

Prof.dr. A.T. Gerritsen

The global life of a soya bottle



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The global life of a soya bottle

Inaugural lecture by

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Mijnheer de Rector Magnificus, leden van het bestuur van de Kikkoman Foundation en van de Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst, zeer gewaardeerde toehoorders.

I would like to begin my story with this tin-glazed bottle, about 20 cm in height, made in Delft, in the first half of the nineteenth century (Fig.1).



Fig. 1. Soyabottle of tinglazed clay. Delft, 1825-1843. H 18,5 cm D 10 cm. Museum Prinsenhof, Delft, R 1244.

The text reads 'Mandarinzoya, D. Boer, Japansch Magazijn, S'Hage'. A bottle of soya sauce, sold by Dirk Boer, in a shop filled with exotica he ran on the square (Het Plein) in The

Hague in the early forties of the nineteenth century, and now in the collection of the Museum Prinsenhof, Delft.¹ For me, this bottle has a global story, which speaks to the dynamic intercultural exchange between Asia and Europe, its material culture, art and human development, in other words, to the Kikkoman Chair that I am pleased to accept on this occasion. I am interested in the life story of this one object, from its manufacture in Delft, to Dirk Boer's shop in The Hague, and its purchase and consumption thereafter. Of course the porcelain factories in Delft would probably not have existed without the impulse of porcelains from China; the shape and decoration of this bottle might have been very different without the earlier arrival of such bottles from Japan. This bottle, then, has a global story because of the circulation of technologies, designs and desires between Asia and Europe that shaped it. But it was not just an empty vessel; it contained, as its inscription tells us, Mandarinzoya. For the nineteenth-century consumer who purchased this bottle of soya sauce, presumably it was the content that mattered more than its packaging, while for scholars of art and material culture, these perishable contents have vanished, and are disregarded. I propose to reunite the contents with its packaging, and food with material culture, to tell the global story of this bottle and the soya sauce it once contained.

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The idea of global connectedness is not particularly new, of course, nor is the idea that art and material culture have a significant part to play in that connectedness; my predecessor Professor Christiaan Jörg has played and continues to play a key role in our understanding of that idea here in Leiden.² The importance of food as subject of historical study is also not new in Leiden; my colleague Professor Kasia Cwiertka already pointed that out in her oratie in 2011.³ What is new, I think, is the combination of food and material culture as an approach to understanding the processes by which interactions across vast distances became integrated into ordinary lives across the globe from the sixteenth century onwards.⁴

Early Histories of Soya Sauce

It will probably not surprise anyone here that the early history of soya sauce lies in Asia, and specifically in China and Japan. Extensive research has been done on the early history of soya sauce, for example by H.T. Huang in his magisterial volume in Needham's *Science and Civilisation* series on the history of food technologies, and especially the history of fermentation.⁵ From Huang, we learn about what he calls 'the wonderful world of the grain moulds' (*qu* in Chinese, or *koji* in Japanese). These are made by exposing cooked grains to the moulds, yeasts and bacteria that occur in the environment naturally, thus creating a fermentation agent with enzymes that could turn starches into sugars, and sugars into alcohol. A wide variety of foods was fermented by combining meat, fish or vegetables with this grain mould and then aging it in jars to produce a flavourful, savoury substance that was used as a relish. The sauce that resulted from adding this grain mould to soya beans, adding water, and letting it ferment in sealed vessels, the soya sauce that will have filled our nineteenth-century bottle, is not actually explicitly mentioned in written texts from China until the Song dynasty. We do have evidence for the presence of other fermented soy products during this early period, including the milk obtained from grinding the soy beans and cooking them in water, creating a milky emulsion, which would have to be heated to make it digestible, and in its curdled form became known as bean curd (*doufu*). We see this process depicted in this line drawing, based on a mural from a tomb in Henan dating to the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE).⁶



Fig. 2. Line drawing based on one panel of a mural found in Henan, China, dating to the Han dynasty. Figure 69 in Huang, *Fermentation and Food Science*, 307.

The activities depicted here (Fig. 2) fit well with the processes of making bean curd: soaking the beans in a large vessel, milling the soaked beans by hand with a stone mill, filtering the pureed beans through a cloth, after which the substance is heated (not shown). A coagulating agent is then added, and the curdling milk gently stirred, and finally the soft curd is pressed in a box to remove the excess whey. While such pickles, pastes and curds became integrated into the southern Chinese diet well before the tenth century, it is not until the twelfth century that we encounter the sauce in a text, but by then, it had found its way into the essentials no one could live without:

The Hangzhou area inside and around the city walls has a very numerous population, and includes a great number of prefectures, but whichever lane or alley, bridge, gate, or secluded spot you visit, everywhere has shops doing business. Indeed, every day, people cannot do without *chai*, *mi*, *you*, *yan*, *jiang*, *cu*, and *cha* (firewood, rice, oil, salt, soya sauce, vinegar, and tea).⁷

This description comes from 'An account of dreaming over a bowl of millet' (*Mengliang lu*), a thirteenth-century collection of reminiscences of the splendours of the city that served as the temporary capital in the south, after the Song court had been driven out of its northern base by the Jurchen in 1127. This city, known also as Lin'an in the Southern Song, and Quinsai in Marco Polo's description, was home to more than a million inhabitants in the thirteenth century, many of whom lived in densely packed multi-story houses to accommodate this vast population.⁸ The quantities of firewood, vegetables, rice, pork and salted fish that had to be delivered from the surrounding regions and distributed throughout the city to supply these daily necessities were very large, and included, for example, several hundred tons of rice every day. The sophisticated and wealthy residents of thirteenth-century Hangzhou wanted more than necessities: they wanted the most expensive teas served in the finest porcelain, on lacquered trays, accompanied by exquisitely flavoured snacks, served by delicately made-up beauties dressed in the latest silk fashions. But within this world, where the discerning customer could pick and choose

from a superb variety of goods, soya sauce had become firmly established on the list of daily essentials.

Of course the use of soya sauce was not limited to the restaurants and teahouses of Hangzhou, or even just the Song empire, but had spread throughout Asia. Transmission stories that feature a single person delivering an object, an idea or a technology from one place to another are rarely more than that: stories. But they tell us something, nonetheless. The person said to have brought soya sauce from China to Japan is the monk Kakushin (1207-98), who was in China for Buddhist studies in the middle of the thirteenth century, and played a significant role in the development of *zen* Buddhism in Japan. Kakushin studied with the famous Buddhist master Wumen Huikai (1183-1260), compiler of a collection of *ko'an*, 'public cases' or conundrums, as an aid to meditation.⁹ As the story goes, upon his return to Japan, he established himself at Koku Temple in Yura-cho (now Wakayama Prefecture). From there, Kakushin introduced Japanese *zen* monks to the use of these *ko'an*, and, apparently, to the making of a flavoursome sauce from fermented soya beans, which acquired the name of *tamari*, from *tamaru*, to accumulate, referring to the accumulation of a thin sauce at the bottom of the kegs of fermenting beans.¹⁰

Regardless of the monk Kakushin's precise role, the transmission of technologies of soya bean fermentation between Song China and Kamakura Japan occurred in a context of active exchange between China and Japan, which led to a cross-fertilization of ideas and religious practices (notably in *zen* Buddhism but also in neo-Confucianism), material culture and, inevitably, food culture. These are, of course, not unrelated: Buddhist temples were vibrant sites where students from far and wide gathered for intellectual exchange and reflection on the meanings of texts and the physical practices of meditation. Tea played a key role in this, too, as did the associated cultures of growing, harvesting, brewing, serving, and consuming tea, each of which had their own ritual and material cultures. The

tea leaves as well as the cups from which the tea was drunk and the food consumed while drinking tea emerged from this dynamic context, and travelled along with monks and merchants between China and Japan.

Little brown tea cups, popular in the tea ceremony in Japan, were made in the thirteenth century in Jizhou, a prefecture in the southern parts of Jiangxi province where I carried out my dissertation research.¹¹ The potters at the kilns here catered specifically for the monks of Jingju Monastery on Mount Qingyuan, making the brown-glazed bowls that were popular for the consumption of tea (Fig. 3.)



Fig. 3. Jizhou tea bowl, from Jiangxi province, southern China. Song dynasty (AD 960-1279). © British Museum collection, Asia OA 1973.7-26.279.

During the Song dynasty, tealeaves were picked, dried or roasted, ground and then pressed into blocks or bricks that could easily be transported. To make tea, a bit of the brick was broken off and ground to a powder, which was placed in a teacup. By whipping the tea while pouring hot water onto the powder a white froth appeared, which contrasted beautifully with the blackness of the bowls.¹² It was this grinding and whipping of tea powder, and the appreciation of the colour and fragrance of the tea that formed a key element of the tea drinking rituals in *chan* or *zen* monasteries in both China and Japan, and still

features in the Japanese tea ceremony. The presence of Jizhou teacups in Japanese monasteries, museums and private collections also goes back to this period of interaction. The vibrancy of this exchange and the accumulations of diverse cultural practices are much more visible when we combine the vessel with its contents, and far more interesting to me than the role of Kakushin, or any other individual character or single political unit might have played in these processes.

From the Song dynasty onwards, soya sauce was one of the ‘things people cannot do without’, an essential flavouring ingredient, part of daily culinary practice, in China, in Japan, and probably more widely throughout Asia. From the sixteenth century onwards, soya sauce appears not only as a daily necessity, but a delicacy savoured by food connoisseurs. Known affectionately in Japanese as *murasaki*, a reference to its deep purple colour, soya sauce was appreciated in numerous local varieties, including *shōyu* from Noda (in Chiba prefecture, where the origins of today’s Kikkoman Corporation are located).¹³ The *Eight Discourses on the Art of Living* (*Zun sheng ba jian*), a 1591 text written by Gao Lian, variously described as merchant, playwright, Daoist and medical specialist, and connoisseur of late Ming idleness, includes a discourse on food and drink, with frequent reference to the addition of soya sauce as a way of enhancing the flavour of the dish.¹⁴ From the seventeenth century onwards, soya sauce features in culinary practices throughout Asia.¹⁵

But how far did the appeal of a deep purple sauce made from fermented soya beans reach? One could probably be forgiven for assuming that soya sauce did not arrive in Europe until the first Chinese restaurants opened in London and Amsterdam after the Second World War, and only found its way into the ‘Exotic foods’ section in Albert Heijn and many of your kitchen cabinets in recent decades. But the assumption would be wrong.

First encounters

In 1632, a merchant couple with seven children, living here in Leiden at the Rapenburg, gave birth to their eighth child, a boy they called Aernout (Fig. 4). In 1643, still 11 at the time, young Aernout embarked on his studies at this university, leading to a doctorate in 1655.



Fig. 4. Engraving of Aernout van Overbeke, 1680.

He seems to have spent the next decade of his life mostly with drink and play, although nominally also with a career in the law. He published witty poems and plays, and mostly lost a great deal of money, which may explain why he accepted an invitation to serve overseas, and set sail on the *Zuidpolsbroek* for the East Indies on 12 April 1668. He spent only four years in

Batavia, and travelled back as commander of a fleet of 15 ships. The third Anglo-Dutch war had broken out just as he sailed back, and he needed the help of the famous Dutch admiral Michiel de Ruyter to make it safely back to port. The report of his journey, entitled 'A witty and entertaining description of a journey to the East Indies' dated 1671, and published while Van Overbeke was still in Asia, is not so much an accurate account, as a series of light-hearted descriptions of amusing scenes to entertain his audience.¹⁶ The book gained a great deal of popularity. His nineteenth-century biographers thought little of his spendthrift and raunchy writings, but it is precisely because of his love for food and drink that we find in his works some fascinating observations. In 1669, while he was still in Batavia, he wrote a poem for an otherwise unnamed girl on the occasion of her seventh birthday. He describes her as a small girl, greatly treasured, most beautiful joy that Java's soil has yielded ('Kleine Juffer, groot van waerde, schoonste vreugd, die ooit de aerde heeft op Java voort gebracht').¹⁷ The poem is his present for her:

Wenschen? wel ghy hebt het al:
Rijckdom, aengenaeme schoonheit,
Deugd die in u klaer ten toon leyt,
Oock gesondheyt en verstant,
d' Eerste dochter van het landt,
Daer de Leeuw met seven pijlen
Heeft gebout op vaste stijlen,
Daer het al te warme Oost
Met haer oegst den koopman troost:
Valt'er dan wat meer te wenschen?¹⁸

Wishes? You have these already:
Wealth and pleasant beauty,
Virtue, clearly manifest in you,
Just as health and intellect.
First daughter of this land,
Where the lion built with seven pillars on a solid base,
Where the warm East
Comforts the merchants with her yield.
What else would one wish for?

But he also uses the poem to reflect on his situation, where his time spent in the East was not by choice and time passes slowly ('My time at Java has to last six and thirty thousand hours'), but he also has his freedom ('My life here is free and assured, and no one urges me to appear at the town hall the next morning').¹⁹ And he seems to develop a taste for the food, inviting his reader to join him:

Dat 's de saus die moet'er zijn:
Soya, gengber, loock en ritsjes,
Maeckt de maeg wel scharp en spitsjes:
Maer 't sijn viertjes, die men stoockt
Voor een pot die weynig koockt.

This is the sauce we need:
Soya, ginger, onion and peppers,
It may well feel sharp and fiery to the stomach,
But these are fires stoked for
A pot that cooks but very little.

With that poem, and those lines, Van Overbeke's seveneenth-century readers had a scoop: the first widely-circulated reference to a sauce that would take another 350 years to find its way into everyday Dutch culinary practice.²⁰

Van Overbeke earned his money as a salaried employee of the VOC, and in that capacity may or may not have been able to access the financial papers and order books of the VOC. Had he been able to do this, he would have seen that soya was also a money maker for the Company. As Cynthia Viallé has shown, the first shipment of soya sauce, a quantity of five casks, was sent by VOC ship to Cambodia in 1637.²¹ Ten years later, double that quantity was sent to Siam, and in 1652, fifty small barrels were shipped to Tonkin. As both Viallé and Chris Nierstrasz's archival research shows, it was not until 1737, a hundred years after this first intra-Asian shipment, that the VOC started to ship Japanese soya sauce to the Netherlands, and 1739 that these goods were sold in the Netherlands. But as Van Overbeke's poem shows, and this is confirmed by Company

regulations, by 1737, soya sauce had already been standard fare for those stationed in Batavia and Deshima for at least sixty years, and may well have been shipped to the Netherlands by

private traders on the behest of those who had acquired a taste for it in Asia (Fig. 5).²²



Fig. 5. Hand-coloured woodcut print of five Dutchmen enjoying a meal in Deshima. Deshima, 1775 – 1800. H 30 cm × W 38,4 cm. Collection of the Rijksmuseum, NG-1978-110. On the far left of the table a small bottle of soy.

Seventeenth-century Batavia and Nagasaki were exceptional sites of encounter, confluence and interaction, and played key roles in the production of a shared cultural legacy, together with the literary writings of the intrepid global travellers of the seventeenth century. Engelbert Kaempfer, born in 1651 in the Hanseatic city of Lemgo, in Nordrhein-Westfalen, was one such traveller. His travels took him to Russia, Persia, India, Southeast Asia, and Japan between 1683 and 1693, and from 1690 to 1692, he lived on the man-made island of Deshima in Nagasaki Bay. His *History of Japan*, published posthumously in 1727, was the chief source of Western knowledge about the country throughout the eighteenth century, but it is his book on exotic novelties, based on his peregrinations in Persia and the Far East, that he describes a famous sauce, 'sooju', 'quod nisi ferculis, certe frictis et assatis omnibus affunditur' (a sauce which is poured, if not over all dishes, then certainly over everything fried and roasted).²³ Kaempfer followed this introduction to Japanese culinary practice with a detailed description of how to make soya sauce. The recipe uses cooked beans and *koji* (grain mould), fermented together, after which salt and water is added. This mixture is then left for several months, during which it has to be stirred regularly. It is then compressed, filtered and preserved in wooden containers. Almost all the elements that Kaempfer saw in the late seventeenth century are still part of the production processes of Kikkoman soya sauce, as I saw in the twenty-first century factories in Sappemeer.

Another of these early travellers, Giovanni Francesco Gemelli-Careri was born in the same year as Kaempfer, in Taurianova in Calabria in the 'toe' of the Italian peninsula, a town ruled from Naples, where he died in 1725. He tried his hand at a career in the law, but suspended his work to embark on a round the world trip in 1693. He started in the Middle East, with Egypt, Istanbul and the Holy Land, crossed Armenia and Persia, visited Southern India and entered China, where visited the emperor at Beijing, attended the Lantern Festival celebra-

tions and toured the Great Wall. From Macau, he went to the Philippines, sailed to Acapulco on a Manila galleon, and from Cuba back to Europe on a Spanish treasure fleet. He funded his travels by buying and selling goods 'on which one makes a good profit'.²⁴ *The Giro del Mondo*, published in Italian in 1699, and translated into several other languages in the early decades of the eighteenth century, shows Gemelli-Careri's curiosity about food. On his way to Peking, he observed the absence of rice cultivation. 'To make some amends for the want of Rice, they use their Taufu, which is boil'd, a Mess of Kidney Beans, which with him is a dainty, for this wretched Sauce they use to dip their Meat in. They make it of white Kidney Beans pounded, and made into a Paste, ... , they also make it of Wheat and other Ingredients'.²⁵ Gemelli-Careri clearly cared less for this flavour than Van Overbeke did 25 years earlier, but the significance, it seems to me, lies in the exploration of self and other this passage reveals. Difference is asserted, to be sure; Gemelli-Careri himself does not share the view that this Taufu is 'a dainty', but he displays substantial understanding of dietary requirements (beans to make up for the absence of rice; eating practices, such as dipping meat in sauce; and food processing stages) to suggest significant interest in the food of the other. Clearly, both Kaempfer and Gemelli-Careri's late seventeenth-century descriptions of flavours, tastes, food practices and technologies created important building blocks for the more sustained exposures of the eighteenth century.

Eighteenth-century ventures

The turn of the century proved a turning point in the European knowledge of plants and foods of the wider world, including soya beans and their various uses. The apothecary and physician Samuel Dale (1659-1739) published his *Pharmacologia* in 1693 without mentioning soya, but in the 1705 second edition of his book, Dale, 'having also received advice from divers Indigenous persons, who had travelled into foreign countries', added an entry on 'Soia, of which Ketchup is made', explaining that it comes from 'the Seed of an Indian Phaseolus'.²⁶ Already

in the first decade of the eighteenth century, then, words like soya and ketchup, the English version of the Malay word *kěchap* (*ketjap* in the Dutch spelling of the Malay), were in wide circulation.²⁷ And it was for sale. The *Daily Courant* (London) ran an advertisement on the 30th of December in 1712, announcing that ‘a great parcel of Soy, commonly called Ketchup, neat and fine as ever come to England’ had arrived from the East Indies and the sauce would be available for wholesale and retail at various China-sellers in London.²⁸

In eighteenth-century Amsterdam, the Oudezijds Herenlogement, ‘the noblest tavern in the world’ according to an English ‘tripadvisor’ *avant la lettre*, hosting guests like Amalia van Solm, Stadholder William the Third and Tsar Peter the Great, became a site for prominent auctions (before it was raised to the ground to make space for the famous Binnengasthuis). On 8 June 1724, the Dutch merchant Philip Piek organised a sale there. Piek specialised in cottons, silks and chintzes, but also sold anything else he could lay his hands on: porcelains, canaries, the entire cabinet of curiosities of Lourens van Campen, and ‘veele flessen Soja’.²⁹ Sadly, we do not know how and where he laid his hands on this lot, nor what price these bottles fetched, but Piek does not seem to have been the kind of man to carry many loss leaders.

Forty years later, in 1763, the Leeuwarden oyster seller Johannes Andrys offered soya sauce together with lemon, lime, Spanish capers, oil from Provence, morels and sugar to flavour his fish.³⁰ Many of the offerings for sale in this mid-eighteenth-century small provincial city had travelled considerable distances, and many would have had a short shelf life, especially the English oysters. Johannes Andrys must have felt sure he could shift his limes, lemons and various fish before the rot set in, and replenish his stocks with fresh supplies. And suddenly a whole new vista opens up in front of our eyes. We knew about space: by the mid-eighteenth century, long distance trade and increasingly global connections had become a fact of life in many parts of the Afro-Eurasian continent. But here we also

see the dimension of time: goods moved across these distances at considerable speed. Adding food into our picture of global connections brings to the fore the compression of time, a characteristic we normally associate only with contemporary globalization.

Between the 1724 sale in the Herenlogement in Amsterdam, and the 1763 advertisement for fishmonger Johannes Andrys’ shop, the VOC started to include Japanese soya sauce in its official shipments from Asia to the Netherlands. Shipments of soyasauce are measured in *kelders*, a word in seventeenth-century Dutch usage that refers to a cabinet or chest, divided into separate compartments for the shipment of bottles.



Fig. 6. Bottle cabinet (*flessenkeldertje*). Wood, silver, velvet and *kakiemon* porcelain. Deshima, 1670 – 1675. H 36cm × D 33cm. Collection of the Rijksmuseum, NG-444.

This late seventeenth-century bottle cabinet (*flessenkeldertje*), on display in the Rijksmuseum (Fig. 6), is an example of such a *kelder*, but of the most luxurious variety, made of precious wood, lined with velvet, decorated with silver, and filled with

kakiemon bottles, to serve as diplomatic gift.³¹ Between 1739 and 1763, the VOC ships carried around 500 *kelders* of soya-sauce to the Netherlands, and here we do have some information about the value of that shipment: on average the *kelders* of soya sauce that were sold by the VOC between 1739 and 1763 fetched about 26 guilders apiece.³² But the presence of soya sauce in Philip Piek's auction demonstrates that the 1737 VOC decision to include soya sauce in its shipments was an attempt to cash in on a market opportunity that private traders had already established long before.

Even though mid-eighteenth-century cooks and maids would clearly have been able to find soya sauce for sale, a thrifty housewife might prefer to make her own. In that case, she or her cook could consult *De volmaakte Hollandsche keuken-meid* [the perfect Dutch kitchen maid] (Fig. 7), of which we see the frontispiece here, to learn how to do this:

14. How to make soya sauce as good as the one that comes from Asia.

Take a piece of beef with all the fat left in, place this on the fire, and add a good bit of salt and crushed cloves. Depending on how big the piece of meat is, add one or two *mingelen* [one or two litres] of good beer, and place this on a flame (low flame for the bottom, and high flame for the top of the meat), leaving it until all the juice is gone and the meat falls apart. Squeeze the juice out, pour this liquid into a pan and leave to cool. Lifting the layer of fat off, filter the remainder through a clean cloth, and pour this into bottles to store.³³

No beans, no fermentation, but a meaty juice combined with a reduction of beer. Undoubtedly a tasty flavouring for any dish, but surely not quite 'soya sauce as good as the one that comes from Asia'. Only a few decades later, in 1779, the erstwhile Leiden medical student and botanist Martin Houttuyn (1720-1798) provided a bit more detail. Houttuyn explained soya sauce as 'a viscous and not unpleasantly savoury juice,



Fig. 7. *De volmaakte Hollandsche keuken-meid*. Third edition (Amsterdam: Steven van Esveldt, 1752, frontispiece).

which arrives in bottles, and is consumed instead of meat-juice or gravy with pulses and other dishes, to raise one's appetite'.³⁴ Meat-juice serves as familiar reference point; otherwise this juice is damned by faint praise with its description as 'not unpleasantly savoury'. Its arrival in bottles is stated as fact, but not more than that.

Meanwhile, more progress towards understanding this sauce was made in Sweden. Carl Gustaf Ekeberg (1716-84) served in the Swedish East India Company from 1742 until 1778, and made at least ten voyages to India and China. In 1764, in a speech delivered before the Swedish Academy of Science, he explained precisely how soya sauce was made, 'because it has come to be used by us, and we ought to be able to produce it ourselves'. The speech was published in the Transactions of the Academy, and eventually translated into various other languages, including French and English.³⁵ A flurry of publications followed containing similar descriptions of the process, including one by the Amsterdam surgeon and VOC employee Nicolaas Titsingh (1745-1812). It is a short piece, with rather precise explanations, which starts with a mixture of what he calls 'miso-beans' and wheat, locked into a cupboard for eight days so that it becomes entirely green with mould, and then left in the sun to dry. It is then blended into a purified water and salt mixture, and left for fourteen days, stirred regularly. His final sentence is revealing: 'this soya sauce, named *ketjap* by the Chinese, is used as a very tasty and flavoursome salt with meat, in Batavia as well as in The Netherlands'.³⁶

Cookery books from the middle of the eighteenth century, suggest that cooking with soya sauce had become part of the ordinary cook's normal practice. According to a 1775 cookery book, scate is served either 'with butter and mustard' or with 'anchovy or soy sauce'. Similarly, flounders is served with, among other things, 'butter melted with a little catchup or soy'. Salmon, interestingly is not served with soya, but pike can be served with 'anchovy, shrimp, or soy sauce, or with melted butter and catchup'.³⁷ Exactly the same recipes are found also in the 1780 *Town & country cook* and in *Mrs. Taylor's family companion; or the whole art of cookery display'd, in the newest and most easy method* (London, 1795). Soya sauce had come a long way; from a novelty, testing tender stomachs to a known commodity that could be bought, created or imitated at home, soya sauce had become part eighteenth-century European culinary practice, and was consumed on a regular basis.

Nineteenth-century imitations

By the mid-nineteenth century, cooks were no longer happy just to use imported soya sauce in their cookery, or even attempt to follow Ekeberg or Titsingh and make their own. Cooks want to create new sauces. One of these inventors was Alexis Soyer (1810-1858), the extraordinary French celebrity-cook of the London Reform Club, eccentric, romantic dandy, dressed in his trademark clothes cut on the bias, 'à la zoug-zoug', inventor of kitchen gadgets, friend of Nurse Seacole (sidekick of Florence Nightingale in the Crimea), and feeder of the poor (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Alexis Benoit Soyer (1810-1858), Cook and writer of cookery books. Portrait by Henry Bryan Hall, after Elizabeth Emma Soyer. Stipple engraving, published 1858. © National Portrait Gallery, London, D6822.

The ingredients of the sauce he created, which he marketed as ‘Soyer’s Sauce’ (or Soyer’s Sauce succulente) included vinegar, apple, wheat, onions and garlic, red current jelly and various spices (Fig. 9).³⁸



Fig. 9. Advertisement for Soyer’s Sauce, 1850s.

Did he mean his ‘Soyer’s Sauce’ to sound like soya sauce? We may never know. Soyer was savvy enough to patent his inventions; the Patent, Designs and Trade Mark Office holds patents for Soyer’s tendon separator, a magic stove, a particularly shaped bottle, even a biscuit stamped with Soyer, but not Soyer’s Sauce, sadly.

We do know that when the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations took place at Crystal Palace in Hyde Park in 1851, Soyer saw an opportunity. The organisers had decided no wine could be served inside the exhibition, and diners could not sit down, so instead of accepting the invitation to feed the thousands of visitors inside the Great Exhibition, Soyer established the ‘Gastronomic Symposium of All Nations’ next door to Crystal Palace. He went all out, turning it into an extravagant experience rather than merely a restaurant, with fourteen themed rooms, including a Confucian boudoir, an ice cave, and an American cocktail bar, his trademark zigzag designs, and of course the opportunity to buy Soyer’s Sauce. The Gastronomic Symposium was a showcase for the latest culinary technologies and for Soyer’s megalomania: 350 ft (100 metre) tablecloths, an 890 Kg (140 stone) bullock roasted for the Queen’s birthday, and 72,000 visitors in less than five months. We know that he was keen to serve people of all classes and all nations together, which probably explains the discomfort of his numerous critics, who felt the whole extravaganza was in bad taste. We know remarkably little about the food he served, beyond his own claim that the only thing *not* on the menu was ‘cold boiled missionary’ for a hungry ‘New Zealand tribesman’. In some ways, that says it all; ostensibly about a gathering of knowledge about the works of industry of all nations, the Great Exhibition and Soyer’s Gastronomic Symposium served imperialist purposes, to establish British superiority, to rank and classify the ‘other’, including the other’s food. Soyer undoubtedly knew about soya sauce, but I think we can also be quite sure that he thought his own concoction of vinegar, apple, wheat, onions and red current jelly, his Soyer’s Sauce, was superior.

The shop that sold the Mandarinzoza that I started with, Dirk Boer’s Japansch Magazijn, had a somewhat different approach. Named Japansche Winkel when it was founded in 1827, Japansch Magazijn from 1735, and Groote Koninklijke Bazar from 1843, this storehouse of exotica sold an extraordinary range of goods, including medicines, lacquerwares, textiles,

and soya sauce, by no means all from Japan.³⁹ And like Alexis Soyer, Dirk Boer did not settle for marketing a Japanese product per se.



Fig. 10. Untitled decoration, by Petrus Regout/Sphinx, for Koninklijke Bazar, 1854. Decoraties Maastrichts Aardewerk, 1836-1969, Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg, 01189.

He turned this Japanese product into his own brand of soya sauce: Mandarinzoaya, with his own name, the name of his shop, and his own city prominently displayed on the label (Fig. 10). This bottle and its contents, then, had a global life with local meaning.

Interpretations

My approach to this humble bottle of soya sauce, and my desire to cast its story in a global light is, inevitably, shaped by my own academic trajectories. My initial training in Chinese Studies here in Leiden, supplemented with a year at the Faculty of Oriental Studies in Cambridge, and continued in East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard, mean that I gravitate

to textual records, and that I know the crucial importance of acquiring and maintaining linguistic competences in Chinese and Japanese. My appointment in the History Department at the University of Warwick in 2001 has meant that I frame most of my research through the methodological lens of the historian. Since the 2007 founding of the Warwick Global History and Culture Centre by Maxine Berg and the subsequent appointment of Giorgio Riello, the three of us have worked closely together in the field of global history. In our different ways, we have centralized the global trajectories of things: of luxuries, crafts and skills, of cloths and textile designs, and of porcelain. We have thought about the ways in which the circulation of goods, people, ideas and knowledge throughout the Afro-Eurasian continent and its surrounding seas and oceans created at the very least the potential for a shared, global, material culture. Things have global lives, and only by mobilising the variety of linguistic and disciplinary skills that teams can offer can we tease out the global meanings of the things that this soya bottle exemplifies.

The opportunity to return to Leiden one day a week, provided so generously by the Kikkoman Foundation, has had the additional beneficial effect that it has pointed me in a new direction of research. The material legacy of the past, which we have access to either in the pristine, and often somewhat sterile context of museum collections, or in discarded and often damaged form in archaeological excavations, has become unavoidably separated from its intended use. Vessels are enclosures for holding things, and more often than not these are more degradable than the vessels themselves. These vessels remain, while the drinks and foodstuffs they transported, displayed and served have vanished, often without a trace. The records of the trade companies such as the VOC and EIC allow us to see that coffee, tea and chocolate would have been amongst the beverages consumed from porcelain cups. We have to turn to two-dimensional visual culture such as the still-lives of the Dutch Golden Age, to see the vessels together with the foods they held.

Only in a few cases does the vessel identify the contents, but the soya bottle is indeed one such example. Grey earthenware bottles inscribed with the words 'soya' or 'zoya', or 'Japansch zoya' have been found in Deshima, where the Dutch purchased crates of soya for use on the island, for shipment to Batavia and throughout Asia, and to Europe. Recent excavations in

the Netherlands have also yielded examples of these Japanese bottles with the characteristic blue letters. A set of five small pouring vessels with handles and a saltshaker on a matching tray, now in the Jan Menze van Diepen Stichting collection, has letters identifying the different condiments served in them: oil, vinegar, and of course soya sauce (Fig. 11).⁴⁰



Fig. 11. Oil, vinegar and soyasauce set. Imari porcelain, Japan, eighteenth century. In the collection of the Jan Menze van Diepen Stichting, JMD-P-2456.

When we reconnect the vessels with the food they held, our gaze moves from the longevity and materiality of the object to the ephemeral quality of its contents. When we add food and flavour to the picture of global connections, we see domestic settings, tables, dining practices, and tastes. Perhaps it is not until we share food and flavour across vast cultural distances that the idea of a shared taste becomes a possibility: global foods and materials, imbued with local meanings and practices. Only then do we see this bottle's global life.

Tot slot een woord van dank, in de eerste plaats aan allen die aan de totstandkoming van mijn benoeming hebben bijgedragen, met name het bestuur van de faculteit onder leiding van Wim van den Doel. Toen ik in 1987 in Leiden begon aan mijn studie Chinees was er een *numerus clausus*, rookte Professor Zürcher zijn pijp nog tijdens de werkgroepen op zijn kamer, en weigerde Mansveldt Beck ooit naar het moderne China te reizen. Professor Idema koos 'de vrouw' als thema voor zijn vak Chinese Literatuur, en onder de inspirerende begeleiding van Harriet Zurndorfer schreef ik toen daar mijn afstudeerscriptie over. Indirect vervolgde mijn Leidse training zich toen ik op Harvard bij Peter Bol verder ging studeren, en ik ben erg blij dat ik mijn medestudente Hilde De Weerd nu hier mijn collega mag noemen. Zonder deze Leidse leermeesters, het inspirerende onderwijs en de voortdurende steun van Peter Bol, en de vriendschap van mijn medestudenten in Leiden en op Harvard was ik niet ver gekomen in de sinologie.

My Warwick colleagues, Maxine Berg, Giorgio Riello, Rebecca Earle, and Stephen McDowall, have been the best colleagues anyone could wish for, and I am glad my part-time appointment in Leiden allows me to continue to enjoy working with them and our students at Warwick. If I am a historian at all, it is because of them.

When the Kikkoman Foundation decided to celebrate the first fifteen years of Kikkoman in Europe with the extraordinarily generous gift of a Chair in Leiden, I doubt that I would have

seemed the obvious candidate. But the combination of support from the Kikkoman Foundation and the Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst suddenly made my appointment imaginable. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity they have given me, and for the trust they have placed in me. I am also grateful for the generosity of the Jan Menze van Diepenstichting. Two individuals have worked harder than anyone else to make my appointment not just imaginable, but a reality: Kitty Zijlmans en Maghiel van Crevel. It took much more than any of us know. To all of you: thank you. I look forward to working with Alice de Jong on the 'Shared Taste' project, with colleagues and students in LIAS and LUCAS, and with the various curators at het Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, het Gemeentemuseum in Den Haag, het Keramiëkmuseum Princessehof in Leeuwarden, en het Groninger Museum.

Lieve Papa en Mama, zonder jullie had ik hier natuurlijk nooit gestaan. Het belang van talen leren, de waarde van het verleden om het heden te begrijpen, het plezier in reizen, en het principe van 'samen uit, samen thuis' dat voor mij staat voor trouw en saamhorigheid, het is maar een greep uit de veelheid van dingen die ik van jullie geleerd heb, maar ik zal ze altijd blijven koesteren. The connection to the King family goes back a very long way, and includes all the Van Leeuwens in Amsterdam. Thank you for being here.

Christopher, Matthijs, and Bella. I am so grateful you are here with me today. The last months have been difficult, and we have all had to adjust to the powerful presence of the inherited heart disease HCM in our midst. I admire deeply how you all three continue to deal with this. Christopher's courage and grace are astonishing. From the moment you decided to leave the UK to come to Harvard with me more than twenty years ago, you have been unstintingly generous with your support and love, and for that, and everything else, I thank you. Ik dank u voor uw aandacht.

Ik heb gezegd.

Notes

- 1 See Marika Keblusek, *Japansch Magazijn: Japanse Kunst en Cultuur in 19de-eeuws Den Haag* (Den Haag: Haags Historisch Museum, 2000). A similar soyasauce bottle is depicted on page 73. The collection of Openluchtmuseum, Arnhem has a similar bottle.
- 2 For a statement of his views at the start of his professorship in Leiden, see C.J.A. Jörg, 'Wisselwerkingen - Rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van de ambt van bijzonder hoorgleraar Materiële Geschiedenis van Wisselwerkingen tussen Azië en Europa aan de Faculteit der Letteren van de Rijksuniversiteit Leiden', Universiteit Leiden, 1998. For his reflections at the time of his retirement, see 'A Short Story about East-West Interactions', *Aziatische Kunst* 40.2 (2010), 3-24. The same volume also includes a list of his publications from 1978 to 2010.
- 3 Katarzyna Cwiertka, 'The Wisdom of the Ordinary: a Prospect for Modern Japan Studies', Universiteit Leiden, 2011.
- 4 I have discussed my understanding of when such interactions intensify to become 'globalizing processes' in 'Scales of a Local: The Place of Locality in a Globalizing World', in Douglas Northrop (ed.), *A Companion to World History* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 213-226.
- 5 H.T. Huang, 'Fermentations and Food Science', Vol. 6, Pt 5 in Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 6 The line drawing and a photograph of the mural on which the drawing is based can be found in Huang, 'Fermentations and Food Science', 306-7.
- 7 *Menglianglu* (Siku quanshu edition), *juan* 16.
- 8 For a description of life in Quinsai based on Marco Polo's *Description of the World*, see A.C. Moule, *Quinsai, with other notes on Marco Polo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).
- 9 See the study on Wumen Huikai by Ding-hwa Hsieh, 'Poetry and Chan "Gong an": From Xuedou Chongxian (980-1052) to Wumen Huikai (1183-1260)', *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 40 (2010): 39-70.
- 10 This, and numerous other references in the history of soya sauce, can be found in the superb sourcebook by William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, *History of Soy Sauce (160 CE to 2012) Extensively Annotated Bibliography and Sourcebook* (Lafayette, CA: Soyinfo Center, 2012).
- 11 See Anne Gerritsen, *Ji'an Literati and the Local in Song-Yüan-Ming China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
- 12 Luo Jialin, *The China Tea Book* (San Rafael, CA: Earth Aware Editions, 2012).
- 13 On the history of the company, see Ronal E. Yates, *The Kikkoman Chronicles: A Global Company with a Japanese Soul* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998).
- 14 Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (first edition Polity Press, 1991, second edition Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2004), 13-20.
- 15 Huang, 'Fermentations and Food Science', 373.
- 16 Aernout van Overbeke, *Geestige en Vermaeckelicke Reys-beschrijvinge van den Heer Aernout van Overbeke, naer Oost - Indien gevaren, ten dienste van de Oost - Indische Compagnie, voor Raet van Justitie, in den Jare 1668*.
- 17 A. van Overbeke, 'Op Juffrou N.N. doe haer Ed. 7 jaer verjaerde, Den 29 Augusti 1669' in *De geestige werken, van Aernout van Overbeke, ...: bestaende in liederen en gedichten. Nevens sijn vermaeckelijcke reys naer Oost-Indien*. Leiden University Library has the 1678 edition printed in Amsterdam by Jan Claesz. ten Hoorn.
- 18 A. van Overbeke, *De Rymwercken*, 78.
- 19 'Als die c'ronjes van die Muysen,/ En naer Oosten doen verhuysen', and 'Ses en dertigh duysend uyren,/ Moet mijn tijdt op Java duyren', and 'Hier is 't buyten vry en seker,/ Hier en bruyt my geen aenspreker/ Met, 'kom Morgen op 't Stadhuys'. A. van Overbeke, *De Rymwercken*, 76-79.
- 20 A. van Overbeke, *De Rymwercken*, 74.
- 21 Cynthia Viallé, 'Japanese Products Exported to Asia and Europe in the Edo Period', in: Frederik Cryns and Fuyuko Matsukata (eds), *Nichirankankeishi wo yomitoku* [Revis-

- iting the History of Dutch-Japanese relations] (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, forthcoming 2015).
- 22 Viallé's research in the archives of the VOC base in Japan (Archieven van de Nederlandse Factorij Japan) shows that soya sauce was shipped 'for the governor's table' and for the Company employees stationed in the various VOC offices. Viallé, 'Japanese Products'.
 - 23 Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amœnitatum exoticarum politico-physico-medicarum*. Lemgoviaë: Typis & impensis Henrici Wilhelmi Meyeri, 1712.
 - 24 This passage is quoted, for example, in Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th century*. Vol. 2 (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1992), 169.
 - 25 John Francis Gemelli-Careri, *A Voyage Round the World*, Vol. IV, 'Of China', in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1704), 314.
 - 26 See the review of the 1705 edition in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* 25 (1705), 2253 - 2267 (2266).
 - 27 The word ketjap or kēchap in Malay means soya sauce, and probably comes from a Chinese dialect word meaning fish sauce. In 1711, Charles Lockyer wrote: 'Soy comes in Tubs from Jappan, and the best Ketchup from Tonquin; yet good of both sorts are made and sold very cheap in China.' See *An account of the trade in India: containing rules for good government in trade, price courants and tables: with descriptions of Fort St. George, Acheen, the Cape of Good Hope, and St. Helena* (London: Samuel Crouch, 1711), 128.
 - 28 *Daily Courant* p.[2], col. 2.4 (30 December 1712).
 - 29 *Amsterdamse Courant* No. 68 (8 June 1724).
 - 30 *Leeuwarder Saturdagse Courant* No. 546 (8 January 1763).
 - 31 Collection of the Rijksmuseum, NG-444. See also Figure 9 in Menno Fitski, *Kakiemon Porcelain: A Handbook* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011), 19.
 - 32 The average of 26 guilder per *kelder* is based on data for 22 separate years. The value per *kelder* ranges from nearly 7 guilders per *kelder* in 1753, when 33 *kelders* were shipped and 13 guilder per *kelder* in 1748, when 66 *kelders* were shipped at the lower end of the spectrum, to 37 guilder per *kelder* when 20 *kelders* were shipped in 1740. I am grateful to Chris Nierstrasz for his help in collecting these figures.
 - 33 'Soja, zo goed als die uit Oost-Indien komt, hoe men die maaken zal. Neemt een dikke lende van een os of koe daar men al het vet in laat blyven, en zet het op 't vuur, daar by doende een goed deel zout en gestoote kruidnagelen: Na dat het stuk vleesch groot is doet men daar een of twee mingelen goede bronswyker Mom by, of anders van het beste bremer bier; van onderen moet men weinig, maar van boven veel vuur doen, en laat het zo lang staan tot dat al de sjeu uit het vleesch gebraden is, zo dat het van een valt; parst het uit, en giet dit vogt in een pan, laat het koud worden, dan komt 'er een dekzel van vet op dat men daar af ligt; en het overige wringt men door een schoone doek, en dan giet men het in flessen om te bewaaren.' *Aanhangzel van De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-Meid* (Amsterdam: van Esveldt, 1754), 65-66.
 - 34 M. Houttuyn, *Natuurlyke Historie of uitvoerige beschryving der dieren, planten en mineraalen, volgens het samenstel van Linnaeus* (Amsterdam, 1761-1785). The text can be found in Volume II, part 10, page 158.
 - 35 Carl Gustaf Ekeberg, 'Om Chineska Soyan' (Stockholm, 1764). See also M. Lindbom, 'Method of preparing the Chinese soy by M. de Grubbens: extracted from the memoirs of the academy of sciences at Stockholm for 1803, first quarter, *Philosophical Magazine Series* 1, 19:75 (1803): 260-263.
 - 36 Isaac Titsingh, 'Bereiding van de soija', *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch-Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 3 (1787): 245-246.
 - 37 Elizabeth Clifton, *The Cook Maid's Assistant, or Art of Cookery, made Plain and Easy* (London, 1775?): 37-40. Consulted in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, 8 July 2014.
 - 38 Karl Ruß, *Waarenkunde für die Frauenwelt* (Breslau: Trendt, 1868), 75.

- 39 Keblusek, *Japansch Magazijn*, 21.
- 40 I thank Henny van Harten, curator of the Fraeylemaborg / Jan Menze van Diepen Stichting for her assistance in finding this object.

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Anne Gerritsen studied Chinese in Leiden, Shanghai (Fudan University) and Cambridge, and completed her studies with a dissertation (doctoraalscriptie) on women and gender in early seventeenth-century China. Her Ph.D. thesis at Harvard University, published as *Ji'an Literati and the Local in Song-Yuan-Ming China* by Brill in 2007, dealt with the ways in which local literati used writings about religious practices as a way of 'belonging' in local society, especially in Ji'an prefecture in Jiangxi. Her attention then shifted from Ji'an prefecture to the porcelain-manufacturing town of Jingdezhen (also in Jiangxi), and from social history and the local, to material culture and the global. She held an early career grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council between 2009 and 2012, and a fellowship at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in Wassenaar in 2013-14. She is in the process of completing a manuscript on global and local perspectives on Jingdezhen porcelain. During her tenure as Kikkoman Chair, she will develop this research on material culture by adding the dimension of food and food studies, under the theme of 'Shared Taste' (see sharedtaste.nl).



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