Introduction:
Nation, Cuisine, and Embodiment

1. Research question: how is “nation” embodied in food consumption?

Taiwanese cuisine has become a main attraction for international tourists and has been used as a national symbol by political elites since the early 1990s. This can be seen in the frequency of local food festivals, the popularity of “state banquets,” and the proliferation of cookbooks, guidebooks, and literature on “Taiwanese cuisine.”¹

The writers of these publications tend to emphasize that Taiwanese cuisine, despite the fact that it originates from Chinese cuisine, has become a distinct tradition after years of adaptation and indigenization (Liang, 1999; Lin, 2004; Zhang & Yang, 2004). In addition to these and related assertions in cookbooks and tourist guides, consumers have manifested the symbolic importance of Taiwanese cuisine. For example, in an official vote open to the whole population in 2006, “Taiwanese cuisine” was voted as one of the most representative “Images of Taiwan”;² and the official website of the Taipei City Government referred to “beef noodles” as “national noodle” after the “Taipei Beef Noodle Festival” started in 2005, the business volume of which reached nearly 100 million NT dollars in that year.³

The proliferation of national cuisine is not a peculiar phenomenon in Taiwan and, indeed, can be seen in many countries or regions in the world. Previous scholarship⁴ mainly interpreted the emergence of national cuisine as the product of intense exchanges between local and global influences, or viewed it as an

¹ According to the Tourism Bureau of Taiwan, “Taiwanese cuisine” has been a top tourist attraction since 2000, superseding “historical sites” and “scenery.” Furthermore, almost 80 books on Taiwanese cuisine were published between 2000 and 2006.
² In the voting held by the Government Information Office, “Taiwanese cuisine” was the fourth most representative image of Taiwan, falling behind puppet theater, Mt. Jade, and Taipei 101. See: http://info.gio.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=28281&ctNode=4525&mp=1 (retrieved 10/22/2008).
⁴ See, for example, Wilk, 1999, 2002; Caldwell, 2002; Billiard, 2006; Yiakoumaki, 2006.
articulation of the nation-building process. This research refers to these two conclusions as the “global-local” perspective and the “nation-building” perspective. The two perspectives do not contradict each other; instead, their differences result from the different conditions in which the “nation” in question is situated. Studies from the first perspective often derive from experiences of mature states, underlining the interplay between native and foreign cultures in a global context. By contrast, the second perspective is based on the cases of newly established countries, particularly the post-colonial ones, highlighting the formation of the cultural characteristics of the nation.

The first perspective discusses national cuisine in the global-local framework, examining how national cuisine is shaped in light of political and global marketplace transformations. For example, Wilk (1999, 2002) explored the formation of Belizean cuisine, arguing that national culture is a new form of cultural production that is generated in the tension between the local and the global. Although focusing on “national” cuisine, Wilk did not put emphasis on the characteristics of nation or the debate on nationalism, but viewed nation-states as “the products of global political and cultural processes that began centuries ago” (Wilk, 2002, p. 68). In the case of Belizean cuisine, the first “Belizean restaurant” in Belize was established in 1990, when there had been increasing imports of foreign foods in the markets of Belize, and this emergence was facilitated by the development of a global food market. By exploring the production of Belizean food, Wilk concluded that “global and local” are intimate partners, and that the development of local identity is closely related to the process of globalization.

The emphasis on globalization in analyzing the phenomenon of national cuisine can also be seen in Caldwell’s research on the passion for Russian food in post-socialist Moscow. Locating the emergence of “food nationalism” in the relationship between the local and the global, Caldwell suggested that nationalist sentiments were growing in globalizing Russia during the 1990s. Showing how consumers carefully calculated what food to buy to express specific Russian values, Caldwell argued that food choices functioned as a means by which Muscovites could express their uneasiness with the transition to the new regime of democratic capitalism (Caldwell, 2002).

In the global-local framework, regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) also influence the framing and positioning of national culture. Billiard (2006) and Yiakoumaki (2006) examined the emergence of local cuisine in Malta and Greece respectively, both arguing that these local or ethnic cuisines were shaped by a need for self-repositioning within the EU. Billiard demonstrated how Maltese

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5 Research from this perspective, see, for example, Appadurai, 1988; Pilcher, 1998; Cusack, 2000, 2003.
elites rebuilt traditional Maltese food as healthy “Mediterranean food” to correspond to the new trend in Europe. He argued that the revival of “traditional” Maltese food represents the desired identity of the Maltese elite to situate themselves in the global system after their entry into the EU. Yiakoumaki suggested that the flourishing publications on food in Greece throughout the 1990s became the sites where discourses of cultural diversity and multiculturalism were articulated, and that such a change reflected the political and economic agendas pertaining to the process of EU integration. In sum, studies from the perspective of “global-local” interaction tend to treat the nation and national culture as given concepts, identifying national cuisine as a form of local cuisine in the context of globalization. The cultivation of national cuisine is thus understood as the construction or strengthening of a locality against the foreign power of dominant entrepreneurs, chain stores, and large importers of food.

While the “global-local” perspective helps us to understand how marketplaces can be terrains of contested local cultures and discourses of identity in a global context, studies from the “nation-building” perspective underline the role of cuisine in the crafting of nationhood, which is particularly significant for understanding those nations that were colonized. For example, Appadurai (1988) asserted that Indian cuisine is the “colonial version” of national cuisine in which print media and the new middle class play the key roles, and he further applied this model to the national cuisine of Mexico, Nigeria, and Indonesia. Following this line, Pilcher (1998) argued that cuisine gave Mexicans a ready way of asserting identity and thus of distinguishing themselves from others, all in order to maintain Mexico’s collective boundary, self-recognition, and legitimacy. Both Appadurai and Pilcher focused on the process of nation-building, underlining that the nation is an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) and a cultural construct. Pilcher argued that national cuisine as well as other mundane aspects of daily life is crucial in binding people into a national community (1998, p. 2), and that the expansion of the middle class and the distribution of cookbooks are important mechanisms contributing to the making of a unified nation. Cusack (2000, 2003) took a similar approach to exploring the newly emerged “national cuisine” in Africa. He viewed cuisine as an increasingly significant part of national culture along with national anthems and flags. For those African countries with weak governments and tenuous links between the state and multi-ethnic societies, the emerging national cuisine is a vehicle that the ruling elites articulate to foster a “sense of national unity” and to achieve legitimate authority when the nation is still in the process of construction (Cusack, 2003, p. 277).

The difference between the “global-local” perspective and the “nation-building” perspective shows that the way in which a “national cuisine”
forms depends largely on the particularities of each nation-state’s nation-formation. However, the two perspectives are thus restricted by these conditions of nation-formation. For a newly shaped national cuisine, an explanation from the “global-local” perspective will run the risk of neglecting the impact of competing nationalisms or ethnic complexities. By contrast, the “nation-building” perspective not only overlooks market mechanisms, but also seems to cast consumers either as a passive population following political elites or as active members participating in the nation-building, neither of which is fully convincing. It is problematic to assume that most consumers will consciously participate in the articulation of national cuisine by choosing food to express their nationalistic emotion or national identity.

The weakness of the above two perspectives can be seen from their inability to explain the changing notions of “Taiwanese cuisine” under different political regimes. Beginning in 1684, the Qing Dynasty governed Taiwan, which imperial Japan later colonized (from 1895 to 1945). In 1949, the Chinese Nationalist government fled the Chinese mainland, where the Chinese communists established power, to Taiwan, where the Nationalist Party claimed that its government was the only legitimate power representing all of China. Nowadays although the political and legal systems of Taiwan differ from those of Mainland China, Taiwan’s “nationhood” remains controversial. The uncertainty of nationhood throughout much of modern Taiwanese history has resulted in changing notions of “Taiwanese cuisine.” During the Japanese colonial period, Taiwanese cuisine was referred to as haute cuisine and enjoyed by Japanese and Taiwanese elites, but its meaning under the post-1949 Nationalist authoritarian rule evolved into one reflective of a “marginalized Chinese local cuisine.” The meaning changed again particularly since the 1990s, when democratization and indigenization policies began strongly asserting themselves, Taiwanese cuisine has been articulated as a “distinctive national cuisine” and has become very popular.

These changing meanings highlight the parallelism of developments in political ideology and dietary culture in Taiwan. Nevertheless, on the one hand, because many symbolic local dishes or ethnic cuisines presented in state banquets are the product of official promotion through subsidies and exhibitions, and because many local and ethnic cuisines lack a long traceable history, the global-local perspective cannot explain the changing meanings as a reactive “defensive localism” that has developed with the support of local farming businesses and local farmers (Winter, 2003). On the other hand, as the status of Taiwan’s nationhood remains controversial throughout the island, and as some “Taiwanese restaurants” have opened up for business in Mainland China, can one justify the hasty conclusions that

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6 Please see Chapter Three of this dissertation for details.
the emergence of Taiwanese cuisine is an invention of national culture, and that the cuisine’s popularity is an expression of Taiwanese identity?

As the features of national cuisine vary with the meanings of nation, the exploration of national cuisine should be based on an understanding of the characteristics of “nation” and their changing meanings in history. In the next section, therefore, the following will conceptualize “nation” and “nationhood” and then revisit the notion of national cuisine.

**Nation, nationhood, and national cuisine**

Nation is often viewed as a community that differentiates itself from others and seeks to acquire or maintain its political autonomy on the basis of a shared history and a common culture (Smith, 1991, p. 14; Townsend, 1992, pp. 103-104). Despite statists’ and ethnicists’ different definitions and emphases regarding nation, the importance of political and cultural elements therein generally take center stage in corresponding explanations of a nation’s development. On the one hand, a nation is a political and legal unit because it rests on a common territory and a common political system and because, for these reasons, a nation can acquire and maintain its autonomy and sovereignty. On the other hand, cultural elements such as a common language, shared traditions, and a shared history are crucial for the establishment of a nation because they greatly facilitate efforts to maintain or strengthen both the distinctiveness of a nation and the citizens’ sentimental bonds to this nation.

Emphasizing both the political and the cultural dimensions of nations, Townsend (1992) suggests that a nation is “a cultural community that is or seeks to become a political community as well” (p. 104). Brass puts it clearly: “whether or not the culture of the group is ancient or is newly-fashioned, the study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part the study of politically induced cultural change” (Hutchinson & Smith, 1994, p. 87). Along with political institutions and autonomy, important components of a national culture include shared traditions, languages, myths, and histories, all of which can arouse a sense of belonging among the nation’s members.

In addition to political and cultural domains, subjective identification is decisive in the formation of a nation. Many scholars have highlighted subjective identification in their definitions of “nation.” Gellner (1983) argues that a nation can be defined only when a political unit, a unified culture, and the will of its population converge (p. 55). Renan (1994) highlights the subjective aspect of nation along with

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7 The distinction was made by Anthony Smith. He suggests that the statists define the nation as a “territorial-political unit” and that the ethnicists see the nation as a “large, politicised ethnic group defined by common culture and alleged descent.” See: Smith, 1971, p. 176.
the objective public culture, arguing that the nation comprises a population’s common possession of a rich legacy of remembrances, a desire to live together, and a high valuation of their perceived common heritage (pp. 17-18). Citizens’ subjective recognition, sense of belonging, and emotional bond relative to their nation are components necessary for the establishment of a nation. Without these components, a population would be unable to identify with and experience a sense of belonging to their community-as-a-nation (Gellner, 1983, p. 55; Smith, 1991, p. 9). In this regard, a nation is an emotional community. On the grounds of a common political system and culture, the members of a nation share with one another a familiar set of memories and sentiments for the nation.

As a nation is characterized by its political and cultural elements as well as its subjective-identification elements, they are important in the maintenance of nationhood. Nationhood is what makes a nation recognizable and identifiable. It is a state of being-a-nation and a form of belonging. The sense of belonging to a nation is not only a feeling binding people to a community but also a mental mechanism of inclusion and exclusion. By means of the mechanism, people can separate “national others” from “us,” the group whose members have the same nationality. By bolstering political demands by reference to nationhood, groups can demarcate boundaries to maintain the distinctiveness of a nation.

The concept of “national cuisine” refers to dishes that have been endowed with national significance. By inscribing national significance, specific dishes become symbols characterizing nationhood and serving as a boundary dividing others from us. It is evident that food often functions as a mark of “others.” Murcott (1996), in this regard, noted that many North Americans make metaphorical reference to the supposed eating habits of the French in speaking of “Frogs,” and similarly, many French term English people “rosbif” based on their consumption of roast beef (p. 50). A national cuisine can, therefore, generate perceptions of not only dishes but a nation and its people, as well. For example, when talking about Korean cuisine, many non-Koreans draw a connection between kimchi and their conventional impressions of Koreans: citing anthropologist Han Kyong-ku (1994), Walraven (2002) noted that “…kimchi is particularly suited to projections of national character. The aggressive red colour and the spiciness of kimchi (both due to the adding of red pepper powder) stand for energy and masculinity” (p. 99). In short, national cuisine can serve as a national symbol that helps a nation’s members distinguish themselves from non-members.

In the formation of such a “national cuisine,” political and cultural elements of a nation, as well as the subjective identification with the national cuisine are all influential. In the political domain, the government can influence the culinary scene of a state by establishing policies that regulate the production, distribution, and
consumption of food and that include regulations on trade, nutrition, and the food industry (Bentley, 1998; Clark, 2007; Nestle, 2002). For example, Cwiertka’s (2006) research demonstrates that the key transformation shaping a nation-wide modern Japanese cuisine was a combination of militarism and various political and social forces that first converged in the late nineteenth century and that include military catering, home cooking, and wartime food management. These forces resulted in the nationalizing and homogenizing of food tastes in Japan, in the process, largely erasing a variety of regional dishes.

In the cultural domain, the distinction of national cuisine derives largely from cultural elements such as common language, tradition, and history. Dishes often have their local names, whose subtle meanings usually escape the understanding of foreigners. Food culture, including dining manners, taboos, and rituals, are constitutive of a part of tradition in a historical process. As Appadurai (1988) argues, the emergence of a national cuisine in contemporary India is “part of the larger process of the construction of complex public cultures” (p. 22). The formation of national cuisine reflects various cultural elements of a nation, and national cuisine itself constitutes a part of national culture.

Concerning the subjective identification, studies of national food have demonstrated the positive relationship between food preferences and identities. Pilcher (1998) suggested that, in Mexico, consumption of native corn tortillas and Western wheat bread helped to define the ethnic boundaries there under Spanish rule. The formation of a unique Mexican national cuisine in the nineteenth century marked the region’s newly forged national identity. In the process, cookbooks helped create not only a national repertoire of dishes but also a sense of community. Similarly, Helstosky (2003) examined the nationalistic rhetoric of an 1891 cookbook and a 1932 cookbook, arguing that although the two cookbooks differed from each other regarding their advocacy of Italian food habits, both of them attempted to strengthen Italian identity through everyday practices of preparing and consuming food. She thus suggested that the two books reflected conscious efforts to “make” Italians (p. 114). In a case from East Asia, Cheng (2002) argued that the development of herbal-tea shops has reflected the search for Hong Kong identity since the late 1960s. Furthermore, studies of migrants and diaspora place a particularly prominent stress on the positive relationship between identity and food consumption. For example, focusing on the connection between diaspora and food, Naguib (2006) showed how recipes of a homeland can be an important way in which exiles remember and understand historical moments. Roy (2002) argued that gastrophilic histories are saturated with the idioms of national belonging and national purity. These studies demonstrate that food is often viewed as “an expression of identity” (Mucott, 1996), or in the words of Palmer (1998), food is one of the “flags of identity,” which not
only symbolizes national belonging, but also constitutes a reference system within which people can experience the material world (p. 175).

Focusing on the association between national cuisine and identity, Mintz (2003) has suggested that national cuisine is in certain important senses a political artifact and is on its way to becoming a touristic artifact:

...a national cuisine primarily possesses a textual reality; produced textually, it can help to achieve a desired touristic and political effect. But there is no doubt not only that particular foods or food habits may be chosen either for national self-definition or to stereotype others, but that they may emerge as strikingly convenient condensed symbols of identity conflict or division. (p. 32)

However, the assertion that national cuisine is a political and touristic artifact begs the questions of whose identity the cuisine expresses and whether or not such an expressed identity is a manufactured notion. When arguing that national cuisine can be a “political and touristic artifact” that contributes to make a nation recognizable and identifiable, that is, to create or maintain the nationhood, it should be clarified how members of a nation, who are also consumers of the dining market, conceive of and participate in the process of shaping the national cuisine. As the subjective identification of a population is also crucial in the maintenance of nationhood, it might be deceptive to suggest that national cuisine is a political symbol which was articulated by political and cultural actors and followed by consumers. Rather, it is important to scrutinize how subjective identification of individuals interacts with political and cultural elements of a nation so as to create or maintain nationhood. Regarding people who prefer these “articulated national cuisines” and take them as an expression of their national identity, it should be clarified how a linkage between identity and food preference is established.

In other words, research on national cuisine is highly significant as it addresses the interaction among individual identifications and politico-cultural elements of a nation. Such interactions are the main concern of this research. As the formation and consumption of national cuisine is a process involving political and cultural elements of a nation, it is thus a ground hosting interactions among various social actors, including politicians, market agents, cultural mediators, and consumers. To explore the ground where nationhood is embodied, this research adopts the approach of embodiment, viewing the emergence of national cuisine as a process of “embodying nationhood in food consumption.” In other words, the research question

8 Palmer drew the metaphor of “flag” from Billig (1995). The other two “flags of identity” suggested by Palmer in this article are landscape and body.
focuses on how nationhood is embodied in food consumption. The following will explain the approach of “embodiment” and how it helps examine the research question.

2. Embodiment as a perspective: body, object, and symbol

The notion of “embodiment” starts from the theoretical implications of “body,” which have been studied by some anthropologists and philosophers. Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggested that body is the source of our experiences and where perception begins. Mauss (2006 [1935]) raised the idea of “body techniques” to indicate “the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies” (p. 78). Mauss emphasized that bodily behaviors like walking, swimming, and marching are encoded with cultural and social differences. As the embodiment of these cultural differences, the “habitus” varies “especially between societies, educations, properties and fashions, prestige” (Mauss, 2006 [1935], p. 80). O’Neill (1985) argued that bodies are “the permeable ground of all social behavior,” which serves as the incarnate bond between self and society (pp. 22-23). Highlighting body as the instrument by which people communicate with society, he developed five dimensions of the “communicative body”: the world’s body, social bodies, the body politic, consumer bodies, and medical bodies.

The common ground of the above studies is their challenge to the dualism of mind and body, wherein humanists prize mind over body. The mind-body dualism tends to treat body and object as a couple of concepts in contrast to mind and subject, and tends to treat body as an object that is subject to mind and that is not an active agent. The above studies generally pose questions to the neglect of body, criticizing the focus of humanist research on intellect, reason, discourse, and imagination, and treating them as activities in the mind. In contrast, body is depreciated as just a part of the physical world, as the “servants of the moral and intellectual order” (O’Neill, 1985, p. 18). And as Turner (1992) argued, because body is seldom considered a way in which individuals engage with the world, the individual-as-actor becomes fundamentally a thinking and choosing agent but not a feeling and being agent (p. 87). Sociologists Shilling and Mellor (1996) noted with dissatisfaction that the mind-body dualism restricts our ability to understand “how people’s experiences of, and responses to, social structures are shaped by their sensory and sensual selves” (p. 2, italics original). According to Shilling (1993), a more rigorous conception would treat the body as an “unfinished project” that constructs social relationships on the one hand but is constructed on the other hand.
Calling for more attention to body, a growing number of researchers consider body a sphere where discourses, practices, images, and institutional arrangements encounter one another, pointing to new ways to reconsider the relationships between body and mind (Lock & Farquhar, 2007). For example, Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) proposes the concept of “mindful body” to reexamine body as an experienced individual that is influenced by social and political control. Csordas (1990, 1994) further suggests that “embodiment,” as a new approach, “begins from the methodological postulate that the body is not an object to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the subject of culture, or in other words as the existential ground of culture” (1990, p. 5, italics original). From the perspective of embodiment, one’s examination focuses on perception and practice, treating body as a field where perception and social practices meet. On the one hand, body is socially informed (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 124; Csordas, 1990, p. 7) insofar as body learns the values, tastes, and manners of a specific society. Thus, one bodily gesture may have various meanings in different societies. On the other hand, bodily practices have the potential to reverse these values and cultural meanings. In short, bodies are socially conditioned but can be another source of meaning-making as well. The process of meaning-making continues through both sensual experiences and bodily practices, although one may not be conscious of this process.

Strathern (1996) explains how embodiment can serve as an analytical concept. He views it as a transformer mediating noun-based and verb-based concepts. The emphasis hence moves from society to action, person to practice, individual to experience, self to enactment, consciousness to representation (Strathern, 1996, p. 202). Strathern claims that “…the stress is thus on action and performance, on doing rather than being, or on the being that resides in doing, that issues from and is expressed only in doing” (p. 202). This claim, rather than meaning that consciousness is unimportant, suggests a more dynamic analysis for the exploration of consciousness. From this perspective, the exploration of nationhood and national consciousness shifts its focus from the static concept of nation to the practice and perception of it.

Reconsidering nation and national cuisine from the perspective of embodiment, “nation” is not merely a political and cultural community but the practical world where people live and experience. There are many vessels that can objectify and put into practice the concept of “nationhood,” and some such vessels are monuments, textbooks and ceremonies, as well as national cuisine. In other words, various objectified forms of nationhood can put into practice and reproduce the concept of “nation” in daily life. These objectified forms of nationhood, that is, the embodiment of nationhood, also constitute the grounds where people can perceive and experience the “nation.”
By contrast with other objectified forms of nationhood, the significance of national cuisine lies in the cuisine’s practical-use value. As an edible object, national cuisine has at least three types of use: one can eat the cuisine to sustain life, one can use the cuisine as a cultural symbol, and one can sell the cuisine as a commodity. The proliferation and popularity of national cuisine depends heavily on the market mechanics and subjective choices of consumers. National cuisine is a consumption choice of a much wider population in daily life, a fact that renders national cuisine different from those national symbols or cultural activities taught in class or appreciated by a select few. Thus, the exploration of food can shed light on a broader segment of society, examining how nationhood is put into practice and is experienced.

In sum, criticizing the division between mind and body, between perception and practice, the approach of “embodiment” proposes a way to unify these dual concepts and to understand how people perceive and act within given social conditions. The core idea of embodiment is to regard “body and mind” as a holistic domain. Body and mind are implicated in each other and the placement of them into two categories is for the purpose of analysis. The following thus turns to the theme of “sense of body,” which focuses on the process of perception relative to bodily experiences and which is important in research adopting, as this thesis does, the approach of embodiment.

**Sense of body and material culture**

“Sense of body” refers to the categories of bodily experience, such as cold and hot, soft and hard, dirty and clean, delicious and disgusting (Yu, 2006, p. 23). Studies on this topic have shown that “sense of body” is the consequence of internalized knowledge or norms that are historically and socially conditioned (Herzfeld, 2001). Because the process of internalization takes place in living experiences of daily life, the sense of body is often the consequence of routine practices. For example, we may experience disgust when seeing someone spitting; or when abroad, we may take comfort in eating familiar foods, even if those foods are prepared or served in sub-standard ways. Never purely biological responses, such senses of disgust and comfort result from the sensing person’s internalization of norms and from the person’s emotional connections to places or people. After this internalization in individuals, norms and related knowledge are stored in memory; many times, a person who recalls such senses takes them for granted as natural responses to

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stimuli. Thus, most people neither render serious judgments nor enter into rigorous contemplation regarding whether a sensed thing is disgusting or appealing.

Whereas the “sense of body” is socially conditioned, it is related to a system of knowledge and cultural metaphors. For example, a “sense of the occult” can result from burning incense in temples (Zhang, 2008); a “sense of the astringent” can be identified in Chinese medical science (Hsu, 2008). A person who has a sense of the occult in temples does not make rational judgments to select a feeling that he or she will subsequently experience; however, a sense of the mysterious and sacred can emerge on the basis of both a person’s understanding of religion and the person’s memory of religion.

Sense of body can be internalized as a kind of bodily technique, like the ability to identify subtle qualities in wine and tea. It is in this sense that we can train our “sense of taste” to be that of a gourmet. Through eating and learning, bodies can develop a gustatory ability to judge the values of food, and the ability can evolve into a bodily technique even though the value of food is largely socially determined. From the perspective of embodiment, a sense derives from both mind (knowledge) and body (sensual experiences), but evolves into a body (corporeal) message so that the individual can feel it as if “naturally.”

As a sense of the comfortable can be induced by a piece of furniture, or a sense of the occult can be induced by incense, specific objects can be a medium for senses of the body. Constituting the infrastructure of human societies, corporeal objects constrain human behavior and experience, but can be changed by humans according to their various needs. Focusing on the changing meanings, values, and social significance of objects, studies of the social life of objects (Appadurai, 1986) have presented a way to scrutinize the ways in which people use, consume, or symbolize objects. As Appadurai argues, “even though from a theoretical point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context” (p. 5, italics original). The meanings of objects are inscribed in their forms, uses, and trajectories; thus, the analysis of the trajectories of objects can shed light on the linkage between objects consumed and social contexts. The exploration of objects on a micro-level can serve as a way to understand, from the bottom up, how macro-level changes in social contexts influence individuals’ everyday life.

Among other objects, food is an important theme whose multiple dimensions facilitate micro-to-macro explorations. For example, Mintz’s research investigates the historical process in which sugar was transformed from a luxury of the upper class to a daily necessity of the masses in the United Kingdom from 1750 to 1850. His work reveals the bi-directional influences between dietary culture and world economy in line with the history of sugar consumption. On the one hand, his
analysis highlights how the development of capitalism and industrial production can affect family meals and workers’ life conditions; on the other hand, he also shows how food preference and consumption patterns can affect industry and economy. In other words, an understanding of material daily-life culture illuminates the concrete mechanics by which economic systems have macro-level operations that influence micro-level daily life. As the meanings and values of “national cuisine” change with the transformation of the political and cultural dimensions of a nation, the trajectories of these changes constitute a window through which we can explore the transformation of a society’s political and cultural dimensions.

Therefore, the study of national cuisine can serve as a way to analyze how Taiwan’s changing “national” status relates to the varying meanings and values of Taiwanese cuisine. Both “sense of body” studies and material-culture studies provide new perspectives from which to examine this topic. Applying these two perspectives in her research on Greek modernity, Seremetakis (1994) argues that the different meanings and values endowed in objects may well embody a profound political and historical divergence. And she further argues that a rigorous analysis of senses is necessary to clarify how the power of objects comes into being (Seremetakis, 1994, pp. 135-137).

Revisiting “national cuisine” from the perspectives of “sense of body” and material culture, national cuisine is a specific “object” in which nationality is embedded. This nationality can endow culinary dishes with the symbolic significance of a nation, thereby transforming these dishes into a national symbol. As a national symbol, a “national cuisine” has the potential to induce specific senses like the senses of belonging, pride, or homesickness. As a food for eating, national cuisine can also induce the senses of pleasant tastes and unpleasant tastes. This dissertation aims to find out how certain dishes can evolve into a national symbol and can induce specific “senses of body,” as well as how the connection between dishes and national pride is made. In other words, rephrased from the perspective of embodiment, the research seeks to explore: how can objects evolve into a national symbol and how can the symbolized object induce a sense of belonging, a sense of home, or a sense of pleasant?

Treating national cuisine as an embodiment of nationhood that can generate specific “senses of body,” this research aims to clarify the relationships among objects, symbols, and senses of body. On the one hand, it will explore the social history of objects, examining how nationality has been embedded in objects and how objects have become a symbol of nationhood. On the other hand, it will investigate the “senses of body” that this object can generate, analyzing how specific cuisines can be identified as “tastes of home” and become a preferred national cuisine.
Above questions will be explored by examining the historical transformation of Taiwanese cuisine. This exploration of Taiwanese cuisine focuses on the following three ingredients and their relationships:

- **Object**: dishes that are labeled as “Taiwanese cuisine” and related dining manners
- **Symbol**: “Taiwanese cuisine” that is presented as a national symbol
- **Sense of body and perception**: taste of home, national consciousness and perception of “Taiwanese cuisine”

As shown, the imagination of Taiwan as a “nation” has changed substantially during the periods of Japanese colonial rule, authoritarian Nationalist Party rule, and fledgling democratization. This complexity, as reflected in and by Taiwanese cuisine, enables the researcher, first, to explore how the changing meanings of “nation” are produced in different political regimes, subsequently, to clarify the formation of a “national cuisine.” Focusing on the changing meanings of “Taiwanese cuisine,” the concrete questions are the following. Of these questions, the first and second concern how objects are symbolized, and the third question deals with bodily senses and symbolized objects.

(1) **What are the definitions of “Taiwanese cuisine” under different political regimes?**

The question concerns how the scope and content of Taiwanese cuisine, as signified objects, have changed during the colonial, authoritarian, and democratic periods. I shall explore the relationship between these definitions and different political contexts. As the process of “defining” always involves juxtapositions of multiple definitions, it is necessary to clarify these changing definitions and to investigate how “Taiwanese cuisine” has fallen into a distinctive category.

“Taiwanese cuisine” in this research refers to a culinary category whose definition may change. Since one main intention of the research is to investigate the changing definitions of this culinary category through different historical periods, the research does not define the meaning of “Taiwanese cuisine” at the outset.

(2) **Who planned and enacted these changes? That is, how do the actors—political elites, market agents, and cultural mediators—draw the boundary of Taiwanese cuisine?**
This research treats the shaping of Taiwanese cuisine as a process where arrays of political, economic, and cultural forces interact. The analysis thus centers on how political actors articulate food as a national symbol, how market agents produce the “authentic Taiwanese taste” in restaurants and exhibitions, and how cultural mediators represent Taiwanese cuisine in cookbooks and other types of food literature.

(3) How do consumers conceive of Taiwanese cuisine? What is the relationship between their national consciousness and food preferences? To which extent can consumers participate in the process of drawing the boundary of Taiwanese cuisine?

“Consumer” in this research refers to individuals who have access to, and can afford to order food in stalls and shops, or to dine in restaurants. Consumers’ preferences are crucial to the proliferation of Taiwanese cuisine. This research will analyze the relationship between consumers’ national consciousness and culinary preferences, exploring the influences of one’s own ethnic background, social network, and social hierarchy (cf. Bourdieu, 1984; Warde & Martens, 2000).

In summary, the main focus of this thesis is on the interaction between individuals and politico-cultural elements of a nation. This thesis explores national cuisine as an experiential ground where individuals and various social actors encounter the notion of nationhood. Focusing on the experiential ground, it adopts “embodiment” as its approach to examine “how nationhood is embodied in food consumption” by clarifying the relationship between objects, symbol, and sense of body. Taking the formation of Taiwanese cuisine as the concrete case for analysis, there are three levels of questions in this thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete focus: The formation of “Taiwanese cuisine”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research question: How is nationhood embodied in food consumption?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research concern: How does the subjective identification of individuals interact with the political and cultural elements of a nation so as to create or maintain nationhood in everyday life?</td>
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In addition to the structural changes that have enabled the idea of a national cuisine to emerge, including the political and cultural elements, the other focus is on how individuals have become aware of national cuisine, that is, how a sense of nationality emerges so as to link individuals to a particular set of dishes. Furthermore,
by exploring the changing nationhood of Taiwan and its association with the changing “Taiwanese cuisine” from the approach of embodiment, this project expand analysis from discourse to practice, seeking to propose a new perspective to interpret the emergence of national cuisine.

3. Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into two parts, exploring the history of symbolized objects first and then investigating the “senses of body” generated by the objects. The first part (Chapters One through Three) responds to questions (1) and (2), just proposed above, while the second part (Chapters Four and Five) responds to question (3). After putting together substantive responses to these questions, I can return to consider the research question by, first, revealing the changing political regimes and social structure in Taiwan and, second, focusing on individuals within the structure—their perceptions and bodily practices.

Chapter’s One to Three will focus on the colonial, authoritarian, and fledgling democratic periods, examining the history of Taiwanese cuisine under these three different political regimes and analyzing how Taiwanese cuisine was presented and articulated. I will show how Taiwanese cuisine emerged as elite food during the colonial period, how culinary transplantation and hybridity took place under the rule of the Nationalist Party, and how Taiwanese cuisine has been evolving into a national symbol beginning in about 1990. Viewing national cuisine as an embodied form of nationhood reproduced in daily life, this research focuses on the producers of Taiwanese cuisine—political elites, restaurant owners, chefs, cookbook writers, and exhibition designers—to examine how these actors participated in the boundary-drawing of Taiwanese cuisine.

In the second part, the focus shifts from objects as historical material to the “senses of body,” including perceptions of these senses. The task here is to scrutinize how individuals experience a nation through their bodily practices. Chapter Four analyzes the changing identification of “tastes of home” revealed in culinary writings. Addressing the various definitions that consumers assign to “Taiwanese cuisine,” Chapter Five explores their culinary preferences and the relations between culinary preference and national consciousness.

4. Methodology

Exploring the history of Taiwanese cuisine across one century from a sociological and anthropological perspective, it is an interdisciplinary project. It combines historical approaches and ethnographic methods as the main methodology, including
historical literature review, in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and case studies. Furthermore, textual analysis serves as a means for interpreting political discourses (Chapter Three) and various exponents of culinary literature (Chapter Four). I also conducted a questionnaire survey with a broad swath of consumers in the early phase of the research to detect people’s general understanding of “Taiwanese cuisine.” However, although I received 155 completed questionnaires, two points should be noted: first, the number of samples is limited, and second, neither the validity nor the reliability of the collected data is sufficient for generalizing the survey results; in short, the survey is a pilot one. Therefore, I do not interpret and discuss this pilot survey’s results in the dissertation. These data have still improved my understanding of both consumers’ perceptions of Taiwanese cuisine and consumers’ related dining habits. In addition, the survey afforded me an opportunity to collect basic consumer-related information with which I could contact a wider range of consumers for in-depth interviews.

The interdisciplinary framework of this study is in line with my approach of embodiment, paying particular attention to the relationships among objects, symbols of nationhood, and perceptions. To explore the symbolized objects (i.e., the history of the presented “Taiwanese cuisine”), I conducted a thorough historical literature review first by examining various archival materials. The primary sources cover historical archives and culinary texts since 1895, including (1) official archives and surveys such as state banquet menus; (2) folk magazines and ethnography records of Japanese anthropologists; (3) early newspapers and reports of exhibitions, particularly those in the Japanese newspaper *Taiwan nichinichi shimpô* (Taiwan Daily News) published from 1898 to 1944; and (4) other popular texts and private archives, such as travel guides, oral-history materials, and private diaries. The secondary sources include related academic works and textbooks. In addition, I conducted interviews with “key actors” (Fetterman, 1998) such as officials, a head of a tourism association, a manager of a grand hotel, and senior chefs who could provide detailed historical data and personal experiences pertinent to this study’s subject. In this same vein, I conducted my own comparison between the content of these oral interviews and the content of archival materials relating to the same period or phenomenon. These approaches, when put together, constitute a formidable lens through which a sound understanding of the history of Taiwanese cuisine can be gained.

To investigate the roles of various social actors in the formation of Taiwanese cuisine and the perceptual process of consumers, I carried out fieldwork in multiple locales, and I did so according to the above historical literature review. The locales of my fieldwork were in the following types of sites:
(1) Taiwanese restaurants and ethnic restaurants

There are no official statistics about Taiwanese restaurants; therefore, there is neither an available “correct number” nor an available “standard list” of Taiwanese restaurants. I identify “Taiwanese restaurant” in this dissertation according to their restaurant names, their advertisements, or the assertions of their owners. To undertake this stage of the research, I collected a list of Taiwan-based Taiwanese-food restaurants deriving from Internet searches and media reports. Afterward, I selected 16 restaurants from the list to conduct participant observation and in-depth interviews. These restaurants typically serve one type of the following cuisines: “congee and side dishes” (widely viewed as authentic Taiwanese cuisine nowadays), “seafood and other common Taiwanese dishes,” ethnic (Hakka and Aboriginal) dishes, and outdoor-banquet dishes (bando, see Chapter One). I used “maximum variation” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) as my sampling strategy to select restaurants for in-depth interviews, taking their historical significance and popularity into account on the basis of both my literature review and my interviews with key actors. Furthermore, the prices and the geographical diversity are also considered.

I interviewed 24 restaurant owners and chefs in total. In addition to the interviews, I conducted participant observation in one restaurant’s kitchen for several afternoons and evenings. Such observation is important for understanding both the ways in which professional kitchen staff prepare Taiwanese cuisine and the characteristics of regular Taiwanese-restaurant consumers regarding, for example, social-hierarchy status, language use, and interaction with restaurant owners.

“Ethnic restaurants” in this research refers to Hakka restaurants and Aboriginal restaurants, which have proliferated with the political discourse of the “four major ethnic groups” (see Chapter Three). Therefore, I also conducted interviews with staff and with customers at Hakka and Aboriginal restaurants in Taipei, Miaoli, and Taidong.10

(2) The outdoor banquet—bando

Alongside indoor restaurants, the outdoor banquet, or bando, is a kind of traditional Taiwanese feast that is particularly popular in the countryside. I interviewed four chefs who were specializing in this field in Taipei, Taizhong, and Kaohsiung. For the purpose of observation, I participated in the day-long preparation of a banquet in Taipei to observe the cooking and dining processes in detail. Before the

10 Please see Appendix for the list of restaurant owners and chefs whom I interviewed.
establishment of modern cooking schools, the training process of cooks specializing in *bando* was very different from that of restaurant chefs. Therefore, the informal interviews and semi-structured interviews with senior *bando* cooks are crucial to understanding the custom of folk banquets and the dishes served at these functions. And again, these cooks’ understandings of Taiwanese cuisine could be explored in greater depth as I participated in *bando*.

(3) Official festivals, exhibitions, and certification

To investigate the role of the government in the formation of Taiwanese cuisine, I participated in official activities concerning food promotion. Many such activities rested on the government’s cooperation with agents from tourist businesses, like grand hotels and travel agencies. Thus, these activities are important sites where the interaction between government and market agents is accessible to outside examination. Some representative activities have been the Taiwan Culinary Exhibition (2006), the Hakka Food Festival (2006), and the Taipei Beef Noodle Festival (2006). In a similar vein, I participated in the “Hakka restaurant certification” that the Miaoli County Government held in 2008, and that was refereed by visiting Hakka restaurants.

(4) Fieldwork in Fujian Province

Most inhabitants of Taiwan descend from people in Fujian and Guangdong Provinces, and the literature review shows that Fujian cuisines had been popular among elites during the Japanese colonial period. To examine the “distinctiveness” of Taiwanese cuisine that is highlighted in cookbooks and textbooks, I paid a ten-day visit in July 2008 to the Fujian cities of Xiamen, Zhangzhou, Quanzhou, and Fuzhou—the cities to which most Taiwanese can trace their descendants. At numerous markets and stalls, I conducted interviews with older residents of the cities about the changes that have characterized local food over the decades. I observed many similarities and differences between Fujian snacks and Taiwanese snacks. Because the focus of this research is on the development of Taiwan-based Taiwanese cuisine, this thesis presents few of my Fujian-based observations and findings; nevertheless, this part of my fieldwork has strengthened my interpretation of the Japanese colonial-era historical literature and has clarified the origins attributable to some dishes that are regarded as representative Taiwanese cuisine nowadays.

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11 See Chapter One.
Consumers: Food-centered life history

To investigate the processes underlying consumers’ perceptions and consumers’ bodily practices, I focused my interviews on the process whereby consumers acquired cultivated tastes concerning—but not limited to—food preferences. Concretely, I conducted “food-centered life history” interviews with consumers. That is, I asked my informants to tell about their experiences of food, eating, and cooking from their childhood to the present. The interviews were kept to focus on details related to cooking methods, ways of seasoning, and descriptions of taste in order to capture the linkage between “senses of body” and actual foods. While centering on food, the topic of the interviews could easily expand into such useful topics as interviewees’ family background, education, and consumption habits. Interviews also touched on interviewees’ personal networks and political opinions, which would help understand the relationship between interviewees’ food preferences and their perceptions of nationhood, whether in terms of China or Taiwan.

To locate consumers with whom I could conduct interviews, I first contacted my pilot-survey respondents. By means of the pilot survey and personal networks that I had established in the above fieldwork sites, I was able to identify consumers of food with whom I conducted, in total, 24 in-depth interviews regarding their food-centered history. My selection of these consumers ensured that the interviewees cover diverse socio-economic status, generational status, ethnic background, and beliefs about Taiwanese cuisine.

I spent in total 17 months of intensive fieldwork: from August 2006 to February 2007 and from November 2007 to August 2008. During the first period of the fieldwork, I collected and studied historical literature widely and interviewed “key actors” to understand the culinary map of Taiwan comprehensively. Drawing from this knowledge, I selected my fieldwork sites and sampling strategy for restaurants and consumers. I also conducted a general-consumer questionnaire survey during this period through various channels, including restaurants, college classrooms, and random acquaintanceships. In the last two months of this period, I started to contact chefs of Taiwanese restaurants, either through introductions from key actors or through my unmediated visits to the restaurants.

During the second phase of the fieldwork, I spent ten months in Taiwan to conduct interviews and participant observation with restaurant owners, chefs, and consumers. Most of this fieldwork took place during 2007 and 2008, and while
staying in Taiwan, I conducted some follow-up fieldwork during the period from December 2008 to February 2009.