strong China.

His sense of loss can be partly explained by the unavailability in Taiwan of certain Mainland dishes and partly by the Nationalist Party's exile from the central position of Mainland China to the peripheral position of breakaway Taiwan. When he recalls dishes and restaurants on the Mainland, he also worries that political conflicts have resulted in the destruction of these restaurants (Tang, 1976, p. 25). Although he provides tips about how to select restaurants in Beijing and the best ways to communicate with the waiters, he also mourns the state of affairs in which these hints are of no use as long as people on the Mainland, rather than patronize restaurants, use "food tickets." Beijing for Tang suggests an untouched home and a lost nation, in which his identification and cultural memories are rooted.

For diasporic subjects, cultural memory is particularly important because it is the grounds on which they can confirm their identities. When cultural memories weaken, the sense of diaspora deepens. Restaurants providing Chinese regional cuisines are not only cultural sites that help preserve specific cultural manners, but also "memory sites" that host cultural memories. Assmann asserts that memory sites

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<sup>10</sup> A kind of Chinese liquor produced in Beijing.

(lieux de mémoire) are memory aides that enable the members of a society to learn and remember their traditions. These memory sites can be monuments, rituals, celebratory feasts, and customs (Assmann, 2006, pp. 8-9). In this sense, Chinese restaurants in Taiwan are memory sites for the migrants who wish to recollect their tastes of home in a space constituted by foods and countrymen. However, in Tang's case, the hybridization of regional cuisines disturbed his memory and its function as a site, and thus, Tang rejected the hybridization. His emphasis on the "purity of regional cuisines" also reflects the emotional needs of the "purity of memory."

Assmann presents the "cultural memory" theory by using examples of religious rituals, but Tang's food memoirs show that cultural memory can also be performed and remembered in the foodways—the specific ways in which a community prepares, cooks, and consumes food. By introducing and recollecting Chinese regional cuisines and various dining rituals, Tang appears to have been relocating himself in the past, thereby keeping the past alive. Relocation might thus be a sought-after balance between loss and healing (Naguib, 2006, pp. 39-40). Tang deplores the disappearance and demise of traditional dietary culture when introducing Beijing food. His writings express a strong sense of diaspora regarding the chasm that opened up between him and the "home" of his family and nation.

### **3. LU YAO-DONG: "TASTES OF HOME" CHANGE, CULTURAL MEMORY REMAINS**

#### **3.1 The transformation of "tastes of home"**

In contrast to Tang Lu-sun, who could not return home after 1949, Lu Yao-dong (1932-2006) had the chance to go back to his homeland after martial law was lifted in 1987. Trips between the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taipei created opportunities for Lu to revisit the meaning of "home," a visitation that inspired considerable insight into the relationship between identification of home and cultural memory.

Born in Suzhou in 1932, Lu Yao-dong immigrated to Taiwan in May 1949 with his family to escape the civil war (Lu, 2000a, p. 9). He got a Master's degree in Hong Kong and a PhD degree in Taiwan. After attaining the status of PhD, he entered into a teaching career in Taiwan (1966-1976) and Hong Kong (1977-1991), and then returned to teach in Taiwan in 1991 until his retirement in 1998.<sup>11</sup> As such, his studies and teaching career were characterized by constant moves back and forth between Taiwan and Hong Kong. Thus, the food and restaurants in Taipei and Hong

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<sup>11</sup> See the short biography of Lu Yao-dong provided by the Department of History of the National Taiwan University: [http://ccms.ntu.edu.tw/~history/1\\_announcement/11\\_general/950220.doc](http://ccms.ntu.edu.tw/~history/1_announcement/11_general/950220.doc) (retrieved 3/10/2006).

Kong are the first theme of his food writings. Lu often made comparisons between food in the two cities, with these comparisons forming the core of his first food memoirs *Zhi shengxia danchaofan [Only Fried Rice with Egg Left]* (1987). After the Taiwanese government lifted martial law in 1987, Lu returned to his hometown of Suzhou and travelled widely across China. What he ate, observed, and thought during his trips constitutes the substance of his second book, *Yifei jiushiwei [Not the Taste of Previous Days]* (1992). His newspaper articles along with some earlier essays were compiled for publication in Lu's third and fourth books: *Chumen fang guzao [Visiting the Old Times]* (1998) and *Du da neng rong [A Big Appetite]* (2001).

Before returning to the Mainland, Lu seems to have felt nostalgia similar to that felt by Tang Lu-sun; in short, Lu regarded his birthplace on the Mainland as his home. Suzhou to Lu Yao-dong was like Beijing was to Tang Lu-sun. The two writers would often refer to the motherland that they were eager to return to. When he finally returned to Suzhou for the first time, after an absence of four decades, he acknowledged firmly that Suzhou was undoubtedly his home: "Every time I was asked which place I would return to if I could, my answer was this town" (Lu, 1992, p. 120). Although Lu left Suzhou when he was only 18 years old and moved frequently because of war, *this town* remained the place he regarded as his home and longed to revisit. For Tang and Lu, their "home" on the Mainland was their place of origin, which, like the roots of a tree, connected the two men with family members, neighbors, and memories of childhood. In this context, "tastes of home" constituted a route that directed them to family, neighborhood, and childhood, from which they had been physically displaced for decades.

The second similarity between Tang and Lu is the explicit connection that the two writers made between "tastes of home" and nation. Just as Tang viewed his home as the root through which he could relate to fellow countrymen, Lu connected himself to the nation and to fellow countrymen through the tastes of home. For example, when Lu suggests in his writings that Taipei is the hub of various Chinese regional cuisines, he soon mentions his countrymen on the Mainland and deplors those tasty foods' near absence in contemporary Mainland China: "In that society which consists of blue ants,<sup>12</sup> is there anyone who has the money, time, and freedom to eat these snacks in stalls?" (Lu, 1987, p. 164) At this point in the passage, Lu's identification of home expands from individual shelter to national belonging and becomes entangled with historical events.

The two writers' third similarity lies in their opposition to the hybrid cuisine of restaurants in Taiwan. As mentioned earlier, many Mainlander writers in Taiwan

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<sup>12</sup> "Blue ants" refers to Chinese people ruled by the Chinese Communist Party because they often wore blue clothes and pants. The term was widely used in the 1950s.



have considered Taiwan-based restaurants' hybridization of Chinese regional cuisines to be a violation of Chinese tradition. Lu's writings raise serious criticism of this phenomenon. He laments that the traditional manners of Chinese culinary culture have been destroyed in Taipei, with Hunan restaurants selling Guangdong cuisine, and American food such as McDonald's fast food easily "invading" Taiwan:

Every dish has its own source and method: if the method is ruined, then the dish deteriorates. Currently, Taipei is claimed to be the chief site where Chinese cuisines converge. Food from every place can be found here, but restaurants in Taipei have made the mistake I just mentioned. (Lu, 1987, p. 5)

However, in spite of such criticism of the Taipei culinary scene, Lu increasingly regarded Taiwanese cuisine as another set of "tastes of home" after his twenty-year-long stay in Hong Kong.<sup>13</sup> He wrote about his changing perceptions of tastes while describing a trip from Taipei to Hong Kong: before embarking on a return trip to Hong Kong to work, his friend Xia, who owned a food stall in Taipei, brought some fresh sesame cakes with pork (醬肉燒餅) to the airport to see him off, saying, "Take these cakes; you can eat them on the way" (Lu, 1987, p. 169). These words were so simple but gave Lu a physical and mental impression that he was "leaving" (Lu, 1987, p. 170). The sense of leaving, in general, induces a sense of detachment from a familiar place and a sense of going from "here" to "there." Although Lu had long worked and resided in Hong Kong, his departure from Taiwan to Hong Kong did not trigger in him a sense of "returning home" but a sense of leaving. In other words, Lu did not consider Hong Kong a place where he had acquired a sense of belonging. In contrast, Taiwan was more like a home to him, with Lu himself also conscious that Taiwan had become another homeland for him:

Taipei is not my homeland, yet it is my homeland. After living here for a long stretch, a person can witness this erstwhile alien place become a homeland...once I left here, whether for a short or a long time, a sense of attachment and longing emerged. (Lu, 1987, p. 151)

In Lu's narratives, his sense of home rests on his dining experiences in Taiwan. Lu admits that indeed Hong Kong was a place known for its cuisine, "but my stomach is not suited for the cuisine here" (Lu, 1987, p. 152). He describes his longing for Taipei food vividly:

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<sup>13</sup> Lu Yao-dong studied in Hong Kong for five years and taught there for fifteen years. See: Lu, 2000b, p. 43.

Every time when I wake up from my nap in the afternoon, I stare at the ceiling and think of the food in Taipei. ...then I get up but soon sit down by the bed and feel frustrated because everything I want to eat is not beside me. (Lu, 1987, p. 168)

Lacking the impression that Hong Kong food was a familiar “taste of home,” Lu searched for the “tastes of Taipei” to cure his homesickness during his work-related stays in Hong Kong. Lu compares Hong Kong with Taiwanese food, criticizing that Hong Kong people were very proud of their Guangdong cuisine, so they tended to assimilate other regional cuisines to it, adding Guangdong flavor to everything (Lu, 1987, p. 145). As a result, he complains, he could not find delicious sesame cakes (燒餅) and fried bread sticks (油條) for breakfast, nor good braised beef (醬牛肉) to enjoy liquor with, so his wife had to bring him “luggage filled with food” from Taipei to Hong Kong (Lu, 1987, p. 151). He searched for the “tastes of Taipei” everywhere in Hong Kong and missed those shops where he had eaten in Taipei. When he finally found a Fujian restaurant in Hong Kong, he felt the comfort of returning to an eatery in a certain small town in Taiwan (Lu, 1987, pp. 34-46).

However, although Lu increasingly regarded Taipei food as his “tastes of home,” and Taipei as his homeland after living in Taipei for a long time, one should not hastily conclude that Lu’s lengthy residence in a new, alien place necessarily transformed it into home. It is clear that although Lu spent twenty years in Hong Kong, he did not view it as his home. The following section will argue that only a site where cultural memory is rooted can be a home. Although Suzhou was the birthplace of and an ideal home for Lu, there were other factors differentiating Taipei from Hong Kong and attaching the meaning of home to Taipei. These factors become clearer after an analysis of his return to Suzhou on the Mainland.

### **3.2 Re-staged cultural memory in Taipei**

Lu’s experience of returning to the Mainland brought him a different understanding of home. As the title of his second book “*Not the Taste of Previous Days*” asserts overtly, articles in this book repeatedly express Lu’s regret over changes in the culinary landscape on the Mainland. When he went back to his birthplace finally, he felt like a stranger:

Now I am really here, walking on the town’s main thoroughfare, but it seems that this town has changed considerably. This is still the street where I walked thousands of times..., however, not only have [the

breakfast shop] *Zhuhongxing* ended its business, but even the store has been demolished. (Lu, 1992, pp. 120-122)

Lu's hometown was quite different from the ideal home that he had entertained in his mind. Lu searched for the noodle shops he had used to frequent on his way to school every morning, but he searched in vain (Lu, 1992, p. 93). In order to indulge in the local dish "stir-fried shrimp" (清炒蝦仁), which he greatly missed, he ordered the dish in thirteen different restaurants within two weeks but could not re-encounter "the delicious taste hinted at in my memory" (Lu, 1992, p. 100). His finding is not surprising because significant changes had occurred on the Mainland during the previous four decades. Not only had his hometown changed, but so too had other cities and food on the Mainland. Lu travelled extensively to try dishes that had enjoyed a strong reputation in the past, but most of them disappointed him. In Shanxi Province, the taste of a noodle dish known as "cat ear" (貓耳朵) was quite plain and "not worthy of my long trip"; in Hangzhou, the famous "quickly stir-fried spring bamboo shoots" (醬爆春筍) also disappointed him, so after this trip, he settled for making the dish by himself (Lu, 1992, pp. 21-22); in Nanjing, the salty duck (鹹水鴨) "is worse than that in Taipei" (Lu, 1992, p. 106). In addition to food, Lu was disappointed in the service, dining manners, and customers in the restaurants. For example, when he visited the renowned restaurant *Laozhengxing* in Shanghai, what surprised Lu was not the slow service, distasteful food, and expensive prices but the consumers who squatted on the benches and spat on the floor (Lu, 1992, p. 113). In a restaurant in Suzhou, he was shocked by the big plates they used because Suzhou was a graceful and delicate town in his mind, but the big plates suggested to him that people here have started to eat unrestrainedly (Lu, 1992, p. 92).

Confronted by the above changes, Lu considered them to be constitutive of a cultural problem resulting from the break between traditional and modern Chinese society:

They cut society into new and old parts, just as one would cut tofu into two pieces. Diet has its own tradition and heritage, no different from other components of culture. But after the drastic changes from which emerged the new society, its people have been unable to find their way back to the days of old. (Lu, 1992, p. 3)

He argued that diet is an important component of culture that, over the long term, integrates itself into daily life; therefore, local snacks can be a window through which one can better understand local customs and people. In his search for

traditional food in many Chinese cities, he found that although the living standards were improving and although many dishes familiar to him were available, the tastes of these dishes had changed (Lu, 1992, pp. 116-117). Even if able to afford these dishes, most of the population apparently neither knew how to enjoy the dishes nor were in the mood to enjoy them. His perspective emphasizes the gap between tradition and modernity on the Mainland, an emphasis that implies the disappearance or the weakening of Lu's ideal "home" in his memory. When he stayed in his birthplace of Suzhou, Lu noted, "In the town where I lived and with which I was quite familiar, I have become a stranger" (Lu, 1992, p. 127). "Being a stranger at home" denotes this distance from the imagined homeland. For diasporic subjects who left home and went to other places, the homeland becomes different from what they imagine, strengthening their sense of diaspora.

Whereas Suzhou and other cities on the Mainland were not the homeland with which Lu felt familiar, Taipei became the chief new site where he searched for traditional Chinese dietary culture. It is noteworthy here that although Lu expressed a strong longing for Taipei food when he stayed in Hong Kong, he constantly longed for food from the Mainland: he seemed unable to stop himself from searching for good restaurants serving such dishes as Beijing roast duck, Shandong soymilk, and Shanxi noodle dishes (Lu, 1998, pp. 107, 112, 145-148); he was also deeply interested in the origins and the histories of restaurants that had moved from the Mainland to Taipei. In short, although Lu started to think of Taipei as his home, what he most longed for was the remapping of Chinese dietary culture in Taipei. He regarded the Chinese Market in Taipei (introduced in Chapter Two) as the best site where one could find Mainland food in Taiwan. In contrast with the food he found on the Mainland, Lu regarded the snacks sold in the Chinese Market as highly "authentic" and consistent with his memories of the tastes in question. Lu suggests that these authentic snacks bore the vendors' nostalgia-laced emotions, and that these emotions rendered the snacks even more delicious (Lu, 1998, pp. 105-111).

Overall, Lu went to great lengths in searching for those remembered dishes of yore, regarding them as authentic tastes representing the accumulation of Chinese dietary culture throughout Chinese history. In particular, he viewed—and his writings treat—local snacks as the sites where traditions are preserved and presented, suggesting that local snacks well reflect social and historical transformations (Lu, 1992, pp. 2-3). In the process of searching, he placed great emphasis on "legitimate" cooking methods and sought out "authentic" tastes of dishes. While he could not find a sufficiently traditional dietary culture either in Hong Kong or on the Mainland, he regarded Taipei as the site where the traditions had been best preserved. In other words, he identified Taipei as a

home-away-from-home insofar as Taipei could best quench his thirst for re-living cultural memories.

Lu's identification of home thus confers another meaning to "home," that is, home is the site where cultural memory is preserved. As Assmann argues, cultural memory constitutes the grounds where group identity is established, and the cultural memory of Chinese food is the grounds where Chinese identity is formed. While identification is the linkage between the individual and the group, Chinese food is an important linkage between Lu and the Chinese nation/people. In other words, food is a crucial means by which Lu confirms his national identity. However, although he insisted on the maintenance of the Chinese culinary tradition, interestingly, Lu himself also participated in the creation of a new tradition in Taiwanese food.

Although Lu criticized the hybridity phenomenon in Taiwanese restaurants, as Tang Lu-sun and some other Taiwan-based Mainlander writers did. In the context where the fusion of regional cuisines was becoming standard, the authenticity of regional Chinese cuisines could hardly be maintained. Old restaurants established by Mainlander migrants ended business gradually. And during this time, Lu acknowledged that these regional cuisines were absorbing each other and were integrating into local dishes, a process that yielded innovative dishes and new tastes (Lu, 1998, p. 110). Regarding this matter, it should take note of his later years, when Lu was renowned as a historian of Chinese food culture, and when his argument about "beef noodles" first became widely known and cited.

Beef noodles are regarded as representative Taiwanese cuisine nowadays, but the origin of this dish remains disputable. Taiwanese people seldom ate beef, at least during the Qing Dynasty and the Japanese colonial era (Inô Kanori, 1965 [1928], pp. 662-679; Tôhō Takayoshi, 1997 [1942], pp. 19-20). There was a prohibition on the consumption of beef during the Qing Dynasty because cattle were an important component of energy-expanding labor on farms. Eating beef was also a common taboo in Taiwanese rural villages because farmers used to use cattle as part of the work force. Therefore, eating beef is a relatively recent phenomenon in Taiwan, and it was only during the 1950s and 1960s that beef noodles became a popular dish.<sup>14</sup> There was even a "beef noodle street" in Taipei where several famous beef noodle shops were located. As many shops named their noodles "Sichuan-style beef noodles" and because most of the noodle-shop owners were migrants from the Mainland after 1945, it was widely believed until recently that Mainland soldiers

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Sun, 2001, pp. 153-156; Tong, 1986, pp. 106-107; and the introduction of "beef noodles" in the National History Database: [http://nhd.drnh.gov.tw/AHDPortal/browse/noun\\_content.do?method=showContent&showId=274](http://nhd.drnh.gov.tw/AHDPortal/browse/noun_content.do?method=showContent&showId=274) (retrieved 7/20/2009).

chiefly from Sichuan Province had introduced Taiwan to beef noodles.<sup>15</sup> Not until the late 1990s did a different story emerge, when Lu Yao-dong started to argue that the so-called Sichuan-style beef noodle was actually an invention in Taiwan and perhaps originated in military dependents' villages at *Gangshan* in south Taiwan. According to Lu's argument, "hot bean paste" (辣豆瓣醬) is an essential ingredient of the so-called "Sichuan-style beef noodles" and is also an important specialty of *Gangshan*. Beginning on July 1, 1949, *Gangshan* was the site of the Air Force Academy, and many soldiers at the Air Force Academy hailed from Sichuan Province. Among the local dishes of Sichuan, "A Small Bowl of Beef in Red Soup" (小碗紅湯牛肉) is quite similar to beef-noodle soup. Thus, according to Lu, cooks in the villages for military dependents perhaps created beef noodles by combining *Gangshan* the "hot bean paste" ingredient with the "A Small Bowl of Beef in Red Soup" dish from Sichuan, and noodles.<sup>16</sup> His argument about the origins of beef noodles has been adopted and propagated by the Taipei City Government at the Beef Noodle Festival that started in 2005.<sup>17</sup> Advertisements and other media-disseminated propaganda stemming from this festival have widely proclaimed beef noodles to be a Taiwanese specialty. Now rather than mention "Sichuan beef noodles," most people call the dish "Taiwanese beef noodles."

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to Sichuan-style braised beef noodles, "clear stewed beef noodles" is another major kind of beef-noodle dish in Taiwan.

<sup>16</sup> Lu Yao-dong, "Zailun niu rou mian [Talking about beef noodles again]," *China Times* 2/15/1999(37); "Hailun niu rou mian [Talking more about beef noodles]," *China Times* 2/22/1999(37). Also see Lu, 2001, pp. 194-201.

<sup>17</sup> See the website of official Beef Noodle Festival 2005: [http://www.tbnf.com.tw/en/m\\_know.htm](http://www.tbnf.com.tw/en/m_know.htm) (retrieved 8/2/2009).



**Figure 4.1 Braised beef noodles**

Source: Website for the Taipei Beef Noodle Festival 2005,  
[http://www.tbnf.com.tw/en/m\\_know.htm](http://www.tbnf.com.tw/en/m_know.htm) (retrieved 8/2/2009)

However, Lu's argument rests on his experience in Sichuan Province, where he found no vendor selling such beef noodles, and thus contains no conclusion backed by solid evidence. However, through his participation in the Beef Noodle Festivals and the related media-driven promotions, his assumption has been intellectualized and legitimized. The popular food writer Yilan suggests that every Taiwanese has his or her own story about beef noodles. She believes that a connection exists between this genuine Taiwanese invention and the emotion-laden memories of most Taiwanese people, regardless of these people's ethnic origin.<sup>18</sup> First of all, both scholarly discourse and commercial promotions articulate beef noodles as "a distinctive Taiwanese invention"; second of all, most Taiwanese people have their own experiences and memories of beef noodles since the popularization of beef noodles got underway in the 1950s. As a result, many Taiwanese people nowadays consider beef noodles to be a common "taste of home." In this way, the knowledge surrounding beef noodles has become a new food tradition.

#### **4. TAIWANESE CUISINE AS THE "TASTES OF HOME"**

Whereas both Tang and Lu were migrants from the Mainland to Taiwan, both Lin Hai-yin and Lin Wen-yue came from Taiwanese families but grew up on the Mainland; consequently, the latter two have regarded their home as comprising both Taiwan and the Mainland. On the one hand, Taiwan is the homeland of their parents

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<sup>18</sup> Yilan's personal website:  
<http://www.yilan.com.tw/html/modules/cjaycontent/index.php?id=599> (retrieved 8/2/2009).

and also the place where they lived after their 30s, but on the other hand, the Mainland is the place where they grew up and established their families; thus, it is a crucial site of their memories. The following analysis of these two authors' writings reveals another way in which Taiwanese cuisine is conceived as a taste of home.

#### 4.1 Lin Hai-yin: alien home, a familiar “taste of home”

Lin Hai-yin is a writer with a great reputation in both China and Taiwan. Her autobiographical novel *Chengnan jiushi [Memories of Peking: South Side Stories]* was filmed on the Mainland in 1981. She is considered a writer who inherited the spirit of the May Fourth Movement in China (Yan, 2000, p. 6).<sup>19</sup> In Taiwan, she is respected as a crucial founder of Taiwanese literature, and her publishing company is a hotbed of many important Taiwanese writers (Ye, 2002; Wang, 2008). All the stories in her novels take place in Beijing during the 1930s or in Taiwan during the 1950s and 1960s. She wrote at length about members of Taiwan's lower classes, such as adopted daughters sold as sex-workers and poor Mainlanders who found themselves exiled in Taiwan at the end of the civil war. Her writings are thus regarded as a reflection of real-life themes on both sides of the straits.

Lin Hai-yin's accomplishments stem partly from her unique experiences. Lin Hai-yin's father and mother came from Hakka and Haklo family in Taiwan respectively, but she was born in Osaka, Japan in 1918. Her father moved to Beijing to work, starting in 1920, under his own father's direction, and Lin Hai-yin moved to Beijing in 1922 with her mother. After marrying and starting a family, she returned to Taiwan with her husband and children in 1947 because of the civil war. Lin Hai-yin spent 26 years in Beijing in total, and these years made Beijing an important homeland for her. However, Taiwan also occupied a special position in her mind. As Taiwan was the homeland of her parents, she regarded Taiwan as her homeland when she lived on the Mainland. Her understanding of Taiwan came from her parents and her father's Taiwanese friends. These Taiwanese who worked on the Mainland called themselves “sweet-potato people” (*fanshuren*) (Lin, 2000, pp. 22-29). Lin Hai-yin suggests that although this term was used more as a joke, it reveals the hardships of these Taiwanese on the Mainland. These “sweet-potato people” viewed China as their motherland and thus migrated to the Mainland to avoid Japanese colonial rule; however, they were often distrusted by the local people. To hide their Taiwanese origin, many of them registered their birthplace as Fujian or Guangdong Province, where their ancestors had been born (Lin, 2000, pp.

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<sup>19</sup> Lin Hai-yin was also awarded the “Five-Fourth Award” in 1999 by *Wenxun*, a literary magazine which was financially supported by the Nationalist Party in Taiwan. See: <http://www.wenhsun.com.tw/activity/54award02.asp> (retrieved 8/2/2009).



22-23). In addition to suffering discrimination by the Chinese on the Mainland, they faced investigations and other forms of harassment by the Japanese police. Lin Hai-yin's youngest uncle died while participating in an anti-Japan patriotic activity on the Mainland. All these experiences made Lin Hai-yin sensitive to the differences between the Taiwanese and other Chinese. She heard much about Taiwan from her mother and, as a child, often imagined life in Taiwan. Furthermore, even though she did not return to Taiwan until her thirties, she was familiar with Taiwanese food long before then because of her mother's influence.

Since Lin Hai-yin's parents came from Hakka and Haklo background respectively and because her husband came from Jiangsu Province on the Mainland, she was well aware of the differences between these different cuisines. She labeled the dishes made by her mother "Taiwanese cuisine and Hakka cuisine:"

My mother's...dishes are Taiwanese and Hakka cuisines. When cooking vegetables and leeks, lettuce, or spinach, she often blended them with Japanese soy sauce. She is good at cooking sautéed fish *wuliu* (literally five willow branches)(五柳魚), stir-fried streaky pork with garlic sprouts (青蒜燒五花肉), stir-fried pig liver (炒豬肝) or heart (豬心), stir-fried pig lung with ginger (薑絲炒豬肺), and the like.<sup>20</sup> (Lin, 2000, p. 14)

The dishes that Lin Hai-yin lists were common dishes in Taiwanese families at that time, and she can further differentiate between Hakka and Haklo dishes on the basis of her parents' food preferences. She describes in her autobiographical novel how a Hakka father would complain about the cooking of his Haklo wife:

When a Hakka friend visits, Father asks Mother to cook more dishes, but he often complains that she cannot cook Hakka dishes well. For example, he complains that the "tofu stew" (釀豆腐) is too light or the boiled chicken (白斬雞) is too old. Once, Mother cooked a dish from her homeland; although Father admitted that the dish was delicious, he still complained to his friends: "Those Haklo can cook nothing but sautéed fish!" (Lin, 2000 [1960], p. 121)

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<sup>20</sup> Among these dishes, sautéed fish *wuliu* is also named as *wuliuzhi* (五柳枝), referring to a special fish recipe: sauté a fish first, and then cover it with pork or five well-sliced vegetables, such as radish, onion, spring onion, ginger, and garlic. The dish has been widely recognized as a representative traditional "Taiwanese cuisine" by many senior chefs and cookbook writers, confirming that it was indispensable in banquets and festivals several decades ago. See for example Liang, 1999, pp. 84-85; Xinye restaurant, 1997, pp. 64-65. Also see Chapter Five of the current study.



**Figure 4.2 Sautéed fish *wuliuzhi***

Source: Author, taken in a Taiwanese restaurant in Tainan (2008)

This description shows that the boundary between Hakka and Haklo dishes existed even within a family. However, Lin Hai-yin was very conscious that her food preferences differed from the “Taiwanese tastes” of her parents, admitting that “I have my own Beijing foodway, and of course flour-dishes are dominant, such as dumplings (餃子), meat cakes (餡餅), leek rolls (韭菜簍), noodles with soybean paste (炸醬麵), pancakes with green onion (薄餅捲大蔥), and stir-fried leek sprouts with bean sprouts (炒韭黃豆芽菜)” (Lin, 2000, p. 14). The difference in food preferences is even apparent in some Beijing specialties, such as bean juice (*douzhi*, 豆汁). Bean juice has a sour taste that is not readily accepted by people other than indigenous Beijing-ers. Therefore, the ability to consume the snack is often viewed as a good indicator of whether or not someone is a real Beijing-er. While Lin Hai-yin regarded it as a delicious snack, her mother was disgusted by its smell and never tried it (Lin, 2000, p. 4).

Although Lin Hai-yin developed her own Beijing foodway, she regarded Taiwanese cuisine as her “tastes of home.”<sup>21</sup> Her appetite for Taiwanese food was cultivated by her mother’s dishes that maintained the local characteristics, such as boiled meat and braised dishes with soy sauce. In her writing, she states that the features of Taiwanese dishes lay in simple cooking methods and seasoning: vegetables were cooked by quickly stir-frying them and meat was often boiled. These cooking methods thus preserved the original flavors of the food, but for her husband, who came from Jiangsu Province, such “Taiwanese cuisine” was too simple. Lin Hai-yin further states that when she, in the company of her husband,

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<sup>21</sup> Lin Hai-yin, “Jiexiangwei [Tastes of Home],” *Central Daily News*, 2/12/1950(7).

would go home to enjoy her mother's Taiwanese dishes, her husband found all the food to be unappetizing, and Lin Hai-yin would have to ask her mother to vary the cooking methods a little. Even so, when her husband teasingly commented that because the minds of the Taiwanese are simple, the Taiwanese can make only simple dishes, Lin Hai-yin defended the people and their culture: "We do not make changes. Everything keeps its original flavor on this island. Why should we chase after the complexity of a civilized society?"<sup>22</sup>

The complaint from Lin Hai-yin's husband is similar to the opinions of Tang Lu-sun and Lu Yao-dong, both of whom regarded Taiwanese cuisine as simple and as less civilized and delicious than other Chinese regional cuisines. However, Lin Hai-yin defended these dishes and viewed them as the authentic flavor of this island. She claims in her writings that these Taiwanese dishes, being her "tastes of home" transmitted from her mother, never bored her. Her emotional attachment to Taiwanese cuisine was not rooted in a long experience of living in Taiwan but in the cuisine's connection with her parents. Although Taiwan was a strange place for her because she had spent few days on the island before 1947, Taiwan remained her "home," and Taiwanese food served as a tie connecting her with her parents and this island. In contrast with Tang and Lu, Lin Hai-yin's emotional attachment to Taiwanese cuisine was bound up with her family but not with a nation or an overarching history. Her food memories about Taiwanese food were established around her mother, childhood, and family life but were seldom, it would seem, direct results of traditional or historical events. In short, it was her mother's dishes but not tradition that most immediately and most evidently established Taiwanese cuisine as her "tastes of home," a story similar to Lin Wen-yue's.

#### **4.2 Lin Wen-yue: "home" embodied in people but not in locality**

Lin Wen-yue came from a distinguished family in Taiwan. Her grandfather Lian Heng was a historian who wrote *Taiwan tongshi* [*General History of Taiwan*] (1918), and her uncle Lian Zhen-dong was the first councilor of Taipei appointed by Chen Yi after the end of Japanese rule. However, although her parents came from Zhanghua and Tainan County in Taiwan, she never stayed in Taiwan before she was fourteen. Born in the Japanese enclave in Shanghai, Lin Wen-yue studied at Japanese schools with Japanese classmates and spoke Japanese, which was her first language. Thus, she considered herself to be Japanese in her childhood, until the defeat of Japan in 1945 (Lin, 1978, p. 30, 1988, pp. 23-24). During the next year, her

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<sup>22</sup> Lin Hai-yin, "Jiaxiangwei [Tastes of Home]," *Central Daily News*, 2/12/1950(7).

family moved to Taiwan, finally returning to the “homeland” in which she had never lived before.

Similar to Lin Hai-yin, Lin Wen-yue has a family background and migration experience in which complicated meanings about the notion of “home” are embedded. While Taiwan is her homeland because it is the geographical origin of her family, she has regarded Shanghai as “always my homeland in my memory” because it is a city bound to many childhood memories (Lin, 1999, p. 94). Furthermore, she has referred to Kyoto, a Japanese city where she stayed for one year, as her “homeland of the soul” (Lin, 2004, pp. 49-52).<sup>23</sup>

Although all three of these cities are her homelands, her writings suggest that she has felt both a sense of uncertainty and a sense of rootedness in Taiwan. For example, once when she passed by the hometown of her father at Zhanghua, she asked herself,

I have lived in Shanghai but I am not a Shanghai-er, I lived in Tokyo but am not a Tokyo-er, I lived in Taipei but am not a Taipei-er. Then which city should I belong to? Suddenly I felt no place to locate myself – it seems that I am just a guest everywhere. (Lin, 1986, p. 16)

The sense of having no roots reveals Lin Wen-yue’s vague image of home. In contrast to Tang and Lu, whose writings express the authors’ strong emotional attachment to their homeland on the Mainland, Lin Hai-yin and Lin Wen-yue, who moved from the Mainland to Taiwan, have exhibited a more reluctant attitude to considering Taiwan as their home. In this context, Lin Wen-yue’s “tastes of home” bond not to a specific place but to those people interlinked with her memory of home. *Yinshan zhaji [Notes of Drinking and Cuisine]*, published in 1999, is her only book focusing on food and is composed of her personal recipes, cooking notes, and stories about those dishes she made. When she had banquets at home, she used to record her recipes and guests on a small card; these cards accumulated over the years and thus became a source of her food memories and a bridge to the past.

Of all the nineteen recipes recorded in this book, seven dishes are representative of Taiwanese cuisine and are popular in Taiwanese families or at festivals. All dishes in this book are connected to specific memories, and the following section discusses the themes of these memories.

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<sup>23</sup> Although Lin Wen-yue is a professor of Chinese literature, she has impressive knowledge of Japanese literature and has translated into Mandarin such classical Japanese literature as *Genji monogatari [The Tale of Genji]*, *Izumi Shikibu nikki [The Diary of Izumi Shikibu]*, and *Makura no sôshi [The Pillow Book]*.

### (1) Banquets with family

Some dishes that her book discusses stem from her dining experiences with her family, and these dishes have always triggered in her various memories of her family and of wonderful days with them. For example, her grandfather Lian Heng was among those who often enjoyed Taiwanese haute cuisine at the restaurant *Jiangshan Lou*; thus, Lin Wen-yuan heard from her mother about some dishes that the restaurants served and that included “Buddha Jumps over the Wall” (佛跳牆)<sup>24</sup> and sweet taro paste (芋泥), which was often delivered to Lian’s room as a snack. After returning to Taiwan, she occasionally enjoyed “authentic Taiwanese cuisine” in a private club at Beitou with her family (Lin, 1999, p. 26). These experiences established in Lin Wen-yue’s mind an image of Taiwanese haute cuisine and influenced her cooking. She tried to cook these dishes at banquets, and her family always came to her mind when she cooked or enjoyed these dishes.

In the last article of this book, Lin Wen-yue describes her mother’s masterpiece sautéed fish *wuliuzhi*, referring to it as a famous Taiwanese dish particularly at local banquets held during important festivals. As mentioned earlier, this dish was also an important banquet dish of Lin Hai-yin’s mother. In her writing, Lin Wen-yue states that her mother, when they were all living in Shanghai, made this dish on special occasions like birthdays or when guests from remote places came to visit; therefore, the dish reminded her of happy days: “I do not remember details of those events, but the memory of the pleasant mood is still fresh in my mind despite the passage of time” (Lin, 1999, p. 145).



**Figure 4.3 Buddha Jumps over the Wall**

Source: Author, taken at the 2006 Exhibition of Taiwanese Cuisine

<sup>24</sup> The dish “Buddha Jumps over the Wall” originates from Fujian Province and refers to a kind of stew that contains several precious ingredients, including shark fin, sea cucumber, and abalone. Its name suggests that the flavor of this dish is amazing; hence, a monk jumped over a wall to eat it, so the story goes.

## (2) Festive food

Homeland dishes are particular favorites during festivals, such as radish cakes (蘿蔔糕) during the Chinese New Year and “Taiwanese rice dumplings with meat” (肉粽) during the Dragon-boat Festival. Both Lin Wen-yue’s writings and Lin Hai-yin’s writings mention that it was necessary in their families to make special dishes during festivals and that the dishes specific to Taiwanese festivals differed from comparable dishes eaten in Beijing and Shanghai. For example, Lin Wen-yue recalls that all the women in her family had to help make “Taiwanese rice dumplings with meat” before the Dragon-boat Festival, and what they made was apparently different from the corresponding dishes consumed in Shanghai (Lin, 1999, p. 70). This memory stayed with her, and after marrying, she insisted on making these dumplings for her family: “by repeating Mother’s practices of the past, I can recollect the sweet and fragrant flavor in my memory” (Lin, 1999, p. 117).



**Figure 4.4 Taiwanese rice dumplings with meat**

Source: Author, taken in an assembly (2007)

According to Lin Wen-yue’s memory of food, her most emotional attachment to these dishes has been a nostalgic mood toward her family and toward an era long since passed. When recalling those dishes, she would also recall the pleasant gatherings or festivals spent with her family, teachers, or classmates. As with Lin Hai-yin’s mother, Lin Wen-yue’s mother would serve Taiwanese food despite being far from their homeland of Taiwan, and these dishes would trigger memories of the remote place of origin. In other words, Taiwanese cuisine would function as their own mother’s “tastes of home,” but through their mothers, these Taiwanese dishes imprinted themselves in the daughters’ memory and influenced their consciousness of Taiwanese cuisine. Their memories of “home” are thus closer in form to a “communicative memory” shaped in a social context than to a “cultural memory.”

Although both Lin Hai-yin's writings and Lin Wen-yue's writings treat Taiwanese cuisine as the authors' "tastes of home," this "home" refers to family rather than to a specific place.

## **5. HOME AND CULTURAL MEMORY**

This chapter explored how Taiwanese cuisine has evolved into "tastes of home." The cases of Tang and Lu highlight the assertion that the idea of "home" is closely connected with cultural memory. Cultural memory constituted the grounds where the two writers' national and cultural identities were maintained, thus Tang always regarded Beijing as his home, and the object of Lu's identification with "home" shifted from Suzhou to Taiwan. Only when Lu conceived of Taiwan as the home where his cultural memory was preserved did Taiwanese cuisine evolve into his "tastes of home." In contrast, Lin Hai-yin and Lin Wen-yue's stories treat Taiwanese cuisine as the two authors' childhood "tastes of home," even if Taiwan was an unfamiliar place to them. Such "tastes of home" originated from the writers' blood ties with their respective parents, ties that were embodied in traditional family dishes.

These cases show that there are at least three meanings applicable to "home" in this context. First, home is the place where people grow up or live for a long time. Second, home is a place that provides the cultural memories that an individual identifies with. Third, home can be a memory site—rather than a place—where one's family and other related people are interlinked.

This chapter also reveals that the concept of cultural memory is a good way to understand how traditions change because it provides insight into the dynamics of these changes. Cultural memory is a foundation on which group identity forms. This formation is related to not only the accumulation of customs and conventions, but embedded cultural values, as well. Group identity can serve as common cultural grounds that a community shares and identifies with. When individuals identify with cultural memory, the identification becomes a link connecting the individuals to the group. By means of these grounds, a sense of distinction and unity can strengthen the group as a community. However, when customs and conventions change or hybridize, new experiences and memories can surface in the minds of community members. With the accumulation of new experiences and new memories, textualization or intellectualization helps transform them into cultural memories—that is, into a new tradition. The changing discourse on beef noodles is a good example of this phenomenon. Beef noodles was a new dining experience in Taiwan after the 1950s, but as more and more Taiwanese acquired the experience of dining on beef noodles, this experience was further textualized, intellectualized, and disseminated, ultimately forming a new dietary tradition.

The development process of a new food tradition can also explain some changes in Taiwanese cuisine. While the hybridization of regional cuisines has continued, various foreign dishes and ingredients have entered the Taiwanese market to reshape both the culinary scene and the dining experiences of Taiwanese people. Once new dining experiences become somewhat familiar, the previously new experiences accumulate and become new memories for both individuals and social groups. It is in this way that, in Taiwan, many common experiences and memories of Taiwanese cuisine have taken shape.

However, diverse identifications of Taiwanese cuisine still exist, even if they concern common experiences and memories. This chapter has shown how textualization and intellectualization play an important role in the shaping of cultural memory and of new traditions. The next chapter will shift the focus to the bodily memory of consumers in a wider context of everyday life, further exploring the relationship between consumers' national consciousness and their preference for Taiwanese or Chinese cuisine.



