REWRITING PIGAFETTA’S FEAST
NATIONALISM, CLASS AND CULTURE IN PHILIPPINE CUISINE

Submitted by

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A thesis submitted in total fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Sociology and Anthropology Program
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

La Trobe University
Bundoora, Victoria 3086
Australia

July 2012
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A subsection of the chapter entitled ‘Agricultural Identities, Industrial Appetites’ has been accepted for publication as an article entitled ‘Eating Out: Reconstituting the Philippines’ Public Kitchens’ in the journal Thesis 11, Vol. 112, to be released in October 2012.

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To the faculty and staff of the Sociology and Anthropology Department of La Trobe University, especially my supervisors Trevor Hogan and Peter Beilharz, and my panelist Wendy Mee;

To the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia and Dr. Marlu Vilches, Dean of of the School of Humanities, Ateneo de Manila University;

To Christine, Jema, Jerry, Pam, Aris, Vim, Tin, Gary, Ate Mel, Ma’am Beni and other colleagues in the Kagawaran ng Filipino;

To Chris, Mary, Marby, Jobo, Tricia, Gloria, Prudence, May, Benj, Raj, Anjo and countless other friends near and far;

To my siblings, their spouses, and my four dear nieces who have grown beyond inches without me;

To Jose & Jovita Salazar:

Thank you for indulging this curiosity.
This study problematizes the manner in which Philippine cuisine is utilized to facilitate the formation of Philippine nationalism. By revisiting critical historical moments and rereading numerous texts affecting the production and consumption of Philippine food, it hopes to articulate how the struggle to secure collective culinary practice has only led to divisiveness instead of unification, contradicting the lofty ideals that accompany the ongoing and ever-shifting formation of the Philippines as a nation. The changing significance of victuals like rice and sugar since the Spanish and American colonial regimes underscores a series of shifts in the economy and politics imposed upon the archipelago. While the consolidation and standardization of food practices around certain staples may have been useful in creating symbols for solidarity, the same symbols have also solidified the supremacy of old structures of power passed on from centuries of colonial subjugation. The residue of such authority is scrutinized in two ways: first is through the examination of colonial and, eventually, state-mandated policies across the Philippines’ history and their long-term implications in organizing the economy, politics and social order of the country; and second, by surveying some of the more obscure and often omitted cultural elaborations that soften the oppressive expansion of many of these systems from the public to the private domains. The issue of collective hunger is eventually explored through the different ways in which the Filipino/Filipina bodies are signified culturally, how they are contained within the specific social and physical architectures connecting the sites of contemporary consumption and production—the home to the farm, the city to the countryside, the feasts marking religious, political and social celebrations to the creative expressions that console a population forced to sustain the elite’s excesses through the embodiment of hunger and suffering.
STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Joseph T. Salazar

13/07/2012
It is an oversimplification to say that it is the Aquino family name, hallowed by Ninoy Aquino’s sacrifice and Cory Aquino’s integrity, that the people responded to in electing Noynoy as the country’s 15th president. Surely P.Noy is as much Cojuangco as he is Aquino. And surely, there is more to the Cojuangco family than just Hacienda Luisita and all it represents. But, to put it in raw terms, perhaps P.Noy’s real challenge may not be to betray his class, but his clan.

– Conrado de Quiros, ‘Hyphenating Noy and Other Dilemmas’
REWRITING PIGAFETTA’S FEAST

NATIONALISM, CLASS AND CULTURE IN PHILIPPINE CUISINE
Fiestas are an integral symbol of the Filipino identity. It is that one moment in a cycle of passages when day-to-day realities are effectively antagonized, hardly causing any rupture or strain. People populate the streets but go nowhere except to witness a procession or a parade that puts everything at a standstill. The religiously devout would find no fault in the desecration of important rituals into spectacles, while skeptics and non-believers find themselves drawn into the rituals they would normally criticize. The sheer number of outsiders invited to partake of the festivities create a frenzied atmosphere where strangers are welcomed as friends. Young women who are taught modesty and simplicity are lavished with make-up and the most expensive of gowns to emulate saints, young gay men who were usually suppressed through ridicule would twirl batons and dance on the streets, men have license to get drunk without worry of scorn, the rich and poor mingle, and an atmosphere of bounty and thanksgiving is reaffirmed year after year despite the unremarkable economy.

It is in this cacophony of strangeness where feasts—unquestionably the centerpiece of the Filipino meal—are staged (Cordero-Fernando 1976, pp. 149-157; Fernandez 1988c, p. 6). Even though Filipinos partake in a number of these celebrations annually, the lavish meals during fiestas and other religious observances provide an interesting foil to the day-to-day reality surrounding a number of food practices. Families who kept tight budgets the entire year waste not only money but also time in an attempt to feed an extended group of family and friends. Likewise,
they indulge in the best produce to cook both well-guarded recipes passed from
generations and new culinary innovations in the process of being tested and refined.
In its 400-year or so history, fiestas became the public repository of how economic,
social and cultural influences have been synthesized through time. Early fiestas
during the Spanish period saw Filipinos enjoying food that were typically reserved
for Spanish households. Utilizing then novel proteins and time-consuming cooking
techniques, many of these dishes eventually make their way into the collective diet,
creating a demand for products that will occupy space in the shared consciousness of
what proper meals should be.

Filipino food already assimilated Indian, Chinese, Malay and Pacific flavors,
and, through colonization and different forms of movement, continues the
absorption of influences from other parts of the world (Fernandez 1988a). I
remember how squeamish I was as an adolescent when I ate tuna sashimi for the first
time. Two decades later, my 9-year old niece’s ability to hold chopsticks, and to
temper soy sauce and wasabi indicate how far Japanese cuisine has made it in the
Philippines. I recall a professor in the mid-90s hastily generalizing this to be the
result of the short-lived Japanese conquest of the Philippines during World War II
even though a bundle of other narratives presented itself at that time. Tuna, bananas
and nata de coco (fermented coconut jelly) from the Philippines have found its way
through Japanese shores and I imagined Japanese products coming here through the
same trade routes. Tokyo-Tokyo and Saisaki, two of the biggest Japanese restaurant
chains in the Philippines, were established almost four decades after WWII in 1985.
It was the year before the EDSA Revolt that unseeded Marcos and the period was
filled with strife as the police and military paid more attention to militant
demonstrators and political activists, ignoring the flourishing of red light districts
such as that of Malate in Manila which saw an influx of tourists, among them were
Japanese businessmen. The same period also saw an alarming rise in the number of
both Filipino professionals working in Japan and Filipinas being trafficked there
(Suzuki 2008). In the midst of tragic stories about abuse and hardships, I recall a few
modest stories of countrymen—neighbors, relatives and even friends of friends—who come home with a quiet fascination for Japanese culture and food. Some arrived with a Japanese husband or wife. They opened small shops, selling everything from second-hand Japanese electronics to sushi. And though these things from the humble entrepreneur to the clever sex worker had something to do with the accommodation of Japanese taste, those contributions are often overshadowed by the ascendancy of narratives that go back to the war, where concerns over the nation and its identity became paramount in protecting the physical territory marking it.

Filipinos reinvented spaghetti and sans rival, appropriated beschamel and cacao, and, thanks to new media technologies, discovered influences from the world over, even rekindling the flavor profiles of our Southeast Asian neighbors whose food, ironically, was more distant to us than that of Europe’s. Three years ago, I attended a town fiesta in Rizal where a friend’s mother served a conservatively spiced Thai feast of tom yum soup, som tam salad, pad thai noodles and chicken pandan, the recipes of which were developed after having gathered them online. Although the food was delicious, you could see the consensus among the guests baffled by the menu. ‘Nasaan ang litson?’ one asked. Where is the roast pig? It remains one of the stranger fiesta meals I have had in my life, shattering all my expectations of what fiesta food should be. Before that, I have only eaten Thai food in Thai restaurants.

The sense of strangeness that accompanies the experience of food is not new. Antonio Pigafetta, Magellan’s biographer and source of one of the oldest surviving archives of Filipino feasts, wrote about their initial contact with locals in the island of Limasawa. It was—and still is—customary to welcome guests with the best food that the community had to offer (Fernandez 1988b, p. 25). As the locals carefully gauged the intent of the visitors, they offered them a staggered feast. Food was brought in slowly: fish, coconuts, bananas and wine at first; and then rice, roasted pig and other food stuffs that were met with a strange curiosity marked by the awkward language used to name and describe flora and fauna in an attempt to make
it their own. I imagine the irony of locals trying to foster some form of camaraderie and brotherhood with the strangers, replenishing the energy these armor-clad men have lost after a long voyage at sea, only to be subdued and enslaved eventually.

Pigafetta’s narration of Filipino hospitality experienced through feasting is replicated in the Filipino experience in many ways. Whether it is the seemingly simple shifts in asserting tastes that force new ways of exacting pleasure or the more pressing maneuverings that result to colonial subjugation, the strangeness that ensues in the contexts where and when food is utilized provides a critical template in rethinking social relationships. That Filipino food is strange is perhaps best reserved for now as a truism I intend to rationalize as I go about this thesis that aims to explore connections between Filipino food, how its induction into the domains of Philippine high culture present various concerns that question the power and authority of the groups who monopolized the rituals and resources affecting the entire nation. I locate that strangeness in the incoherence of Filipino cuisine that enforces a sense of solidarity in terms of symbols but has yet to actualize concrete measures to ensure that the public is adequately fed. The same can be said about Filipino nationalism—conjured in the last century through countless musings which included food—and how it aided in liberating the country from the Spaniards and Americans, only to find itself ensnared into a more insidious labyrinth of commodities whose transcendence of borders ‘could provide the most productive orientations yet for emergent Filipino Studies’ (Campomanes 2003, p. 13). Here, I argue that the construction of the national cuisine emanates not just from nationalist attempts at unifying various cultural and regional practices together, but a cuisine that comes together as a cumulative reproduction of neocolonial processes privileging a select few and asserting that their culture stand for the entire nation. Mediating between an undernourished populace and a corpulent global economy are different Filipino elites who craft dreams of being and belonging as a means of wooing the majority of the population to become subservient to the dream of national unification. The role they played will be examined in light of a rereading of
the historical circumstances surrounding Filipino food, the texts that pertain to it, and how it has been inflected with a rhetoric that allowed for the establishment of processes that—contrary to the assertions of nation-making narratives—have amplified divisiveness rather than unification. Filipino feasts expanded beyond traditional fiestas and religious celebrations and into restaurants, informal gatherings and even into the kitchens and dining rooms of food aficionados, signaling how much Filipino food, culture and society has evolved. All these implicate how much notions of the good life, a healthy society and pleasure have become dependent on the syntax of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

Needless to say, the thesis hopes to articulate the connections, traditions and currencies of power embodied in Philippine food practices. At the core of that discussion is the problematic enterprise of establishing a national cuisine and the inability of its proponents to contextualize such a project in light of the experience of poverty and hunger. While the thesis is far from offering solutions, it tenders a critical framework for rethinking cuisine, shedding light on its colonial nature in order to examine how its appropriation in the Philippines contributed in structuring inequalities in Filipino society. Likewise, it hopes to engage western constructs of knowledge to dialogue with local Filipino culture/s. Because the pre-defined ideas encapsulated in tastes and cuisines are never appropriated completely, they also expose a number of fissures in imagining societies, and how local and regional Philippine cuisines and the identities they represent are marginalized.

A second objective is to articulate the ideological constructs aiding the formation of a ‘Philippine cuisine’. While this thesis is concerned in discussing food as a phenomenon in itself, it also uses food as a means of recasting how narratives of nationalism, class and culture developed in Philippine society. The nationalist sentiments reinforcing the current dominant culture of the Philippines remain a largely unexamined field. As a cultural practice, ‘Philippine cuisine’ is often defined as the intrinsic bond that unifies both a series of seemingly incongruent dishes coming from different cultural backgrounds and of the identities they represent. For
instance, Mercado (1976, p. 9) stitches together generalized racial differences—‘a Chinese-Malayan face, a Spanish name and an American nickname’—through an infallible and unified ‘Philippine cuisine’ that ‘[produce] dishes of oriental and occidental extraction’. The notion that there is a collective Filipino taste undermines the negotiations transpiring between different groups and the plurality that they work with to come to an understanding. Most of all, it implicates the centrality of the state and its anointed agents in managing the outcomes of food enterprises ignoring the significant role other identities may have had. Current scholarship on Philippine food is limited and often assumes that the nation is a sedentary concept from which notions of cooking and eating are derived (Cordero-Fernando 1976; Cordero-Fernando 1992; Fernandez 1994b; Fernandez 1999), distracting from the fact that these meanings of food soften the power of the elites who have benefit from such constructs of food. By focusing discourses that look at the multiplicities of sources for defining Philippine food, this thesis hopes to characterize the center as a means to construct the identity of smaller players, and magnify their concerns against the dominant concepts defining the culture and power structures of the nation.

Finally, this thesis aims to interrogate the plurality of ‘Philippine nationalism’ and its ‘cuisine’—whether the identity it symbolizes emanates from a diverse assemblage from both regional and international sources as is often emphasized (see Cordero-Fernando 1992; Fernandez 1994a; Fernandez 2000; Sta. Maria 2006; Tayag 2006), or whether it is just another tool for legitimizing widespread coercion that is meant to promote the pre-eminence of the state and its allied stakeholders. Although it is wise to mediate between these two positions, I would like to take the contentious cause of the latter as virtually no work has been done to push the scholarship on Filipino food to move beyond its descriptive attribute. By doing so, I hope to rethink Philippine food’s connections to issues such as nationalism, culture and class. The little scholarship informing this cause has forced the thesis to draw
from a multitude of texts and disciplines in order to demonstrate how control is latently exercised in the determination of local food customs across time and space.

The abovementioned objectives will be accomplished through a series of discussions structured around new ways of seeing how the upper class maneuvered Filipino food into a divisive culinary activity. The first chapter begins by scrutinizing the layered meanings associated with the term cuisine, and investigates its historic development especially in the manner it attaches to issues pertaining to nationalism. Its appropriation in the case of the Philippines can be examined closely through a survey of the existing literature on Philippine food studies. How is cuisine understood? How is it performed, ritualized and incorporated into the banality of Philippine life? How is it similar and/or different from dominant conceptions of cuisines from all over the world? These and other similar questions will be posited to expound the fundamental concerns affecting the seemingly futile struggle to popularize ‘Philippine cuisine’.

Implicit cultural negotiations antagonize the political and economic discourses of food studies, and are the subject of the next two chapters. The first of these chapters explores Philippine food during Spanish occupation and its role in altering Filipino taste. Starting with the ambiguous position of the dining table in the Filipino household, it attempts to narrate different historic and social tensions surrounding the dining table’s eminent position—how it affects the economics of the household and, consequently, that of society by altering the diet to revolve around rice, the cash crop fueling the Spanish colonial government’s operations in the Philippines. The third chapter moves towards the kitchen as the primary symbol signifying the disengagement of agriculture implemented in the countryside from the domesticity enforced in the confines of upper class urban households during the American occupation. Despite attempts to aggrandize agriculture as an important construct in defining Filipino collective identity, the shift in design of the kitchen represents a growing reliance on industrial food consumption. By illustrating the ambivalent character of agricultural policies in the Philippines, the chapter delves into the
fragmented consciousness separating the peasant from the elite classes—where the affinities towards the land and hard labor remain a decidedly important symbol of resistance and struggle for the former, and a source of ridicule for the latter. Framing this dichotomy in the context of the transitions from sugar farming to the rising demand for canned goods to the successful undertaking of local fast food restaurants at present, the industrialization of food practice spurred new cultures and forms of being that are dependent on both globally and locally structured class positions.

The fourth and fifth chapters explore the consequences of economic and social transformations through more concrete cultural practices. The fourth chapter looks at the historical development of cookbooks in their collective attempt to define a national cuisine. I will explore the construction of the modern Filipino identity through nationalism through the many recipes and dishes included in these cookbooks alongside the possibility that much of the cuisines they imbibe are, one, products of industrial and global waste; and, two, appropriated or loaned by their educated authors from dominant global culinary syntaxes that position colonial and neocolonial tastes to reproduce upper class control. The fifth chapter looks at representations of food in Philippine literature as an antagonistic source that forces the reconceptualization of the food experience. Whereas food and dining in the west constantly uphold strong representations of subjectivity through the sheer pleasure of eating (i.e. Proust’s madeleine in Swann’s Way to Dinesen’s lavish dinner in Babette’s Feast), the experience of food is far more abject in Philippine literature. The examination of these representations presents a pervasive contradiction against the grand ideals of the cookbooks examined in the previous chapter.

The concluding chapter implores how dominant colonial and global constructs of food practice render Philippine cuisine a static concept despite the many specific instances demonstrating dynamic and vibrant practices. I analyze the fossilization of local food practice within the frames of knowledge challenged in the preceding chapters in the hopes of reiterating how the existing structures of thought contribute
to Philippine food’s inability to move conceptually—that despite all forms of elaboration food is made to assume, it remains to be a symbol of control and oppression. Along this line of inquiry, the chapter problematizes Philippine identities through the everyday practice of food in an attempt to thresh out the historic threats of global consolidation on their legitimacy.

I have devised the chapters to progress historically from the Spanish occupation of the Philippines towards more contemporary practices to lend an accessible structure to a set of cultural practices that are variable and ever changing. While this was quite handy in locating specific events and moments chronologically—and would make the task simpler for both the reader and myself, my intention is to focus attention towards specific cultural features that mark the perpetuity of oppression and subjugation. Even though there is a chronological progression, I treat the chapters kaleidoscopically, imagining linkages between seemingly disconnected events and moments, and indulging the distractions of narratives, anecdotes and conjectures that permit me the reexamination of food’s banality as a naturalized construct concealing larger gesticulations of domination and authority.

The chapters move not only across time but also through space, across different sites affecting the journey of food from farm to table, and reconstructing the contexts that induce the movement of particular foodstuffs. It attempts to connect fractured sites of performative events and expressions enacted by a variety of actors to reimagine the multiple frontiers of Philippine life. There are obvious spaces like the dining table and the kitchen, their prominence resulting from the rituals of distinction and propriety favoring their utilization in any matter involving food. There are also attempts to reclaim marginal or even unnamed spaces like the ‘public kitchen’—a term I borrow from Pérez and Abarca (2007)—whose popularity has diminished as a result of being shunned by the compartmentalized spaces of modern domesticity but whose value remains vital in fostering alternative forms of solidarity and belonging. And then there are what I consider the cognitive
and affective spaces of the body, and the emotions, sensations and consciousness it embodies which I interpret as an equally, if not more, critical attachment in comprehending the architecture of public life. ‘If feelings are social’, wrote Bloomer and Moore (1977, p. 46), ‘so is the emotional spatiality of the human body, with all the meanings which find the expression along its boundaries, centers, and psychophysical coordinates’. The body illustrates how the physical and psychical forces determined on the collective level permeate the realm of the personal; becoming a receptacle, filter and sieve for policies and collective preferences that inevitably structures emotions and thoughts. In what way does the body, through the consumption and ingestion of food, reproduce and/or impede the physical and ideological design of the society we imagine and the order it asserts? How does one imagine and actualize his or her location, relationships and social standing in the existing order? What kinds of culture aid in this regard, and are they loyal towards the cohesion they are supposed to espouse?

To answer these questions, the thesis also moves across a variety of disciplines and fields to synthesize knowledge from different perspectives and make the connections between disparate subjects. Our familiarity with food has made it difficult to imagine food studies as its own systematic discipline. In a sense, the study of food has been left to the custody of different disciplines, each one utilizing food in a manner that is more concerned with their respective agendas. Beardsworth and Keil (1997, p.1), for example, note food’s marginal position in the field of sociology saying: ‘alongside the themes which, in various genres, occur again and again (stratification, work and employment, crime and deviance, ethnicity, gender, the family, etc.) you will not come across food and eating as specifically identified focus of interest. If such issues are addressed at all, they usually appear on the margins of one or more of the central themes’. Here, I oscillate between the historic and the literary; probe quantifiable economic measures and contemplate the subjectivity of things like oppression, suffering and alienation; and even eschew collective realities induced by media texts in favor of personal recollections as ethnographic materials.
Add to this is the burden of situating numerous food practices within clearly delineated national traditions. Cookbooks present national cuisines as signifiers of national practice, the performance of which stems from the seamlessness of how human ingenuity and determination integrate with natural, geographic and ecological constraints to produce a picture-perfect culture immortalized in postcards and glossy recipe books—all detached from struggle and conflict. A critical note in this regard is the interplay between regional and local variations, and how practices from the periphery manipulated the center’s policies and practices to create a culture that is more attuned to their concerns. While this was the original project and remains to be a critical concern, the characterization of the Philippine’s margins could not be accomplished without discussing the center first. The center, the hegemony, the dominant tradition becomes the main concern, and the articulation of its practices creates the constructs needed in order to ascertain the many ways processes of assimilation, subordination and variation can be reconstructed. I am attempting in this thesis to formulate a framework for rethinking Philippine food, and to dissuade it from undertaking the conventional path of situating cultural practice as the refined outcome of numerous social and political negotiations—one that is free from discord and is smoothly enacted. The analysis is inclined towards wide-ranging interconnections rather than linear and sequential comprehension. On one hand, this means wrestling with numerous policies and assessing its consequences in issues affecting the distribution and utilization of food. How is it produced and consumed? How has technology affected the way we eat? How has food become indicative of inequality and what are its implications on the grand project of nation building? On the other hand, I am also compelled to rethink the more intangible concerns that do not lend itself smoothly to discussions of food. Gender, class and race are pervasive motifs, and call attention towards the indefatigable ways identities are constructed and reproduced. How do they fit in? Or do they have a place at all? How are they represented in the collective level, and who speaks for them?
The work, in its entirety, persuades the rigidly conventional ideas of Philippine food studies to embrace new possible theoretical positions that expand historically and ethnocentrically constrained concepts of cuisine and culture. Originally, I intended to do textual analysis of media texts where national cuisines have been contested and argued. The past three decades saw an abundance of writings and media texts that made food into its own genre, however I abandoned the project momentarily in place of characterizing the center—and how the enterprise of the entire nation is defined through the decisions and choices made by a specific group. This study hopes to foreground the historical, sociological and anthropological discussions that make sense of how contemporary practices made to assume the identity of the nation are products of a social class whose power and authority emanates from the past. Philippine food and its association with nationalist efforts is much a problem today as it was over a century ago when the Philippines first confronted the question of nationalism. Not only did the last three decades see an emergence of texts that tried to congeal a concept of Philippine cuisine, it was also accompanied by three revolutions that have cast doubts on many facets of the country’s sovereignty. The idea that there exists a Philippine cuisine has always provided a foundry to re-imagine collective connections, and renew faith towards the nation. Despite food’s centrality in defining different social categories governing Philippine society, its legitimacy within the realms of formal knowledge often takes a backseat to other topics and issues. Themes such as nationalism, class, gender and culture have been made relevant across many disciplines that one is often hard pressed to take the topic of food as a central cultural concern. And yet, the same themes are co-opted only in relation to the political and economic structures of the west. Many books, that range from the likes of Schirmer and Shalom’s *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance* (1987) to that of Rodell’s *Culture and Customs of the Philippines* (2002), have left the task of interrogating collective identity and history through the broad strokes of political policy and not through the gestations of everyday life. How the struggle to make
sense of the everyday is not necessarily an attribute that one finds in the discussions about the nation.

This is ironic considering interest in the region now called Southeast Asia was amplified mainly through its cultivation of much coveted spices that were unable to grow in other parts of the world back then (Miksic 1996, p. 21). Spices such as cloves were exchanged for goods from nearby China and India to as far as Mesopotamia and Rome, enticing a vast number of empires to extend their domains in the region. The 5th century BC saw the introduction of religious and political reforms from India affecting the islands of Borneo, Java and Sumatra (Lach 1994, p. 572). The 12th century heralded the spread of Islam in the region, marking the entry of Arab influences across all aspects of social life. The coming of the Spaniards to the Philippines in the 16th century introduced not just Christianity but also the impending entry of European mores that to the region. Within these larger historic narratives are smaller but nonetheless significant narratives demonstrating food’s ability to shape human affairs and interaction. Each introduction in religion initiated a shift in eating practice that consequently molded tastes and preferences whose complexities overcome boundaries of time and space. Hinduism leaned towards strong practices of vegetarianism and the avoidance of beef, Islam made taboos out of eating non-Halal food specifically pork, and Christianity introduced a stern set of fasting customs and allowed for the inclusion of pork in the diet. The effects of these developments are vast and continue to stimulate interactions until today that can no longer be pinned down to a specific region. Vegetarian and vegan movements have been equated with many lifestyle choices—yoga being one of the most fashionable thanks to Hollywood and the machinations of lifestyle and well-being industries the world over (Irr 2005)—raising moral concerns towards the sustainability of meat industries. Meanwhile, Malaysia has recognized the economic opportunities in actively engaging the need to supply Halal foods outside its borders in an attempt to bolster its modernization as indicated in its Third Industrial Master Plan (Ministry of International Trade and Industry, 2006). And over the years, Christianity’s fasting
rituals have drowned in a deluge of folk traditions from Brazil’s festive Carnivale (Lewis 1999) to Philippines’ morose self-flagellation and crucifixion rituals during Lent (Tiatco & Bonifacio-Ramolete 2008). All these examples point to the need of restructuring understanding of local polities in terms of debates affected by globalization. The knowledge imbibed in these examples transcends the politico-economic discourses that dominate the valuation of food. I use Southeast Asia deliberately in an attempt to reposition the understanding of its varied localities in relation to the homogenizing discourses developing in food studies as the region’s collective identity barely scratches the surface of what the west has constructed so far. The case for Philippine food, like the rest of the region, burrows more deeply as the minimal scholarship articulating its position has only integrated the country’s many cultures onto specific spheres that reproduce the political and economic systems of western thought. The cultural implications, as varied and contested as culture itself, remain enslaved by the rhetoric of political and economic development.
The story of Philippine cuisine has been told countless times that it is difficult to imagine it differently from the seamless narratives that connect human practice to that of the land. As one introductory book on Filipino food puts it, ‘good weather, fine soil, and waterways teeming with life provide the Filipino people with an abundant food supply’ (Sheen 2006, p. 4). There is an ostensible pride in the manner specific proclivities are presumed to have sprung from nature itself, and that relationship has become widely accepted that it is difficult to find texts—from cookbooks to political campaign propaganda—defiant towards the highly romantic depictions of the flawless union of culture and nature. For one, the abundance imagined has no grounding in the material reality that plagues a country beset ‘not only from an inadequacy of food supply, but also from the people’s inability to produce or acquire food’ (Chiba 2010, p. 524). Abundance is probably the last word that can be attached to the eating practices of majority of the country’s population and yet it persists and is naturalized, glossing over the nuances marking the severity of the country’s food situation. The constant propagation of Philippine food’s abundance dismisses the continuous power held by elite classes in curbing resources to their favor. Not only does it assign a high premium on a set of dishes

1 Statistically, the rate of households falling underneath the prescribed dietary energy requirement increased from 57% in 2003 to 70% in 2008 (Food and Nutrition Research Institute 2008). Similarly studies from the same government bureau point out that with increasing hunger plaguing most low-income households, there is also an increasing trend of obesity leading to bigger risks of heart disease, diabetes and hypertension in households with a higher income (Angeles-Agdeppa 2008).
corresponding to a specific ideal, it also writes off the inequality between the select few who indulge in such constructs of Philippine cuisine and their connection to the rest of the population whose concerns and ways of eating are not at all reflected in the meandering and capricious narratives about the food made to represent them.

A critical concept facilitating this problematic connection between food and the environment is that of nationalism. Nationalism became the overarching ideology that not only unifies cultural differences between different food practices. It is presented and consumed as a normal and conventional occurrence governing the structure and organization of Philippine life. For now, I define nationalism through Ernest Gellner (2006, p. 48) who describes it as an ideological structure that facilitates ‘a new social organization, based on deeply internalized, education-dependent high cultures, each protected by its own state’. If food emanates from a place of abundance that has structured ways of life around specific resources, nationalism is seen as a progression from the same roots tasked with the responsibilities of demarcating a specific territory where particular cultures and ways of life are imposed. In this regard, food becomes a critical signifier of the nation and offers a more tangible form of belonging. Filipinos have a shared pride for certain foodstuffs and manners of eating, and have made these the basis for a number of banal associations establishing their identity. As one journalist puts it:

You are certified Pinoy [slang for Filipino] if you think the star of the **handaan** (feast) is the **lechon** [roast pig] and you can’t wait to grab the crunchy **balat** (skin)! You like sweet spaghetti (**may Filipino hotdog pa yun na manamis-namis din** [that comes with sweet Filipino hotdogs]). You love “dirty” ice cream (**Lalo na yung may buo-buong keso!** [especially with chunks of cheese]). You eat the fish head con gusto including the eyes, **sinisimot lahat, mahhiya ang pus** [you finish everything, much to the cat’s shame]. You crave for **dinuguan** or “chocolate pork stew” with **puto** [rice cakes]. You **sawsaw** (dip) the **pan de sal** in the coffee! You eat **balut** [boiled duck’s embryo], **sarap na sarap sa paghigop ng sabaw** [savoring its juice], **at pagkain ng dilaw ng sisiw** [and eating the yolk of the chick] (which to foreigners is nothing but a disgusting duck’s embryo) (Santos-Relos 2010).
Cuisine and nation become interchangeable abstractions, equally reliant on each other’s mode of signification even though they both refer to material things derived from some form of human intervention—geographical boundaries are imposed upon the natural terrain, and the resources they contain are transformed into the victuals that fuel routines and help propagate a sense of a unified culture. It is in this imposing preponderance of the nation where an awareness of cuisine becomes demonstrative of how daily routines and ritual practice embody the manner in which identities as individuals and as a group is reaffirmed and confronted. And while it is reaffirmed obstinately, there are hardly any accounts of Philippine food that confronts the question of identity and grounds it in the more seething concerns of its material conditions. The primacy of nationalism has rendered innumerable stories affecting the development of food practice dormant and ineffectual.

This chapter, then, seeks to articulate the theoretical and historic framework to contemplate the many hidden histories and struggles characterizing the development of Philippine food alongside its peculiar role of expressing Philippine nationalism. At its very core, it struggles against the idea of a Philippine cuisine, showcasing it as a premature and derivative construct that has only managed to resuscitate old forms of class-centric, colonial and patriarchal control in defining the nation. I begin by exploring the nuance of the term ‘cuisine’, particularly the historic circumstances that have led to its popular usage, how it has been employed to structure social relationships and some of the contexts where it has been appropriated and transplanted. Its connection to nationalism will be examined next, and will concentrate on how the construct of national cuisines remain to be what Mintz (1985, p. 105) labeled a ‘holistic artifice’, legitimizing claims of solidarity and sovereignty while simultaneously concealing the transformation of food into an inconspicuous commodity. It then problematizes its application in framing tradition in the Philippines and examines the specific issues and concerns affecting its appropriation especially with issues affecting class and culture. In particular, it will
look at the manner in which culinary scholarship in the country has been an elitist discourse that has effectively disempowered a significant portion of the population.

THE GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF CUISINE

Taking root from the Latin *coquere*, ‘to cook’, the French word *cuisine* is an overarching term that originally denoted not just the verb from which it originates but also the practices involved in the preparation of food as well as particular area of a house or establishment where cooking was done. Its transformation into a fundamental concept has mainly to do with *grande cuisine*, which utilized styles that was completely distinguished from both domestic cooking and the aristocratic *haute cuisine*. Championed by the urban middle classes who were in dire need of cultural forms to assert control over other social classes, *grande cuisine* emphasized eating for pleasure. It was celebrated in posh restaurants around the 16th Century and paved the way for elaborate and intricate cooking styles that imbibed a number of important ideas to our present notions of cuisine (Mennell 1996, p. 204).

*Grande cuisine* was significantly transformative. Eating became an elaborate system of manners laden with symbolism. Apart from supplying fuel to sustain daily activity, cuisine articulated a myriad of important ideals and lifestyles. Partaking of pleasure on the dining table, *grande cuisine* distinguished French cookery as a more superior national activity as it ‘symbolized the cultural superiority of France over its more puritanical neighbors’ (Kiple 2007, p. 215; see also Barlósius 2000). Associating good food with the good life reinforced hierarchies between the life that the French aspired for, and while this inevitably created a sense of collective identity, it also became symbolic of class differentiation within their own society (Bourdieu 1984). As national and class features were becoming more pronounced,
the cooking techniques, dishes and flavor profiles associated with the different lifestyles formed a system that codified an established French cuisine in the 19th Century. By this time, *grande cuisine* took off and spawned an array of specialized professionals, products, tastes and food philosophies that led to the diversification of the market. Famed French chef Marie-Antoine Carême explored this diversity, often segmenting his cookbooks between the elaborate *grande cuisine* which figured prominently in restaurants, the more traditional but somewhat exclusive *haute cuisine* for the aristocrats, and *cuisine bourgeoise* which featured food meant for families with cooks. The judicious relationship between these cuisines influenced what was referred to as *cuisine classique*, which constantly contemplated the balance between flavor and stylish presentations.

Cuisine was also to become representative of movements in French cooking and responded accordingly to the impetus of modernization. For one, it consolidated tradition into a syntax of practices meant to simplify food preparation for identities situated in cities. Auguste Escoffier, considered the father of modern French cooking, pushed *cuisine classique* in the latter part of the 20th Century by simplifying and refining Carême’s previous work (Mennell 1996, p. 215). Simplification then became the foundations for *cuisine moderne*. It accommodated the need of customers whose fast-paced lives meant less time in restaurants. Escoffier’s adaptation of cooking techniques to adjust to new eating and dining habits spawned a new breed of restaurant chefs who hastened their service to satisfy customers. Giving considerable thought to speed in cooking, *cuisine moderne* began to chip away at the formalities and rules that once were thought to be universal and reduced cooking to a science. *Cuisine classique* and its predecessors were strict with what went well together, cooking times for different kinds of ingredients, assigning dishes for certain occasions, even the presentation of plates during service. Although such rigidity strengthened the codification of cuisine, it also destabilized the position of the chef. As rules were being formalized into a code governing both habits of cook and consumer, cuisine also imbibed the spirit of experimentation. *Cuisine moderne*’s
reinvention of cooking times played with the established rules under *cuisine nouvelle* or *cuisine de liberté*. By the 1930s, chefs were able to take liberty in repurposing the rules of traditional French cookery—even abandoning them completely—to advance cooking techniques responsive to a number of other concerns. Most notable is the shift in integrating taste with current knowledge about health and nutrition. Natural flavors became a priority in *nouvelle cuisine*, preserving the taste, color and textures of ingredients utilized, emphasizing freshness and lightness, and appealing significantly to the health-conscious.

These shifting movements and the sensibilities they represented effectively turned the term cuisine as a means to imagine links between food and place. French food did not only make apparent the connections between classes, it also located the geographies and contexts these classes occupied, highlighting the city and relegating the country to the periphery, effectively instilling layered categories of politics in the seemingly commonplace practice of cooking and eating. As early as the 17th Century, France’s systemic organization of styles and techniques and the meanings and lifestyles they imbibed spread rapidly across Europe, easily becoming the benchmark for other national cuisines in the western world (Ferguson 1998, p. 599; Ferguson 2004, p. 30; Trubek 2000, p. 3). The Italians reacted adamantly to the imposing stature of French food as it reached their soil (Pilcher 2006, pp. 65-66). The start of the 18th Century saw a number of Italian cookbooks denouncing French cuisine and championing their own, laying heavy emphasis not on techniques but on the role regional and seasonal variations played in determining the quality and value of food. This culminated in Pellegrino Artusi’s *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*. Described by Pilcher (2006, p. 66) as a cookbook that 'sparkled with grace and humor [thus] gaining a wide following throughout the country', it ‘invented an Italian national cuisine by unifying bourgeois society with regional dialects’.

With national cuisines gaining momentum, notions of eating affected the determination and protection of products within determined localities, attracting
nationalists to use food in inculcating legitimacy. Although the aristocracy’s inauguration into power has been decisive in determining the direction food has taken, their elimination has also been argued to be more pivotal (Elias 1994; Ferguson & Zukin 1998; Mennell 1996). The elaborate need to perfect cooking in France came with the implied assertion that these codes traverse collective use. And with a strong current of bourgeoise empowerment leading up to and following the French Revolution, the public consumed the same symbols of food and leisure that was once exclusive to the upper class. Ferguson points to Carême whose ‘culinary system so forcefully identified as French gave French and foreigner alike a means of imagining their country as community that brought together producers and consumers who were geographically dispersed, socially stratified and politically divided’ (Ferguson 2004, p. 81). Providing a practical system that strengthened commonality at the same period as the French Revolution, the coalescence of a French cuisine was pivotal not just in determining the fate of food but also in fostering the imagined connections between the people who consume it. So important was nationalism to be signified by food that on the eve of the first anniversary of the Fall of Bastille members of the National Assembly shared a meal on the Palais Royal, displaying fraternity and solidarity between the once divided clergy, nobility and commoner.

Elevating food from the mundane into a more complex structure that propels the ascendance of the nation, cuisines are likewise reinforced by other existing cultural institutions and practices. Cultural refinement underscores an important construct traversing different forms of control. Broadly defined, culture refers to ‘all socially located forms and processes of human meaning-making’ (Spillman 2011, p. 112). Following the premise set by Émile Durkheim (1964) that spells out the manner in which culture connects to the logical, functional and historical aspects of a society, culture in the social sciences has utilized the term to connote practices pertaining either to some form of material production or a symbolic system (Williams 1983, p. 91), and experienced collectively or
independently (Ritzer & Goodman 2004). The interplay between material objects and the different significations they embody result to the manner cognition and perception is shaped. Language becomes the primordial symbol aiding the creation, reproduction and preservation of knowledge, emotions and beliefs. Likewise, the transmission of objects and concepts between individuals and societies enforce the normative characteristic of culture where similarities are oftentimes upheld and deviations are suppressed. Cultural features relevant to a particular society are made known through the pervasiveness of objects and symbols across a wide cross-section, or, in the case of cuisine, through the influence of a select few who make their ideas, opinions and tastes as the implicit standards for the rest of society to follow.

Cuisine derives its persuasive power from what Ray (2008, p. 260) calls the ‘double orality [of] taste and talk’. French and other European cuisines established themselves not only through the efforts of exclusive food practices but also through different language systems facilitating debates and discussions on why and what tastes should be idealized. As cultural practice, cuisine transforms material object into an invasive symbol where the concerns of a select few are forced upon the rest of society. In France’s case, Ferguson (2004, p. 83) cites the role gastronomic writing played in transforming ‘food into cuisine, eating into dining’. Food’s development in this manner encapsulates a series of fundamental relationships imperative in the cooptation of modernity. Mentioned a while back was how it has redefined the boundaries of food-related practices and behaviors where speed and efficiency is prioritized in restaurants to accommodate a growing number of clientele distracted by the fast-paced city life. Likewise, the very presence of the restaurant obscured distinctions between private and public arenas, and demonstrated the role of commerce in partaking of something as private as a meal in a site so ostensibly public.

with hegemonic ideology. Culture, for Adorno and Horkheimer, cultivates a false reliance on the products of capitalism to satisfy basic human needs. They assert that because culture reproduced through media are programmed to cater to the widest cross-section of society possible, many media texts lost its grip on providing the traditional functions culture once served and have instead provided convenient forms of standardized pleasure. Culture turns into an ideological apparatus detaching the audience from their own impulses and thoughts, and substituting in its place standard ideals convincing them to participate heavily in consumption. ‘The most intimate reactions of human beings have become so entirely reified, even to themselves, that the idea of anything peculiar to them survives only in extreme abstraction: personality means hardly more than dazzling white teeth and freedom from body odor’ (Adorno & Horkheimer 2002, p. 136).

Food indicates the presence of a culture industry bearing the standardized symbols of privilege, gender and even the nation. The connection between producer and consumer—signified by the dynamic between writer and reader—becomes exemplary of the major intervention of capital in how day-to-day activities were to be carried out. The food writer and recipe book author cultivates something so abstract as taste into a veritable set of concrete practices for the reader’s literal and figurative consumption. Acting on behalf of the producer and his/her product, the food writer transforms necessity into a commodity prized not just for its function but more for what it represents. Food is not just sustenance, it is also refinement that differentiates mankind from being merely just another organism, and a group of people from each other. Through their association with literacy and refinement, the nation and other concepts encapsulated by food become even more appealing. Writing elevated the once obscure and feminized activity hidden in the kitchen into the masculine arena of intellectual activity. Revel (1982) makes an interesting case for the pauper Carême who, after being forced into the streets to fend for himself, landed a job in a restaurant out of sheer desperation and produced not just food but a voluminous collection of recipes, menus and anecdotes historicizing French
cookery, prescriptions for organizing kitchens, techniques on how to present food on a plate and a lexicon of culinary words—both technical and descriptive—dictating the logic and structure of food practice even until today. Carême’s skill in the kitchen not only determined the outcome of French cuisine but that success owes more to his ability to write well that he ‘passed from illiteracy to literary mastery’ (Revel 1982, p. 247). This shift to literacy—literary mastery even—illustrates food’s transition into modern domains, providing a source of tension between society and the individual. Bridging the gaps between the fundamental, instinctive and reflexive need for sustenance and the more elaborated, structured and educated justifications of going beyond necessity, the food writer—whether chef or critic—becomes the quintessential figure of rationalizing food beyond vitality. As the need to stress subjectivity through preferences and choices is enhanced, so does the need to become systematically absorbed into a field of routines and behaviors elevated by a select few and made to represent the entire society.

In *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias (1994) illustrates how culture can be read as the systematic conditioning of collective human behavior that not only controlled decorum but also initiated notions of a privileged culture crucial in harnessing the power of the modern state. Elias asserts that shame and revulsion cultivated a culture of manners pertaining to a broad range of bodily functions from eating to defecating. For Elias, manners are constructed to illustrate the positive attributes of civility and refinement in opposition to the ‘barbarism’ ascribed towards other and lesser-perceived cultures. The culture of Europe lent ‘consciousness [to] their own superiority, the consciousness of this “civilization”, from now on serves at least those nations which have become colonial conquerors, and therefore a kind of upper class to large sections of the non-European world, as a justification of their rule’ (Elias 1994, p. 41). As they became more specific and cultivated a disavowal for certain aspects of human behavior, manners deemed crude and distasteful concealed the routines and habits of social life, creating an intricate
structure of social control and even self-restraint. Control transformed society’s latent infringement on personal domains, and restraint effectively indicated internalization of the discipline demanded by the state. Both represented an increasing need for rationalizing actions within an expanding social sphere whose development was propelled by population growth, urbanization and modernization.

The importance of food in defining the culture of modern society is best seen in functionalist ideas in the middle of the 20th Century that saw food facilitating the enactment of collective social functions. Following the lead of the likes of Durkheim (1964), Merton (1957) and Parsons (1951), food’s function in so far as society is concerned becomes analogous to fueling the operations of the population to perform a set of tasks vital to a given society. Owing to anthropology’s earlier output that focused on communities situated in places like that of the Trobriand Islands (Malinowski 1935), Papua New Guinea (Powdermaker 1932) and the East African Nuers (Evans-Pritchard 1940), the centrality of food production and distribution looked towards non-European and pre-modern contexts to show the evolution of societal concerns from worrying about survival towards the safeguarding of stability and cohesion. Because food is given a value that is more symbolic than utilitarian, the societies they represent are understood to be complete given their present structure and organization, and that the institutions and ideals that make one society more powerful than another as a natural development. By harboring this illusion, cuisine invokes the biological and functional representation of society to a fault as it undermines the capacity of society to accommodate change while remaining protective of the current status quo (Goldschmidt 1996, p. 511). By looking at food as a means to reinforce existing social relations, it becomes privy to the cooptation of urban identities usurping power that once divided the peasantry and the aristocracy. The rise of bourgeois culture marks significant changes in the form and dynamics of social relations and yet all these are homogenized under a set of assumptions based on a functioning concept of society, effectively concealing the conflicts that many of these changes enacted.
Taking into consideration the development of the term in the processes and circumstances enumerated with regards to culture, I define cuisine as the elevation and transformation of the once material and personal experience of food into a viable collective symbol that instilled social knowledge not just in the food consumed but the various cultural configurations it espouses, softening the harsh connections between—among other things—the land, its bounty, human skill and the processes that replicate tradition and the calculated attempts to creatively modify or challenge it. What was once a word that denoted cooking and the place where cooking happened, cuisine has now transformed itself into a complex language replete with symbols expressive of how classes, regions and nations are to be organized. It also expresses movements, the passage from an old era marked by savagery into one of civility, emphasizing progress in man’s ability. Food is no longer a need but signifies a refinement that maximizes the ability to make choices. The elevation of cuisine into a cultural practice not only championed the genius of people who partake in its preparation and eating, but also validates other fields of artistic expression such as literature and fine art.

CUISINE AND NATIONALISM

Working with the abovementioned definition for cuisine, I now proceed to discuss its connection to nationalism, whose meaning and significance alone will also take some time to unpack. The induction of culinary tradition within particular spaces, territories and nation-states enjoyed a multiplicity of processes with varying features and outcomes that it is impossible to pin down a singular monolithic concept for nationalism, let alone a national cuisine. Earlier, I touched upon a proposition by Gellner (2006) that looked at nationalism as a consequence of massive state expansion fueled by the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. The movement of people from Europe’s countryside into cities not only created new forms of social organization, but it also allowed for the expansion of state control
reinforced through numerous cultural installations such as a shared lingua franca, education and even, for the purpose of this discussion, cuisine. In this form of nationalism, the induction of a ‘high’ culture becomes an imperative that not only wipes out old hierarchical social structures but also serves as an inherent structure reorganizing society:

Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is a reality, for better or worse, and in general an inescapable one (Gellner 2006, p. 47).

Cuisine functions as part of the invention establishing the stage for the performance of bourgeoisie culture, reproducing their newly formed attitudes, values and aspirations through dishes, eating practices and other commodities. Gellner argues that nationalism is the only rational outcome of imposing industrialization into an ethnically and culturally divided society. Developing the need for a literate workforce, the state is compelled to produce a populace that can perform skill-specific tasks necessitated by the division of labor in a modern economy. Whereas agricultural societies created structures based on kinship and birthright, industrial and capital societies prioritized labor and market value, transforming these into critical symbols that embody the nation. By doing so, it suppresses the peculiar cultural practices that once distinguished one group from another, only to be replaced by the standardizing idiom of commodity exchanges. The state, proffering nationalism, only serves as the unifying and civilizing agent that structure hierarchies according to the levels of participation or commitment individuals or groups have towards production and consumption. Mary Douglas’s ‘Deciphering a Meal’ (1997) examines food as pre-coded messages implicit in the habits, attitudes and activities specific to a culture. The meal becomes a signifier of vital cultural markers and its significance is not derived from the opposition of
nature and culture, but instead on a series of meals that create a system of hierarchies, a sense of belonging and disenfranchisement within a particular society, and implicit negotiations across different boundaries. For Barthes (1997, p. 21), ‘the subject of food connotes triviality or guilt [exposing] a veritable collective imagination showing the outlines of a certain mental framework’, prefiguring notions of class and leisure in constructing tastes and preferences. He notes, for instance, the disjuncture in the manner coffee is advertised as a leisurely drink that effectively conceals the age-old knowledge of its use as a stimulant. The consciousness towards the value of food implicates the adaptation of human beings to modernity. As the concerns of nutrition and sustenance with an increasingly diverse range of behaviors expressed through food become increasingly blurred, the past in Barthes’s critique becomes an image which advertising uses to commemorate things such as aristocratic tradition or an idyllic connection to rural life, to sublimate sexuality, or to promote health and well-being.

Although these observations about the emergence of high culture is useful in framing how class consciousness enforced hierarchies within the nation, it does not fully encapsulate the development of both Philippine nationalism and its corresponding cuisine. Because ‘the emergence of nationalist thought was in part a response to the highly problematic role of the Spanish friar in at once ratifying and usurping a sovereign power whose origins were understood to lie in an extraterrestrial and suprahuman source’ (Rafael 2010, p. 345), the social structures indicative of power relations in the Philippines is only secondary to a religious order that reproduced itself in both rural and urban settings. Likewise, the industrialization and modernization of the country is not adequately expressed through the transfer of control from rural to urban centers where high culture has mostly been determined. While much of the discourse regarding this shift points to the Filipino ilustrado (the educated elite) as the forerunners of utilizing western enlightenment to dispute religious power (Aguilar 2005; Constantino & Constantino 1984; Cullinane 2003; Rafael 2010), their struggle only replicated the
sanctimonious character of religious ideology. Ileto (1979) even goes as far to say that the Filipino revolution against Spain—thought to have sprung from enlightenment ideals gathered by Filipinos who studied in Europe—would not be possible if not for the masses’ re-interpretation and subsequent subversion of religious symbolism. Concepts such as liwanag (light, reason), kalayaan (freedom) and kalooban (spirit, will)—many of which were critical in the dispersal of democratic ideology and the recruitment of revolutionary fighters—first appeared through formulaic prayers.

To this end, Hobsbawm’s account of nationalism provides another perspective on the matter. Locating its development ‘at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation’, Hobsbawm (1990, pp. 9-10) defines nationalism as an ‘invented tradition’ working on the ‘principle […] that the political and national unit should be congruent’. The nation—just like religion, cuisine, education and other forms of cultural elaboration—is interpreted as forming part of a set of practices administered by specific values and regulations of a symbolic nature. And like symbols that need to be grounded in specific referents, the tradition of nation-building finds roots in responding ‘to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which they establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition’ (Hobsbawm 1983, p. 1). The fervor of religion that fostered a sense of commonality during the Spanish period can be seen in the manner nationalism is championed as an uncontestable feature governing the enactment of ‘Philippine’ culture. Thus nationalism, as a sanctioned and enforced ideology of the state’s hegemonic order, not only reinvents what is already in existence to induce social cohesion, it utilizes change as a means to impose ways of living that in no way reflect how majority of people think, further inducing division in the process.

The same remark can be observed with national cuisines. Ferguson (1998, p. 600) notes that ‘modern gastronomy enriched the social order by exacerbating those distinctions’. Citing the example of French cuisine, she looks at nationalism as a
force capable of transposing what are usually specific and even exclusive food practices into aspirational collective activities and eventually normalized in the routines and rituals of public life. Like the example of Carême discussed in the previous section, national cuisines are formed only in part by food, and, to a greater extent, by writing. The formalization and dissemination of knowledge and information about the food habits of a collective society come from a decidedly exclusive and almost unassailable authority that determines the form and function of the nation itself. By inducing desire for specific victuals and commodities, the enterprise of codifying food into a systemic practice

presupposes a different order of consumption inasmuch as the cultural product in question is at one remove from the base product—the work performed, seen, or heard and, in this instance, the food prepared and consumed. These culinary texts of indirection were indispensable for the gastronomic field because they stabilized the ephemeral culinary product within a network of nonculinary discourse and because they redefined the culinary as broadly cultural. Texts, both instrumental and intellectual, are therefore critical in making food what Mauss identified as a “total social phenomenon”—an activity so pervasive in society that, directly or indirectly, it points to and derives from every kind of social institution (religious, legal, and moral) and every type of social phenomenon (political, economic, and aesthetic) … To turn singular food events into a veritable cultural configuration, to transform a physiological need into an intellectual phenomenon, dictates powerful vehicles of formalization and diffusion. The gastronomic writings that proliferated over the 19th century supplied the mechanisms that brought the culinary arts into modern times (Ferguson 1998, p. 600).

In this light, national cuisines can also be defined as a collection of food-related activities meant to actualize the presence of the nation. It is not exclusive to enumerating dishes and styles of cooking alone, but also utilizes all available avenues of cultural expression to anchor food and other symbols of the state in place. Like the nations that supposedly own them, cuisines are by and large categorical imperatives that impose a compelling mandate eradicating existing differences in lieu
of strengthening an imagined sense of belonging. The declaration and recognition of sovereignty is never enough, and a national ideal has to be constantly reiterated if only to consolidate the state’s efforts at maximizing its economic potential and minimizing the confrontations brought about by social differences. To this end, national cuisines project the solidarity the state needs to quell disparity. National cuisines point out a seemingly irrevocable connection between individual and the land, implying a group’s immediate affinity towards their material environment, to the natural world, to geographic milieus and the products derived from them. Many of these connections—because they are material in themselves—offer problematic foundations: Hainanese chicken rice is supposedly one of Singapore’s national dishes and yet its name is derived from a Chinese province, halloumi is contested by Cyprus and Greece, the pavlova is disputed by Australia and New Zealand, potatoes came from the Americas and yet the Irish and the Poles have a stronger affinity to it. Cuisines fail to ignore how the same things have navigated across oceans and continents in different times. Their movement contributed to the changes that have made it difficult—if not impossible—to compartmentalize them within the clear boundaries of the nations that were meant to contain them.

Despite its undeniable mobility, the practice of containing food within boundaries is a persistent trope in this arena. Currently, both the abstraction of food as art form and its transformation into a sellable set of products (evidenced by the agglomeration of industries from agriculture to tourism) draw interesting arguments towards the valuation and appreciation of food in terms of national imaginaries. Consider for example how the Observer Food Monthly’s Top 10 cookbooks of all time are imbibed with titles attaching food to place:

2. French Provincial Cooking, Elizabeth David (1960)
5. Roast Chicken and Other Stories, Simon Hopkinson and Lindsey Barcham (1994)
National cuisines do not necessarily foreground the experience of belonging. Instead, it only strengthens exclusivity and instigates a sense of ownership over resources and processes that are broad and encompassing. The nation becomes cuisine’s most important attribute that the food becomes only secondary: ‘For most part, a national cuisine is simply a holistic artifice based on the foods of the people who live inside some political system, such as France or Spain’ (Mintz 1996, p. 104). Historically, the development of national cuisines has become advantageous to the establishment of modern identities in the west. By rewarding individuals who advocate cultural practices aligned with industrialization and the dispersal of commodities, it creates a condition that downplays linguistic and cultural disparities, and insists on their unification through commonalities that are often derived from the enforcement of the dominant group’s culture. Revel’s (1982) glorification of Carême, whom he described to have epitomized the fusion of high and low class cooking may be interpreted as a unifying symbol, but it also emphasizes the superiority of new forms of education and skill which were mostly available to the elite classes struggling to maintain and cordon off their position in French society.

The composition and scope of the elites determining the national cuisine in Italy has also demonstrated the manner in which cuisine has become an apparatus that simultaneously promotes solidarity while closing off privilege for the people who have determined the terms of how different individuals were to become unified. Castellanos and Bergstresser (2006) maintain that despite almost a century and a half of nationalism, Italian cuisine is still exemplary of old means of control and subordination. Looking at the manner in which Italian food navigates through the political mold of the newly constituted European Union, they assert that Italian
nationalism still rests on a pronounced penchant for cosmopolitanism now strained by a new set of developments:

The risks to cosmopolitan identity come through the realization of the negative aspects of modernization—Europe is not the utopia many Italians thought it would be. These risks have concurrently led to the emergence of a new form of nationalism [wherein] foods increasingly represent not the values of home, family, and women, but the values of consumerism (Castellanos & Bergstresser 2006, pp. 196-197).

Following Hobsbawm (1990, p. 11) who describes nationalism as a top-heavy concept containing ‘official ideologies of states and movements [that] are not guides to what it is in the minds of even the most loyal citizens or supporters’, I argue that cuisine's attachment to the nation is not experienced through belonging per se but through an affective attachment towards the new culture, its corresponding commodities and the people who can afford them. The processes leading to this are multiple and inextricably interconnected, and its transformation in the west has been documented extensively (among them are Mathias & Pollard 1989; Mott 1973; Rostow 1960; Wagner 1994). One of the overarching characteristics affecting the connection between nationalism and the significance of commodities is best described by the changing value of labor. If in the past a significant amount of labor was directed towards the production of food, the evolution from foraging into agricultural and industrial societies represent a marked transition in the manner labor is utilized. Technological changes have allowed for the reduction of human efforts at food production, replacing this with an evident dependence on, among other things, energy-dependent tractors, sophisticated irrigation techniques, even engineered organisms. The significant reduction of labor costs concentrated agricultural wealth on a select few with access to capital. They, in turn, have a hand in determining food prices and the value of labor, leading into a historically unprecedented competition for jobs the wages of which will ingrain the dependency on commercial production further.
These transitions have effectively situated food as a commodity, illustrated by the growing disparity between its production and consumption. While the attention of economics since Malthus focused significantly on improving production to generate food supplies for an ever-increasing population, ‘the existence of widespread malnutrition in the modern world indicates that many food systems are not performing adequately, [where] in many cases the immediate problem is distribution, not production’ (Bodley 2008, p. 127). With a significant amount of food production oriented towards selling rather than subsistence, the higher value assigned to food is a result of its use as a commodity rather than a source of sustenance. For instance, W.H. Friedland’s (1984) work on commodity systems analysis highlighted a number of significant factors from how labor organization to marketing affected the production of commodities, showcasing a vast array of analytical links whose connections are almost invisible to consumers who probably know more about making mayonnaise from scratch as opposed to the social and cultural conditions involved in transporting eggs and oil to store shelves. Despite the dramatic growth of awareness towards fair trade practices, organic farming and locally produced food, the standards and regulations are often contested leading to a misunderstanding between regulatory definitions and consumer expectations, further concealing the complexities of food production. Case studies such as that of M.T. Friedland (2005) on the United States, and Louden and MacRae (2010) on Canada implicate how ever-shifting industry regulations on labeling and certification have not only become tautological but also conceal unresolved issues such as that of genetic engineering and the limits to the amounts of chemicals allowed in farming.

These concurrent concepts of nationalism and cuisine have situated both production and consumption activities as critical determinants in validating the nation. However, such a valuation is only representative of western Europe where industrialization was relatively successful. In areas where industrial expansion has been inadequate, the shifts in social organization did not achieve an egalitarian feature. Validating organic and fair trade practices outside of the west reveal more
fissures and social inequalities that concepts of nationalism and national cuisines fail to address. For example, case studies on the Dominican Republic and Mexico show that

while the Fair Trade model [in the Dominican Republic] approximates ‘fairness’ and ‘equal exchange’ in which consumers and producers are in partnership via trade, this partnership can be illusory at best. In our organic case study [in Mexico], on the other hand, the terms of trade were not invisible but, to the contrary, excessively visible, as their rigidity and exclusiveness dominated and altered social relations and increased socio-economic stratification within small farming communities (Getz & Shreck 2006, pp. 499-500).

Addressing this dilemma, I turn to Benedict Anderson (2006, p. 6) who provides another concept of nationalism by defining the nation as ‘an imagined political community’. For Anderson, the adherence towards a particular community is brought about by the dire need to compose the community’s exclusivity, where a social group imagines itself alongside other nations and when the ambitions of conquest are no longer viable as they were during the age of imperial expansion. In this regard, nationalism is seen as a cultural artifact, one that has taken over the significance of kinship ties and religious integration marking social organization in European society. Coinciding with the demise of religious supremacy is the development of what he calls ‘print-capitalism’ accompanied by the rise of newspapers, novels and other forms of writing. Not only did these cultural forms condition a decline in privileged access towards print media, they were also instrumental in strengthening a sense of belonging. If Revel looked at the effects of literacy on subjectivity and utilized this to ground cuisine’s ties to modernization, Anderson beckons us to take a closer look at the material product of literacy itself:

The significance of this mass ceremony [reading] […] is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others whose
existence he is confident, yet of those identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned? (Anderson 2006, p. 35).

Print radically altered the way in which national affinities are characterized. By partaking in the ‘mass ceremony’ of reading, readers situate themselves within a specific context and period of time, assimilating roles and functions in the ongoing discourse of the nation—which defines itself through abstractions borrowing roots from an imagined past and a purpose from an equally imagined future.

Alongside this development is the continuation of European colonization through the transference of print culture in the state-making processes of its colonies. Looking at the Spanish empire in the Americas, Anderson notes how the bureaucratic functions familiarized through print capitalism facilitated a standardized language that led to ‘document interchangeability’, and eventually ‘human interchangeability’ (Anderson 2006, p. 56). Through administrative agents who crossed over different cultures and societies, Europe’s bureaucracy was effectively enforced in its colonies and/or former colonies.

The firmness and imposing stature of European systems effectively neutralized and homogenized the uncertainty brought about by different cultures, languages and societies. The so-called ‘pilgrimages’ of cultural bureaucracy not only fostered a common culture, they also elicited a sense of dis-ease towards local cultures, creating an unheralded sense of otherness for any process, activity or identity not emanating from Europe. Nationalism, in this light, becomes an imitative act of re-disseminating European ideology beyond Europe. The struggle to define other nations politically became dependent on the ability to mimic European nations, which by then were the only models for imagining the nation’s form and function. Anderson illustrates this through a number of North and Latin American political entities defining their sovereignty and independence through civic nationalist movements between the 18th and 19th Centuries. Even in ethnic
nationalist movements in polities undergoing decolonization utilized the same mold of dependency on print’s bureaucratic character. In Indonesia, the educated elite spearheaded the dissemination of nationalist thought. ‘Rome was Batavia’ so many flocked to bureaucratic centers where they ‘read the same books and done the same sums’, and where ‘the amiably competitive comradeship of the classroom gave the maps of the colony which they studied … a territorially specific imagined reality which was everyday confirmed by the accents and physiognomies of their classmates’ (ibid., p. 122). Despite the resentment brought about by periods of isolating indigenous culture outside Dutch colonial jurisdiction, the development of nationalism hinged on the intellectual’s abilities to penetrate the administrative power that was traditionally withdrawn from them.

If nationalism was a learned product necessitated by a need to display bureaucratic mastery, I interpret national cuisines to be an allied by-product of print culture whose primary function can be seen in extending the homogenizing power of the state within the confines of the home and the lived experiences of individuals. As cuisines transform material and personal experiences into symbols of affinity, national cuisines adopt the project of political kinship by functioning as the state’s vehicle in infiltrating private domains. It asserts the logic, language and presence of print capitalism’s bureaucracy at a personal level, reinforcing collective behavior through the transformation of food and its corresponding processes into signifiers of the state even in the most inherently private and mundane aspects of an individual’s life. The infiltration of the home by nationalist ideals embodies the many layers of control often overlooked in the enforcement of national cuisines. Between the home and the state, the bureaucrats wielding control over the state and the marginalized identities struggling to ease into power, and the colonial nation constructed in deference to the perceived pre-eminence of established western nations, national cuisines represent an intricately choreographed passage of transforming the necessity of food into expressions beyond its actual use value. This transformation is structures the pervasive utilization of different forms of capital, and becomes the
basis of determining the superiority of one subjective value over the other. In the case of food, ‘taste’ often connotes a broad range of categorizations that pit one set of preferences against another, creating hierarchies among different forms of predilections whose rationale may seem arbitrary.

Bourdieu dismantles this arbitrariness by identifying two kinds of symbolic and non-economic forms of capital that cuts across the seemingly subjective enterprise of asserting taste. For Bourdieu (1986, p. 422), it was not viable to comprehend the social world without recognizing the work of ‘capital in all its forms, and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory’. In this regard, he examines cultural and social capital as equally important constructs that may operate independently of traditional financial capital. Arguing that taste is an outcome of one’s ‘cultural capital’, he looks at the numerous forms of knowledge, skills and education as a means to confer status and power to specific individuals. Placing culture at the core of stratification rather than economics, Bourdieu argues in the book *Distinction* (1984) that the increasing disparity between cultural and economic capital further fragmented social classes. He notes that upper class hierarchies in France exhibit distinctive preferences or tastes according to the combination of economic and cultural capital at their disposal. Thus ‘high’ art (painting, music, literature, etc.) is generally attributed to professors and artists who go as far as embracing even the most avant-garde of forms to brandish the kind of culture afforded to them by different modes of their seemingly superior cultural exposure. On the other hand, employees representing the portion of the upper class having more economic capital generally imbibed tastes for more traditional art forms that corresponded to customary and accepted concepts of beauty, style and luxury.

Bourdieu also talks about ‘social capital’ which he defines as ‘the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 119).
Emphasizing the role social connections play in conditioning social inequality, Bourdieu utilizes social capital to elucidate the conditions leading to fragmentation within hierarchical groups. He shows that one’s networks and position within a web of potentially infinite social relations can be used to gain access to powerful positions, thereby conditioning the unequal distribution and partitioning of capital itself. Volume and flexibility became important attributes in defining the potency of social capital. He illustrates this through professions—such as law, medicine and politics—where social connections and networks bear considerable weight in enhancing the effectiveness of economic capital. More connections imply more possibilities to position one’s self in a hierarchical society especially if some credibility is lost or compromised. This structure emphasizes the flexibility of social capital. The inability to maintain a more varied set of social connections with the corresponding multiplicity of forms of cultural and economic capital becomes ‘vulnerable in the event of “credential deflation”, not only because they lack connections but because their weak cultural capital reduces their knowledge about fluctuations in the market for credentials’ (Field 2008, pp. 19-20).

Regardless of what form or combination of capital they own, the mobilization of economic, cultural and social capital to assert one’s standing comprises the processes underneath what Bourdieu refers to as ‘symbolic capital’. Defined in ‘The Forms of Capital’ as ‘capital—in whatever form—insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity’ (Bourdieu 1986, p. 255 n3), symbolic capital underscores the potent imposition of an individual or group’s taste as the objective standard whereby all other subjectivities and social positions are to be determined. The consciousness of the majority is crafted around the preferences of those with symbolic capital, deriving collective concerns and desires around that of the hegemony. For Bourdieu, the hegemonic alteration of the actions and self-perception in this manner constitute what he refers to as symbolic violence, where
the hostility is marked by an implicit and, therefore, more powerful form of manipulation, domination and coercion.

Honing Bourdieu’s notions of distinction, Mennell (1996) examines the specificities of stratification in different societies to show a widely disparate set of gastronomic traditions. Focusing on English and French cuisine, he illustrates how the English are dominated primarily by aristocratic tastes that revitalized traditional meals that continue to alienate peasant traditions. The French succumbed to the pressures of an emergent middle class who fused aristocratic and peasant traditions together:

Balances of power are not to be observed only between states. Wherever people are bound together through interdependence with each other, they have power over each other—sometimes very unequal and one-sided, sometimes rather evenly balanced, usually fluctuating to some extent, and often changing in a definite direction over time. The very fact that people are interdependent with each other means that they exert forces over each other, forces which shape not just their overt behavior but their tastes and the way they think about themselves and their activities (Mennell 1996, p. 16).

Expanding Marxist revolutionary critique further, Mennell looks at food practice as mediator between production and consumption. Identifying different modes of production, he examines control through a specific social structure that reproduces itself through material productions that tow the lines between a growing population and the constrained resources available. This dynamic forces the reorganization of groups and institutions, effectively regulating different exchanges within the economy. For Mennell, as well as anthropologists like Jack Goody (1982) and Marvin Harris (1985), taste becomes the signifier of a superstructure that manages the reproduction of ideology through conditioned attitudes, behaviors and perceptions rationalizing the validity of the existing structure and/or the need to depose it. While the installation of class ownership of production becomes implicit in these valuations, they depart from Marx and Engel’s (1969) theory of social
change by emphasizing that such changes occur through those in control of society’s production forces but also through shifting relations within a population, the technology they employ, the economy and even the environment.

Anderson’s linkages between print capitalism to bureaucracy exemplify the prevalence of cultural and social capital in configuring collective organization. If judgments of taste are determined by social standing, then the assertion of one’s taste constitutes in itself an act of social positioning, one that is doubly alienating in that it emanates not just from a place of control but—given the historic circumstances surrounding Philippine history—also replicates the violence of colonial subjugation. Access and exposure to the documented word and the people who control its production and dispersal, reproduced in varying forms and disseminated as widely as possible becomes the definitive sum of resources that have made the activity of learning the ropes of bureaucracy a rather pleasing and rewarding enterprise for the select few who benefit from it. Similarly, access to the resources, knowledge and meals pertaining to the national cuisine make nationalism equally pleasant and, therefore, relevant. By institutionalizing a common set of eating habits, it also created a hierarchy hinged on one’s ability to engineer the symbolic implications of one’s preference and make it assume a vital place in the activity of others.

DECIPHERING THE SOCIAL SYMBOLS OF FOOD

The past three decades saw the rise of sociological and anthropological writings about food and its symbolic significance to various ethnic, regional, cultural, gender, age and even national groupings. Mary Douglas’s ‘Deciphering a Meal’ (1997) examines food as pre-coded messages implicit in the habits, attitudes and activities specific to a culture. The meal becomes a signifier of vital cultural markers and its significance is not derived from the opposition of nature and culture, but instead on a series of meals that create a system of hierarchies, a sense of
belonging and disenfranchisement within a particular society, and implicit negotiations across different boundaries.

For Roland Barthes (1997, p. 21), ‘the subject of food connotes triviality or guilt… (exposing) a veritable collective imagination showing the outlines of a certain mental framework’, thus making it possible to understand food in the same vein that Levi-Strauss looks at it as a semantic system. However, Barthes looks at the multiplicity of meanings in more contemporary food systems, prefiguring notions of class and leisure in constructing tastes and preferences. For example, he notes the disjunction in the manner coffee is advertised as a leisurely drink that effectively conceals the age-old knowledge of its use as a stimulant. The consciousness towards the value of food implicates the adaptation of human beings to modernity. As the concerns of nutrition and sustenance with an increasingly diverse range of behaviors expressed through food becomes increasingly blurred, the past in Barthes’s critique becomes an image which advertising uses to commemorate such things like aristocratic tradition, idyllic connections to rural life, sublimations of sexuality, and the promotion of health and well-being.

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) embraces the dilemma of modernity by pointing to specific social class positions harnessing the structure informing notions of contemporary taste not just in food but also in a vast array of commodities. Consumption, for Bourdieu, is ‘an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code’ (Bourdieu 1984, p. 2) that is acquired through education and other strategies implicated in modernity’s obsession towards the accumulation or preservation of economic and social capital.Aligned with Marx’s conception of historical materialism, Bourdieu sees the instatement of one’s taste as tantamount to the instatement of one’s class. Thus, the food preferences of different societies are determined not by particularities in culture but by the structures of control threading different periods of a particular society together. In Consuming Geographies, Bell and Valentine (1997) explored how food preferences work across different notions of scale from the level of the body, into
communities, regions, nations and into the global sphere. The specific choices made by different persons on an individual scale progress into larger forms of belonging mapping out how ‘communities are about exclusion as well as inclusion [where] food is one way in which boundaries get drawn, and insiders and outsiders distinguished’ (Bell & Valentine 1997, p. 91).

However, principles of scale do not follow a processual continuity and often play into varying levels of interactions that differ from one culture to the next. Jack Goody (1982) uses the word ‘cultural’ loosely to describe the inherent rise of man-made responses affecting the manner in which nutritional aspects of food habits are determined. Food practices indicate a propensity to ignore food’s capacity to respond to nutritional needs in favor of its power to indulge pleasures reflective of class positions spread across different societies. Culture’s departure from nature is not totally warranted as the establishment of the former has had serious implications on the latter. Surveying a vast array of food systems from the tribes of Ghana to the industrial societies of Europe, Goody illustrates how the differentiation of cuisine is not a consistent feature in various societies despite sharing an intricate dynamism that aided the development of food preference in diverse ways. For Goody, the ability of many ‘Third World’ societies to resist homogenized and industrialized food reflects the need to substantiate historic developments specific to a culture. Looking at aversions instead of preferences, Marvin Harris (1985) grounds tradition towards more specific interplays of cultural and historic nuances underscoring the reasons why certain foodstuffs such as beef, pork, milk, dogs and insects hold different meanings in different contexts. For instance, he explains that the rationale behind the avoidance of beef in India cannot be simplified as the mere product of religious mandate. While India’s staggering bovine population could potentially contribute to the country’s diminishing food supplies, Harris implicates class, economic and nutritional efficiency, and ecological sustainability as equally critical factors in shaping the symbolic value of the cow in India. In contrast, Harris looks at beef consumption in the United States whose growth was spurred on by a
topography that allowed for more grazing land, and a middle class market that readily consumed hamburgers and other symbols of an industrialized lifestyle (Harris 1985, pp. 109-129).

Sidney Mintz’s *Sweetness and Power* (1985) expands the complexities of scale by tracing the transformation of sugar from a spice that expressed aristocratic novelty into a major global commodity and dietary component using accounts narrating paradoxes of industrial capitalism, peasant labor and neo-colonialism. Looking at the interconnections between different societies as a strategy to develop a more complex set of social relations, Mintz sees sugar as expressive of the disjunctured experiences of modernity in societies where it is both produced and consumed. While traditional historic discourse pegs the origins of industrial capitalism in Europe, Mintz (1985, p. 47) demonstrates that the growth of modern institutions in Europe would have not been possible if not for ‘the synthesis of field and factory’ in Caribbean sugar plantations. As England emancipated its peasant class through the consumption of sugar and the lifestyle it represents, Mintz is quick to point out the opposite experience in the Caribbean where sugar is produced. Although situated in an agricultural setting, the labor of plantation workers and the demands they respond to is more reflective of an industrial life but without the leisure afforded European industrial laborers. In calling attention to the rise of sugar as a global commodity, Mintz illustrates the political-economic control exercised by production shareholders (plantation owners, merchants and refiners) and their infringement upon areas beyond the traditional geographic boundaries they occupy. The condensation of space becomes an integral theme in Mintz’s appraisal of English food and the society it represents. Their economic monopolies not only swayed political decisions within their own respective localities but also impacted on the lives of the communities from where cheap labor is sourced.

The construction of notions of inclusion and exclusion also pervade into varying patterns of socialization. Belasco (2007) laments how old countercultural strategies from the 1960s, that spawned notions such as organic, local and natural
foods, was incorporated into the rhetoric of capitalism. The contributions of countercultures and their marginal ideals not only steered food discourse to embrace differences and pluralities, it also politicized the meanings of food in varying ways. Feminism and gender studies disputed the engenderment of food practices, questioning the premise that ‘masculinity as he who fucks, femininity as she who cooks’ (Gamman & Makinen 1995, p. 15). Critical here is the revaluation of women’s role in the domestic sphere, particularly in the kitchen which is seen as an important site for socialization and identity formation (Duruz 2002; Shapiro 2004; Supski 2007; Theophano 2003). Femininity has been relegated to the kitchen, ‘male cooks are, conventionally, public cooks’ (Coxon 1983), and are viewed to have been more successful at translating domestic chores into public enterprises.

Despite the many shifts influenced by industrial change and the assertion of fundamental rights that ideally should reconfigure the meaning of dominant gender roles, gender identities remain contained by the patriarchal language they seek to eradicate. American cookbooks in the 1950s grappled with processed and packaged foods fueled by post-war industrialization, they also reasserted traditional gender roles in new configurations of domestic ideology (Neuhaus 1999). This tension is dramatized well in queer studies that examine food practices in relation to LGBT identities. Carrington’s ‘Feeding Lesbigay Families’ (2008) illustrate the difficulty of displacing dominant gender roles in households of same sex parents. Along with non-heterosexual couples’ struggle to provide food and create strong foundations for the rearing of children comes the need to look for models that establish the legitimacy of alternative parenting schemes in contexts where they are frowned upon (Ehrhardt 2006; Kates 2002; Probyn 1999b).

Gender’s incursion into food studies represents a significant turn in exploring body image constructions by scholars who triangulated connections between food, body and religion. Bynum’s ‘Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women’ (1985) looks at fasting and feasting in the lives of female medieval saints. Using religious symbolism to concretize gender-
related notions of embodiment, she challenges modern interpretations that saw female medieval practice of fasting and abstinence as the pathological and misogynistic consequence of patriarchal control. Likewise, Lester’s ‘Embodied Voices: Women's Food Asceticism and the Negotiation of Identity’ (1995, p. 214) concludes that ‘female religious ascetics of the medieval period were not anorexics and bulimics’. Using food for constructing a different set of spiritual meanings from the contemporary connotations of anorexia and bulimia that is fixated on weight, size and other determinants of body image, this study injects insight at how overproduction and consumerism has affected the shift from the religious significance of fasting and abstinence into the pathological connotations of anorexia and bulimia (see also Bordo 1997; Brumberg 1997; Campos 2004; Gard & Wright 2005; Sobal & Maurer 1999). The image and construction of women’s selves become antithetical to the social selves being reproduced in capitalist societies, and thus offers scathing remarks on the commodification of things and human beings alike.

The commodification of women articulates itself well in Ecofeminist discourse, a feminist strand that has reinvigorated feminist critique into a mass of responses demonstrating the extent to which commodification has renewed old patriarchal dynamics in modern societies. Ecofeminism poses hostile challenges towards questions of sustainability and the ethical concerns surrounding a broad range of issues from women’s health to animal rights. The underlying consideration unifying ecofeminist thought is the centrality of the woman’s body in her exclusion from the spheres of cultural thought. Adopting Michel Foucault’s principle of normalization where the structure of a society is reinforced through a collection of strategies aimed at maximizing social control and minimizing the expenditure of force through discipline and punishment (Foucault 1977), the objectification of the female body as a contiguous entity becomes the antithetical mechanism reinforcing the supremacy of the mind—which has become an imperative symbol of masculinity. For many ecofeminists, the reasons invoked in seemingly natural
Behaviors are but normalized processes cultivated over time through disciplinary measures. Reproductive labor becomes both material and discourse to the valuation of women who are, arguably, enslaved by men. The experience of gender becomes analogous (but in no way equivalent) to class relations whose insistence on surplus and capital accumulation proves detrimental to nature and the environment. In as much as women are exploited as a natural resource, ecofeminists see nature and its species as exploited and feminized objects (Birke 1995; Donovan 1995).

Consequently, ecofeminists view different food practices as instilled forms of discipline and punishment upholding modes of objectifying women and species alike. Assembling a veritable list of essays, *Reweaving the World* (Diamond & Orenstein 1990) introduces a set of principles reflective of the feminist suspicions towards the emergence of ritual hunting and sacrifice in the procurement of protein. Focusing mainly on consumption of meat as the symbolic normalization of humans as carnivores, the anthology looks at the interchangeable reduction of animals into meat and of women into objects of sexual desire as symptomatic of a collective lack of agency in diminishing acts of violence (Gaard 1993; 2002). Adams (1997, p.45) applies this viewpoint in her critique correlating the overproduction of beef and mad cow disease stating that ‘the patriarchal worldview lodges itself in each individual consumer’. The lack of will to eradicate such dependence on beef becomes symptomatic of a more severe social disease. Increasing demands for beef result to more deplorable living conditions for bovines, contributing to an increasing number of physical diseases and sustainability issues that threaten both animals and human beings.

Ecofeminism also provides a model justifying the re-absorption of gender across colonial lines. Asserting that Western feminism consolidated the identities of ‘Third World’ women into one simplistic category (Mohanty 2003), food studies looks at the plurality of female and colonial experiences to challenge the structural and universal assumption of patriarchal control prevalent in modern societies:
What happens when this assumption of ‘women as an oppressed group’ is situated in the context of western feminist writing about third-world women? It is here that I locate the colonialist move. By contrasting the representation of women in the third world with what I referred to earlier as western feminism’s self-presentation in the same context, we see how western feminists alone become the true ‘subjects’ of this counter-history. Third-world women, on the other hand, never rise above the debilitating generality of their ‘object’ status. (Mohanty 2003, p. 67)

Discourses on gender reorient the way we understand social relations and collective identity formations. Lorde (2003) reiterates Mohanty’s position adding that much of the entrenchment of feminist ideology in popular knowledge becomes possible through the subjugation of other identities far more detached from masculine, white and class-centric domains, duplicating that which it seeks to dispute in the first place. She uses feminism’s acceptance of the plurality of cultural positions as a means to destabilize the homogenizing tendencies of the patriarchy. Offering a reading of Toni Morrison’s novel Tar Baby, Carruth (2009) relegates the centrality of food meanings in the novel to clarify how gender, class, ethnicity and ecology intertwine in the fictional conception of the islands of Dominique and Isle des Chevaliers in the Caribbean as the embodiment of consumer appetites that grapple with both local and global cultural transition. Proposing a more concrete material knowledge on the matter, Shiva (2006, p. 183) argues that the developmental ideology spreading across ‘Third World’ societies is ‘an extension of the project of wealth creation in modern western patriarchy’s economic vision’. She demonstrates how women in ‘Third World’ societies collectively participate in an array of agricultural work that ranges from deciding what to plant down to the most complex of tasks such as the utilization of available resources for food and shelter. Underlying such participation is the ability to respond to demands of the habitat, nurturing not just the family and community but also the environment they inhabit. Shiva sees the dismissal of traditional labor in favor of what she refers to as a set of ‘reductionist’ industrial and scientific processes: the meaning of labor shifted from
simple subsistence into a complex wage-oriented system favoring homogeneity, efficiency and profit, and insensitive to the diminishing the ability of local societies and the individuals in it to decide how to allocate resources for their needs.

As a number of gender-oriented writings illustrate, challenging the dialectical construction of gender as well as other combinations of ownership and disenfranchisement provide an opportunity to identify the many symbols that are reproduced to reinforce difference. The hierarchies identified by these studies provide a textured and layered means of incorporating a variety of disciplines, approaches and even texts to critique the oppressiveness of ideology that would otherwise be difficult to infiltrate.

THE NATIONAL CUISINE OF A SOCIAL CLASS:
MODELS FOR INTERROGATING PHILIPPINE CUISINE

The enforcement of a set of preferences for food and other cultural practices culminates in an important feature of nationalism that I seek to elucidate through the exploration of Philippine cuisine. Nationalism aids the process of state-formation at whatever cost. In *Economy and Society*, Weber (1978) famously established how violence—from its physical forms down to its utilization to realize hegemonic ideals—is legitimized through the state to assert authority over a specific territory. The state’s authority, writes Weber (1978, p. 54), ‘upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order’. The infliction of violence is obvious in the deployment of institutions like the police and military, but it must also be noted how it is concealed and rationalized in the other systems that function as a form of embedded knowledge coordinating the order desired by the state. The assertion of a national cuisine emanates from the same form of violence upholding the state’s territorial anxieties. The prescription of common ingredients, cooking methods and dishes provide another avenue aiding the internalization of consumption habits that compel day-to-day habits and attitudes to reflect state ideals. Mely Tan’s ‘Chinese Dietary Culture in Indonesia Urban
Society’ (2002) demonstrates how contemporary Indonesian culture—assimilating Islam as the state’s official religion—has marginalized traditional Chinese-Indonesians for eating customs revolving primarily around the consumption of pork despite a long history of incorporation and integration into mainstream Indonesian culture. The infliction of state-mandated violence could not be any more apparent in the relationships between two or more states trying to assert their ascendancy over each other. War has become the most prominent manifestation of state violence, and the devices associated with it have come to imbibe meanings relevant to food. Flanders (2001) illustrates how inter-state aggression caused confusion between air dropping bombs and food rations during the United States’ assault on Afghanistan after 9/11. Quoting a BBC report stating that ‘the United States is seeking to avert further criticism over the use of cluster bombs in Afghanistan by warning the Afghan people not to confuse unexploded bombs with food drops’, Flanders (2001) noted how the yellow casing of bombs were ‘hard to distinguish from the emergency food parcels wrapped in yellow plastic that U.S. planes have been dropping over the last few weeks’.

Flanders’ and Tan’s examples illustrate how the nature of the state’s monopoly on violence is not only oriented towards conflict but also encumber upon other problems such as ‘environmental pollution, depletion of the ozone layer, warming, and massive migrations of unwanted refugees’ (Matthews 1989). Inasmuch as the popular depictions of national cuisines present seamless and concordant food narratives, they can also be interpreted to conceal a number of risks and anxieties associated with issues pertaining to food security, nutrition and hunger (Harris 1978). The formation of national cuisines happened alongside the emergence of the modern nation-state, and thus represents complex changes to forms of economic, cultural, political and social organization centered around the will and decisions made by a select few elites who exert influence over society’s important institutions. This increasing complexity, however, harbored
very pronounced relationships of dominance and subordination, easily naturalizing violent interactions in the process.

If mobilizing symbolic capital legitimizes national cuisines and the nations they stand for, then how can the implications of such symbols be measured in the different societies where they are utilized? Answering this question compels a series of discussions with specificities that extend beyond the scope of this project. Focusing on the Philippines, I am keen to examine the power of print and its bureaucratic compulsion in a context where modernity is continuously reproduced in different institutions, forms, and other cultural practices. While it is necessary to survey the literature on the matter, I will abbreviate that task here for the sake of economy and discuss it in more detail in Chapter Four. For now, allow me to raise a few salient points regarding general themes in Philippine food writing to situate the important points that respond directly to the objectives of this study.

First, it would suffice to say that the scholarship on Philippine food remains limited and, at best, descriptive. The production of cookbooks whose efforts are attuned towards the need to standardize and codify collective food practice offers deceptive foundations. Cookbooks that first published as early as the 1950s have been reprinted countless times even until the present all epitomize the unrelenting problem of formalizing conventions. Enriqueta David-Perez’s Recipes of the Philippines (1953) is the first among these cookbooks and is considered instrumental in defining the direction of recipe writing in the Philippines (Fernandez 1996). The concerns of Perez and by other recipe book authors following her such as Daza (1969; 1992), Fabian (1969; 1986), Alejandro (1999; with Reyes-Lumen 2004) all emanate from the need to define local conventions against the rationalizing syntax that characterized American occupation in the Philippines. The struggle to define the dishes comprising Philippine cuisine became tantamount to measuring it against the scientific imagination that not only insisted on the linguistic utterances that they already established but also kept calculating risk against a number of insecurities that plagued American colonial rule. Not only did these cookbooks problematize the
conversion of indigenous weights and measures either to the metric system (kilograms, liters) and/or British system (pounds, gallons) or both, they also had to address issues pertaining to that of health and sanitation. As these cookbooks provide the syntax essential in consolidating practice into what is now regarded as the national cuisine, very few take note of how the same cookbooks facilitated the erasure and concealment of local culture.

To this end, I look at cookbook authors as the bureaucratic intelligentsia that Anderson (2006) identified as responsible for resuscitating colonial relations in the postcolony. As cookbooks incorporate the didacticism of U.S. colonial education in codifying recipes, they not only restructured local cooking procedures within the rigid and calculating space of streamlined home kitchens made popular and essential during American occupation, they also made local eating habits demonstrative of the influence and supremacy of the modern life it represents. Under this set-up, the culture signified by Philippine cuisine becomes a requirement to legitimize its identity. And because the same identity is streamlined within an interchangeable system of conventions best represented by its containment in a private domestic kitchen with its own language of culinary codes and measures, it also effectively downplays the uniqueness of cultural specificity by impressing upon Philippine cuisine the need to assume the structure and logic defining more popular food systems.

The dis-ease towards Philippine food cultures can also be found in far more discursive practices outside the field of cookbooks. Whether they are meant to introduce a set of recipes and lend them some weight, or whether they deal with food issues directly, a second strand of writings problematizing Philippine food shows how the knowledge constructed about food relapses into a fantasy where the system imagined is detached from everyday reality. That fantasy revolves around the stringent belief that Philippine food comprises a series of progressions emanating from nature itself. ‘Philippine cuisine began as all cuisines do’, wrote beloved Philippine food writer Doreen Fernandez (2000, p. 95), ‘with the weather, the
seasons, the sources and the particularity of place. From these came the food elements. Although the choice of these may seem arbitrary, in general an item is eaten because it is there, and has been part of one’s or one’s ancestor’s experience’. Everything—from the country’s Department of Tourism website declaring that ‘Filipino food is the [Philippines’] next tourist attraction’ (Buenavente 2009) to numerous food reviews—erases the countryside’s economic realities to preserve its unbridled connection to nature. Believing that food is bound to the land structures a series of implicit assumptions about the very nature of ‘Philippine cuisine’. It espouses that the cultural enhancements involved in elevating the transformation of resources into a pleasurable activity stems from a natural process. Food practice indicates the many social impositions and economic manipulations resulting from the romantic assumptions narrating how Filipinos collectively refashioned nature to meet specific human needs.

I use the term ‘food practice’ deliberately as I have yet to wrestle with the word ‘cuisine’ and its utilization in denoting Philippine food traditions. Again, I revert to Fernandez (2000, p. 95), who has been very careful not to use the term ‘Philippine cuisine’ throughout most of her career as a food writer, and it is only in this latter work published two years before her death that she makes a direct reference to a ‘Philippine cuisine’. Instead, she used terms such as foodways, cooking, food, and even taste to refer to specific antecedents that foreground collective practice, but she seldom referred to it as ‘cuisine’. Although she offers no explanations, her manner of appropriating the word cuisine to refer to collective food practices in the Philippines becomes indicative of the same attitudes that naturalize knowledge about the Philippines’ evolution from mere makers of food for sustenance and into a systemic structure of cultural articulation. Panlilio and Sta. Maria, for example, introduces the idea of a ‘slow food’ movement in a recipe book laden with idyllic descriptions of the country’s geography saying:

Philippine cooking developed in communities along food-rich island shorelines and riverbanks, on ridges rich with volcanic soil, in valleys
and deltas fertilized by rivers carrying mountain deposits, and in foggy highlands near kindly rivers and lakes. The peoples of the archipelago’s rich, natural setting have developed a culinary style and taste that celebrate every nuance of flavor. (2006, p. 13)

Referring to these practices as part of a ‘culinary style’, many of these food writings presume that the evolution of Philippine food into a cuisine is more the outcome of nature itself rather than human determination. While the understanding towards how nature is tamed is undeniably of critical importance in laying the foundations for Philippine food practice—or any other cuisine for that matter—it proves restrictive and premature. Nature may play a significant part in honing cultural variety, but it also provides a camouflage to conceal many of the manmade interventions that make Philippine food an equally, if not more, distasteful experience. Technological developments in agriculture and industry subvert the ways in which nature is utilized, and presents a more compelling case highlighting how food has now become more indicative of human articulation than natural progression. Goodman and Redclift (1991, p. xiv) note the breakdown of natural farming techniques in industrialized countries where agriculture is ‘more closely linked with industry than the rural environment’, and although the Philippines is far from claiming industrial status, a number of the processes entailed in its food systems is highly dependent on models coming from more developed countries resulting to the inequitable distribution of food. In analyzing food habits of third world countries competing for space in a global arena, Bello (2009b, p. 16) points to ‘capitalist industrial agriculture, with its wrenching destabilization and transformation of land, nature, and social relations, that is mainly responsible for today's food crises’ affecting a vast majority of the world.

Unfortunately, the implications of the technological and industrial changes in the sites of agricultural production remain unexamined in the discussions oriented towards the induction of culinary practice. Needless to say, the romantic connection to the land also conceals a series of equally important historical, economic and social transformations determining the form and substance of culinary consolidation. Just
like the issue of artificially inducing industrialization, faith in the primacy of cuisine disregards the nuances affecting collective food practices. I look at these romantic and exotic musings of rurality as extensions of narratives of modern progress. Forcing the countryside to assume a pristine and immaculate image, it effectively conceals the city’s relationship to the countryside, and the transition of power from one elite class to another. Through the nation’s symbolic value, the steep income disparity marking class and geographic differences become negligible, unifying the cooking and eating habits of rural nobility and peasants, and the urban elites and working classes under the guise of collective unification.

A potent tool dispersing this illusion of a seamless collective is that of nostalgia. Traditional ideas of life in different Philippine provinces are the rage in many writings about Philippine food, effectively passing off the memories of specific individuals and their respective groups and classes trapped in bygone eras as representative of the entire nation. Whether conscious or not, these accounts magnify the memory of a select few and employ food as a resource to draw attention away from the hierarchies conditioned by their musings of the past and directing focus instead towards the compelling symbols that stitch disparate places and periods together. Besa and Dorotan’s *Memories of Philippine Kitchens* (2006), for instance, illustrates the conjoining not just of city and countryside but also of the transnational Filipino migrant in the ‘first world’ through vinegar, the defining ingredient in one of the country’s most popular dish:

Here in the United States, I know Filipinos who use balsamic vinegar in their *adobo* for the sweetness it provides, but this strikes me as a poor use of the subtle flavors of good, costly balsamic. At Cendrillon [Besa and Dorotan’s restaurant in New York], we use Japanese rice vinegar, French sherry vinegar, and, when we see it at natural food stores or Asian markets, organic coconut vinegar. Romy has also begun infusing his own vinegars. At home, I use organic, unfiltered apple cider vinegar for my *adobos* (Besa & Dorotan 2006, p. 43).
The search for a suitable vinegar substitute passes off as the performance of Filipino identity overseas, situating nation-delineated identities within the world of commodities. Creating a sense of loss or longing for nationalist ideals provide stories and memories shaping collective Filipino identity and its attachment to a particular place. Both subjectivity and nation become landmarks denoting the departure not just from the homeland but also from the past. Nostalgia evoked both the displacement from time and place, providing ‘lonesome stragglers a common refuge in history, even while it said that their losses were irreversible’ (Fritzsche 2004, p. 65). The space of the homeland finds actualization through what Armstrong (1982, p. 16-17) describes as a ‘persistent image of a superior way of life in the distant past’ that has been ‘systematically manipulated by elites’, and thus reconstructs both identity and place according to the pragmatism and puritanism of economic development. It is in this imposing image of the past that the present becomes a struggle to replicate what is perceived to have been lost, creating an infallible standard that make the culture and economy of the present futile and pale in comparison (Ray 2004).

Besa and Dorotan’s ‘Memories of Philippine Kitchens’ provides an example of how the past is imagined as such. Consistent with the other accounts of the cookbook, they refashion the nation’s history from memories not necessarily their own. In the following excerpt, Besa constructs the past by piecing together stories about her grandparents’ wedding in their hometown of Nasugbu, in the province of Batangas:

For the wedding, Tatay [Father] was offered the use of the Coast Guard cutter to ferry the guests and food from Zambales and Manila to Batangas. It was called the Wedding of the Century in Nasugbu. Nanay walked with her father from her house to the Church on a white cloth that led to the altar. She was not allowed to step on the ground.

The ceremony was followed by a week-long celebration. New guests came every day. Ramon Mitra, Sr. (a patient of Toto [Toto is the author’s uncle; Mitra is a future statesman]) was a nine year old
boy at the time, taken to the festivities by his father. During the week, he remembers that *Lola* [grandmother] Enchang, *Nanay*’s (mother’s) mother, complained that the plates were not being properly washed. So *Lolo* [grandfather] Vicente ordered that the plates be used only once, then thrown away and new sets brought in (Besa & Dorotan 2006, p. 31).

The nostalgia for the hometown and homeland becomes an impetus for molding the present according to the standards of the past, whether real or imagined. Through the very specific vinegar for cooking *adobo* and the narratives of the lavish wedding, the past and the landscape of Nasugbu calcifies in Besa’s memory as an ideal time and place when and where control afforded the ability to divert public resources to stage feasts commemorating private milestones. Both vinegar and Nasugbu become mementos that condition the present, aligning activities in places where Filipino dishes are recreated to reclaim what seems to have been lost. Interestingly enough, the idiom of sophistication and cosmopolitanism implored by such activities revert to the countryside, and not the city nor the transnational centers of convergence, as the default source for one’s identity.

The glorification of the countryside as the Edenic basis of a glorious past bears a number of critical implications that hinder Philippine cuisine from actually contributing to the discursive formation of the nation it supposedly alludes to. Even though Philippine cuisine struggles to represent regional variations, the specificity of the different regions represented is lost in the imagination of the food writer whose insistence that different kinds of food are borne out of a specific place only made cultural differences hackneyed. The problem of representing regions through food practice is made into a salient yet inconsequential undertaking most evident in the unclear logic of what constitutes a regional dish. While there are definitive dishes that seem to be more popular given the prevalence of specific provisions such as *pili* nuts in Bicol or cooking processes such as the excessive use of fermentation in Northern Luzon victuals, the regional identity and plurality of Philippine cuisine dissipates in the essentialist chatter of the nation. In *Flavors of the Philippines* (2006)
for instance, Rosales-Barreto struggles to articulate the intricacies of what constitutes regional cooking:

\textit{Flavors of the Philippines, A Culinary Guide to the Best of the Islands} is an expression of my personal commitment to give wider recognition and appreciation to a body of cooking styles and techniques collectively known as Philippine cuisine. Underrated and unknown in some parts of the world, Philippine cookery stands out as one of the most satisfying and comforting foods in this part of the world.

Aboriginal in roots, the trunk is a sturdy mixture of Malay, Chinese and Spanish cookery. The foliage and fruits however of this astonishingly pleasant cuisine is characteristically native in flavor and taste.

Filipino food is a friendly encounter with both the exotic and the familiar. The flavors are sweet and spicy, the tastes are fresh and simple, the textures varied and playful, and the colors bright and appetizingly vibrant (Rosales-Barreto 2006, p. 6).

In \textit{Philippine Fiesta Recipes}, Belmonte and Del Mundo (1993) goes as far to suggest that the regional specificities comprising the nation ingrains itself within the sensibility of the populace:

Filipinos could easily identify and recognize their own dishes from those of other regions by just the smell, flavor and appearance of the cooked food. An Ilocano can determine whether or not the \textit{pinakbet} (vegetable stew) served is genuinely Ilocano cooking in the same way that a Bicolano can guarantee that the \textit{ginataang gabi} (taro in coconut milk) or \textit{laing} (taro leaves in coconut milk) is true Bicolano concoction (Belmonte & Del Mundo 1993, p. 4).

And while both \textit{Flavors of the Philippines} and \textit{Philippine Fiesta Recipes} share a common interest in championing regional cultures within the nation, they offer no rationale to their classification. For example, chicken \textit{adobo}, arguably the most popular throughout the archipelago, is listed as an item under ‘Central Visayas Flavors’ (Rosales-Barreto 2006, pp. 72-83) in the former and classified under ‘Pampango Culinary Art’ (Belmonte & Del Mundo 1993, pp. 129-152) in the latter.
Although arguing for the specific regional origins of a dish is futile, neither offers sensible ideas as to what certain dishes mean to the regions.

All these talk about regional diversity to exalt the ascendancy of Philippine cuisine illustrate the problem that Billig (1995) refers to as ‘banal nationalism’. The incessant and numbingly persistent need to refer to the nation transform into ‘ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced [so that] the nation is indicated, or ‘flagged’, in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition’ (Billig 1995, p. 6). Philippine cuisine, imagined to emanate from the confluence of regional differences—even without necessarily articulating what those differences are and how they have been negotiated—provides another means of signifying the nation through overlooked words and practices that naturalize into familiarity and normalcy.

Likewise, the manner in which the nation is hailed and accepted as normal in many of these writings also fail to consider that the nation is a directive that comes from a select few whose interests are being forced upon the majority. Many regions and cultures are described according to how elite identities remember or idealize them to be. Gilda Cordero Fernando’s Philippine Food & Life (1992) is supposedly one of the most comprehensive accounts of food cultures in the Philippines. However, I find the same banal inflections of twisting the vitality of selected signs and symbols as harbingers of the nation. As it takes the reader to different provinces around Luzon—and not the Philippines as the title suggests—it narrates the stories of the predominantly privileged and their momentous feasts as the crux of daily life. The main island and geographic division of Luzon becomes representative of the entire nation, and the ostentatious life of the rich are made to stand for the specific identities and cultures that mark a region. Philippine Food & Life thus reads like a guidebook for understanding the particulars of high society maneuverings in staging their festivities:
The size and quality of a party were gauged by who the cook or the cooks were. “Aling [Miss] Titang” and “Mang [Mister] Parit” were an unshakeable combination. If “Aling Tisia,” a pastry specialist, was called to live in the rich man’s house a whole week before, then it must be a truly grand and expensive celebration. “Mang Baldo” was middling, but if his brother Panying came along, the יצבון [roast pig], at least, would be perfect (Cordero-Fernando 1992, p. 93).

These materials are venerated as important sources of knowledge about the nation and not as intercessions that, because they control the outcome of cultural and political processes, needs to be interrogated and contextualized. They underscore the importance of revisiting the nation-centered ideology that proliferates the discourse of Philippine cuisine to expose it as an equally culpable undertaking resulting in the politics of inclusion and exclusion often discounted in the propagation of the nation-state.

While the establishment of a national cuisine helps frame a social and political presence in imagining the collective identity, it has also instituted a dismissive disposition towards other less known but equally potent symbols in expressing the nation’s character. Such symbols of the nation and the consciousness creating it hinder the articulation of identities that celebrate plurality in favor of upholding a monolithic collective identity supporting the elite classes. The formation of the nation and, in this case, the national cuisine prefigures the emergence of modernity as an essential category of consciousness helpful in stabilizing the authority of industrial and commercial processes situated in the city and the displacement of agrarian and feudal processes as relics of a traditional past, therefore championing the economic, political, social and cultural systems of Europe, the west or developed nations that have appropriated the structures of modernity relatively well. Although most of Europe and other developed nations reflect the transformation from agrarian towards industrialized societies, the same cannot be said of developing countries. If applied to the Philippines, the passage from an agricultural into a modern society presents a series of ruptured and disjointed experiences highlighting what it has failed or yet to accomplish while
establishing the west’s achievement as the very standard of modern progress that should be imbibed (see Appadurai 1990; Bhambra 2007).

The elevation of Philippine food cultures to the realm of culinary tradition illustrates exposes what it lacks in relation to more established cuisines. At the core of this predicament is the need to position the colonial experience as an ongoing process in the establishment of the nation and its national cuisine. In the literature about Philippine cuisine, however, colonization is often glossed over as a seamless process that automatically enriches collective food practice:

Assimilating all these influences, Philippine cuisine may literally be considered a potpourri. Certainly to the European and South American, nothing can be very strange about Philippine dishes. The French will recognize a lighter bouillabaisse in our sinigang, which is fish in broth tarted with tomatoes and tamarind. The Germans will find arroz caldo familiar, just like their suppenhan, which is rice in chicken broth. There are those who contend arroz con goto is very similar to the Italian minestrone (Mercado 1976, p. 10).

Colonization also entails violent and oppressive shifts and continues to enshrine itself anew in the processes that simultaneously assert a sense of solidarity while softening the state’s stronghold on its ‘monopoly on violence’ (Weber 1978). Its consequences on food remain buried underneath the premise that its impact has come together homogeneously. The assumption that national cuisines are part of a complex system that structures the uniqueness and exclusivity of a nation by simultaneously hailing old forms of colonially derived bureaucratic control and transforming them into symbolic forms of capital could not be any more accurate in the case of the Philippines. In this regard, Philippine cuisine can be interpreted as part of a set of discourses assimilating collective notions of cultural and social belonging within ‘the production of particular versions of nationalist thought and language in particular settings and traditions’ (Calhoun 1997, p. 6).

The 2008 cookbook Kulinarya (a transliteration of the word ‘culinary’) demonstrates this issue noticeably. Written by a pantheon of locally renowned chefs
wanting to articulate a Philippine cuisine for a decidedly international audience, the cookbook immediately embraces the need for local cuisine to adjust itself to the norms of more established cuisines:

*Kulinarya*’s first challenge was to draw up the list of standard Filipino dishes most representative of the diverse culture. The team also strove to create a balance of meat, poultry, seafood, and vegetables. After much debate, the recipe selections were force-classified into courses—even if Filipinos do not always serve meals by courses. This was done to make the cuisine more understandable by international norms, and also to make menu planning, whether for home or restaurant, easier (Barretto et al. 2008, p. 14).

A closer examination of *Kulinarya*’s objectives reveals how Filipino cuisines struggle against the seemingly immovable precepts established by its western counterparts. Looking at the presumed spaces of eating, *Kulinarya* immediately avows the supremacy of the home and the restaurant, asserting embodiments of the private and public spheres of western life. It automatically compels the character of Filipino practices to accept the naturalization of the western structure of eating, and homogenizes its own local practices within these realms even if local eating experiences expressive of a communal spirit blur these boundaries repeatedly. And despite the admission that ‘Filipinos do not always serve meals by courses’, it hails the dominance of the structure of the western meal, utilizing it as an important attribute of civility and nationhood.

*Kulinarya* is also demonstrative of unrelenting problems in trying to rationalize a comprehensible structure for Philippine cuisine echoing the persistent dilemma confronting many Filipino cookbooks. As they labor to define culinary tradition, they often stumble upon the need to box concepts of eating within the well-elaborated signifiers of western cuisines. Strangely enough, as attempts to define it for an international audience materialize, the very object it illuminates is alienated from the people and context it was derived from. The ‘force-classified’ streamlining towards ‘international norms’ immediately asserts the lack of a
coherent structure in the Filipino meal. As a result, the cookbook reorganizes food traditions around familiar western syntaxes of appetizers, soups, vegetables and salads and main dishes, while utilizing local translations beside them to assume the same structure. Unfortunately, the manner they are presented in the Filipino language makes no sense at all. Appetizers are translated as *pulutan*, which in Filipino means food accompaniments to drinking alcohol. *Adobo*, translated here as ‘vinegar braised’ dishes, is a main dish in itself. The most basic structure of the Filipino meal consists mainly of *kanin* (rice) and *ulam* (viand), implicating the primacy of rice in the Filipino diet. Ulam can be subdivided into other categories: *sinabawan* (with soup), *sarciado* (with gravy or thick sauce), *karne* (meat), *isda* (fish) and *gulay* (vegetables). A simple meal is often rice with any kind of *ulam*. Even traditional Filipino soups fall in this category, as it is common practice to have plates filled with a heaping serving of rice running with soup. Expanding the simple meal into a complete and healthy one would entail a few adjustments. It still revolves around rice and requires the presence of *sabaw*, *gulay* and a protein dish that can come in any of the other forms categorized above. Distinctions between appetizers and mains are unheard of. Likewise, *minatamis*—translated in *Kulinarya* as desserts—would have been more accurately been referred to as ‘*panghimagas*’, as *minatamis* is a term for the process of cooking fruit in sugar syrup. Either way, the cookbook’s concept of ‘dessert’ is seldom configured within meals and is often taken as snacks in between lunch, breakfast and dinner.

The problems underpinning the establishment of cuisine go beyond signification and translation. Aside from the inability to define the structure of the Filipino meal, the table of contents of *Kulinarya* suggests the intrusion of corporations in mobilizing a working concept of cuisine. A couple of messages appear from San Miguel Pure Foods and Del Monte, two large conglomerates that control a lion’s share of the food and beverage market in the Philippines. However, the messages appear as advertorials aggrandizing these companies’ history and
entrenchment in the nation’s affairs, forcing their unwarranted participation in the project of articulating Philippine cuisine:

As San Miguel continues to deliver its 100-year-old tradition of product quality and weave its products more deeply into the fabric of everyday Filipino life, it also seeks to uplift Philippine cuisine to world-class standards and preserve the country’s legacy of culinary excellence (Barretto et al. 2008, p. 9).

Corporate patronage in Philippine cookbooks presents a larger discourse confounding the character of national cuisines. The nation-state’s role in mediating between capitalist, laborer, consumer and other agents participating in the creation and flow of money is immediately compromised. The corporation ingrains itself into the habitus of everyday life. The ordinariness of these products simultaneously conceals the nature of how and why they have to be reproduced within the confines of the nation, and their existence naturalized through overestimated legacies and enforced standards. The assertion that their products bind the nation together also sheds light on the deficiency of Filipino food. From solidarity with the nation, the need for belonging evolves into keeping par with the rest of the world, echoing the contention of Hopkins and Wallerstein (1977, p. 113) that the ‘two broad organizing tendencies (of the modern world)— integrating production on a world scale and forming strong national states—are in principle deeply contradictory’.

This contradiction reverberates in the valuation of Philippine cuisine. Claude Tayag, Filipino chef and food writer who was part of the team that assembled Kulinarya, wrote in an earlier work:

What qualifies as gourmet in the first place? Do the price tag and packaging make an item gourmet? How is the fish from the wet market any different from the “gourmet” one from the delicatessen? Is an item gourmet (and thus superior) just because it was imported? What makes a dish gourmet? Is it the manner it was cooked, the presentation, or the ambiance in which it is consumed? (Tayag 2006, p. 16)
The unwillingness to refract the concept of gourmet towards Philippine food reflect the ambivalent result of surrendering Filipino products to the deli, supermarket, restaurant and other spaces of global consolidation while still wanting to claim a sense of ownership and identity for an audience who have no means to navigate the said terrains. The *palengke* (wet market) where fish is usually bought becomes antithetical to the deli and conditions a drastic change in value by virtue of the cultural significance assigned to the latter whose products come from some place and culture that is not only foreign but is demonstrative of—to echo the message from San Miguel—‘world-class standards’. The same can be said of home-cooked meals and restaurants. Access to food becomes an imperative gauge to its value where the more domestic and commonplace, despite fulfilling more fundamental needs, becomes only secondary to a location that normally does not perform the functions in the same extensive measure that cooking at home has accomplished. This tension illustrates the traumatic alteration of how an external force imagines local practices and its corresponding identities. It subverts the order established in the source culture where gourmands and their cuisines enforce a decontextualized authority, undermining local tradition yet again.

‘WHAT REALLY IS PHILIPPINE FOOD, THEN?’

I borrow the heading for this section from Doreen Fernandez, whose response to her own question best summarizes the structure of ideas continuously circulated about Philippine food:

What really is Philippine food, then? Indigenous food from land and sea, field and forest. Also and of course: dishes and culinary procedures from China, Spain, Mexico and the United States, and more recently from further abroad.
What makes them Philippine? The history and society that introduced and adapted them; the people who tuned them to their tastes and accepted them into their homes and restaurants, and especially the harmonizing culture that combined them into contemporary Filipino fare (Fernandez 1999, p.9).

Filipino food, seen not just as source of sustenance has always been used as an expedient tool for fabricating social cohesion. Impelling a Filipino taste becomes vital in stabilizing the many tensions and upheavals of a vast array of cultures and influences carry a horde of contentious economic and social shifts whose impact needs to be ascertained. A collective Filipino taste is best described for now as a mythical fabrication. While it would be comforting to profess faith in the project of the nation, there needs to be some paucity in engaging the totality it professes to locate the exigency of other identities, voices and tastes that have yet to assimilate the rubric of nationalism. Rather than patronize cuisines as a foundry for nationalist ideals, there is a need to take a look at national cuisines and the role it plays in mutating old forms of colonial control to the current forms of state-mandated violence and class-centric power marking Philippine cuisine today.

In Marxist inquiry, the concept of class was a central concern in defining social conflict in industrial societies (Marx 1976; Marx & Engels 1969). In this context, power relations between the capitalist (those who control the means of production) and the proletariat (those who do not, are reliant on wages in exchange for the services they offer and are therefore relegated to a subordinate position) stems from how the former is able to exert economic and political domination by controlling most of society’s wealth and assets despite the latter comprising majority of the population. Such a concept of class relations confers the capitalist not just with the power to curb collective resources in their favor but also the ability to exclude majority of society from the opportunity to determine the outcomes of collective activities and policies. Mediating between them are the bourgeoisie, consisting of professionals who have the dexterity to own their own means of production, hire workers, and even utilize their own labor to create and sell their
own products. Meanwhile, Weber (1982) plotted his concept of class against three variables: economics, status and party. Like Marx, Weber considered economic differences to play a part in the production of social classes but also maintained that non-economic variables play an equally considerable role in determining hierarchies within society. For Weber, the acquisition of status calcifies into a form of social power affecting patterns of association such as lifestyles, tastes and even marriage (enforced in societies with distinct caste systems). Economic and status interests connect to the realm of politics, and political parties formalize these concerns and their claim to power in the legal realm. Class can thus be seen as a collection of individuals sharing similar ‘life chances’, where the aggregation of economic, status and party opportunities result to distinctive advantages in determining one’s standard of living.

The development of Philippine food culture provides a good opportunity to reexamine class structures and add insight to a scant field of inquiry that has not fully located the implications of concerns such as gender, power, religion and colonialism in the ever-changing social relationships characterizing Philippine food, culture and society. Even the most exhaustive accounts of Philippine class structures often focus on specific moments. For example, Scott’s ‘Filipino Class Structure in the Sixteenth Century’ appearing as a chapter in Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History (1984) and Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society (1994) explore general features of social structures in the archipelago at the beginning of Spanish contact. Cullinane’s Ilustrado Politics (2003) explores the clout and maneuverings of Filipino elites during the transition between Spanish and U.S. colonial administration. On the other hand, studies that cut across different periods have often concentrated on specific contexts (Cullinane 2001; Guerrero 2001; Lynch 2004). While they prove beneficial in examining specific places vis-à-vis the larger gestures of state-influenced social formation, they remain isolated from the histories and backgrounds of the localities surrounding them. The tension underscoring different social relations manifests in different cultural practices that
become resistant towards traditional Marxist critique maintaining that ‘cultural forms were generally linked to specific classes’ (Nelson & Grossberg 1988, p. 3). Looking at Philippine food as a cultural form, the links between class and culture may appear clear at first, but the constantly changing composition of the Philippine elite and the ever-expanding notion of what constitutes the lower classes present numerous forms of cultural expression indicative of conflicting and changing class interests. Aside from the conceptions of rich and poor that become definitive of popular notions of class in the Philippines today, numerous sources of tension exist and contribute to variegating Philippine social hierarchies. The hybrid character of Philippine food find roots in this diverse and constantly evolving Philippine social structure, one that is complicated by the multiple social and political hierarchies indigenous to the archipelago and their interactions with external changes brought about by colonization. Inasmuch as Philippine food is a collective practice of recipe collections that ‘delighted and pleased many, from gourmets to plain folks who love good food’ (Rosales-Barreto 2006), its codification and relegation into cultural practice replicates dominant culinary traditions accompanying nation and state-building processes in the west. Embedded within the development of Philippine cuisine is the assumption that the nation-state is the natural social and political progression for the attainment of modernity. The flag, the military and, in this case, the national cuisine as well as other symbols become emblematic of admission into a community of nation-states where ethnic and national sentiments are subsumed under streamlined systems and institutions.

The propagation of a national cuisine can also be interpreted as the perpetuation of colonial presence impeding upon and recalibrating local knowledge to hail the supremacy of European-derived culture. In this regard, Marxist theory’s evaluation of social stratification based on an uneven access to the means of production becomes an incomplete assessment of class in the Philippines, as it was in China and India where the logic of capitalism did not follow Marxist history’s general trajectory. While this was attempted to be rectified by defining the ‘Asiatic
Mode of Production’ in India and China (Marx & Engels 1970), Marx and Engels’ faith in the dialectics of capitalism overemphasized the superiority of western history especially in projecting the growth of other cultures. The ‘violent introduction of capitalist modes of production’ as a means to break down ‘the “barbarian” systems of “Oriental despotism” … only reinforced a brutalization and degradation of human beings subjugated to external circumstances’ (Young 2001, p. 109). The contradiction of Marxism and its conceptualization of class become problematic in determining the position of localities whose respective identities had to be articulated against the supremacy and totalizing tendencies of western imperialism, and against the aggregation of cultural specificities deemed ‘barbaric’.

Postcolonial theory provides a mode of thought helpful in reorganizing and reorienting the dialectical pitfalls of Marxism. Broadly conceived, Postcolonialism refers to the field of inquiry whose concern lies in challenging discourses that identified colonial subjects as ‘barbaric’, ‘pagan’, ‘primitive’, ‘developing’, etc. (Bhabha 1994; Césaire 1972; Fanon 1986; Loomba 2005; Said 1995; Spivak 1988; Young 2003) as the principal means through which Europe identified and intellectualized their actions towards their empire. Consequently, such an understanding was crucial in rationalizing the ‘civilizing process’, which justified the subordination of colonies subjected to the explicit retooling systems and institutions adhering to Europe’s form of governance. As a theoretical tool in the sociology of food, Postcolonialism forces the issue of rethinking the distribution of power not just within a society but also between developed and developing societies, and to mull over the inequality brought about by the inordinate ways the west is able to reproduce its image and identity in postcolonial societies (Fanon 1986).

The implication of these ideas towards food studies bears critical insight on the emergence of cuisine in the tricky label of ‘developing’ nations. With the emancipation of many European colonies and the rise in power of the United States at the end of World War II, a new interest arose towards the impact of decolonization and the growth implicated in the futures of different nation-states.
whose sovereignty has been conditioned by some form of subjugation. The patronage of developed nations—handing out aid and grants in the latter half of the 21st Century—left a significant imprint as it recalibrated policies from across the globe to mimic the same set of indicators inducing western development. Industrialization, technological innovation, the championing of democracy and capitalism, the rise of the nation-state, and other processes signifying the specter of modernity demonstrate the ends towards which development initiatives are sought to deliver (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Mennell et al. 1992; Murcott 1992).

Historicizing Philippine cuisine narrates several aspects of colonial reproduction. The cultural fixing of eating habits, collective economic production, nutritional consciousness, hygiene and sanitation, and even religion itself respond to the need to conform to the knowledge and culture of the west, which assumes a sense of superiority and cosmopolitanism over indigenous traditions. The craving for western-based progress only reified developing countries’ dependence on old forms of colonial control. The preponderance of food retailing in many ‘Third World’ countries in Africa and Asia significantly reliant on imported commodities indicate not only dramatic change in food preferences over a couple of decades but also growing dependence on established industrial societies (Drakakis-Smith 1991). This dependence becomes obvious when imagined alongside issues of famine and hunger. As western surpluses find their way into the cupboards of the developing middle class consumer more rapidly than before, the problem of equity in resource distribution is distorted by reinforcing ‘Third World’ backwardness and reinstating western supremacy. Fair (1996) illustrates this problem through the reproduction of famine-stricken images of Ethiopian and Somali women in the mid-1980s. With media attention towards Africa intensifying, so did the western audience’s faith in what modernity afforded them, extending help from as simple as gathering food donations to complex multilateral policies. The infrastructure enabling the assembly of western progress in the Non-west supplanted the legitimacy of existing economic
systems, replacing the ideological and cultural imagination of local life with structures licensed by histories and contexts detached from everyday experience.

The unearthing of different subject positions also pushed postcolonialism towards uncharted territories. Its employment in food studies renewed attention on questions of hunger and poverty and infused these concerns with more definitive responses assertive of the different experiences of modernity. The new geographies replicating the experience of modernity need to be understood outside the pervasive and normative notions of growth, development and social organization. Wilk (1999) provides a model through Belize. Here, local tastes and preferences continue to prosper and develop despite the threats of homogeneity inflicted by global and transnational forces that bring foreign food and tastes to the country. For Wilk, local customs overpower the cultural capital derived from foreign tastes and preferences, making the impact of class distinctions less obtrusive than they are believed to be. Although the influx of supra-national culture potentially leads to the naturalization of western modernity, it also strengthens local collective identity whose ‘ethnicity, family ties, political alliances, regional loyalties, and rural/urban differences… [enable] the educated middle class [to adopt] local “Carribean” or pan-African styles that are self-consciously similar to working class fashions’ (Wilk, pp. 252-253).

Socio-political conditions that are specific to and remain fervent in Belize sheltered the country from absorbing the rank-stricken meanings of foreign commodities, tourist practices and the deployment of migrant workers overseas that would otherwise signify power shifts to a new elitist middle class hegemony. On the other hand, contemporary Indian cookbooks situate the narrative of Indian nationalism within the rubric of a more globalized and hybridized middle class formation (Appadurai 1988). While the emergence of an Indian national cuisine bears striking resemblance to the manner in which French cuisine developed insofar as middle class participation is concerned, Appadurai notes that the emergent middle class’s appropriation of numerous regional traditions is not congenial towards the classical traditions and history they stem from. Instead, Indian cuisine recalibrates many of
the customs employed in these cookbooks, and reassembles it in order to project the
new idiom of what the middle class imagines the nation to be. For Appadurai (1988,
p.20), the new Indian menu’s defiance of the traditional regional courses within the
Indian meal prescribed in cookbooks is ‘accompanied by the development of a
sometimes fairly explicit nationalist and integrationist ideology’. Meanwhile,
Spittler’s ‘In Praise of the Simple Meal’ (1999) disputes the ascendancy of western
practice completely and reiterates that notions of poverty are constructs signifying
the inability to understand Non-western subject positions. Poverty, in this case, is
best viewed as an assessment useful for capital-conscious societies where
accumulation is an important facet of life. Looking at the Kel Ewey Tuareg of Niger,
he makes a case for the ‘simple meal’ as the conceptual opposition to dominant
concepts that reduces the shortage or lack of contemporary consumer products as
indicators of poverty, a mode of thought pigeonholing numerous societies and
identities in Africa with hardly any need nor desire for consumption. He states:

Simple needs should not be equated with deficit. Societies with
simple needs also experience periods of deficit in which simple needs
are not met; for example, seasonal hunger. Such deprivations are
often accepted with little complaint as part of life, in which plenty
and shortage alternate.

Such shortages should be distinguished conceptually from
poverty. Poverty should always be seen in relation to wealth; the
poor exist only where there are also the rich. Shortage without
poverty presupposes a society that does not compare itself with
other, prosperous societies. (Spittler 1999, p. 40)

Sengupta (2010) looks at symbolic meanings associated with good taste,
health and the kitchen to present a compelling example illustrating how middle class
identities evolve differently. For him, the formation of the bourgeois middle class in
western society is by no means parallel to that of the bhadralok middle class in
colonial Bengal. The British demand for meat protein created boundaries not only
between ethnicities but also in gendered differences constructed around the image
of the Raj. The perceived lack of protein translated into, first, the veritable symbol
of effeminacy allowing the colonist to deride everything from the climate to the ‘premature maternity of women’; and second, a region-wide program demanding for the increase of protein sources. Cookbooks and magazines from the bhadralok appearing during this period chided the carnivorous diet as inferior to local food production citing both ethical and ecological considerations that make meat production inefficient. With mounting pressures for Indian independence, vegetarian practice congealed into an important symbol of derision against the ruling British, and ‘the Bengali/Indian kitchen, so strongly reviled in European colonialist discourses as veritable purgatory, became a critically important symbolic space in the emerging ideology of domesticity in the late-nineteenth century’ (Sengupta 2010, p. 97).

Like Sengupta’s assessment of the kitchen that was instrumental in reproducing a counter-hegemonic ideology, the appraisal of eating spaces provides significant responses to concerns affecting the nutritional needs of people situated outside dominant socio-economic centers. It is difficult to imagine a different location for the kitchen since it is deeply grounded in established and naturalized notions of gender and domesticity that relegated it within the hidden confines of the house. Mexico’s food traditions make it possible to strip off notions of domesticity and effeminacy from the private kitchen. Despite Spanish colonial traditions relegating the kitchen in the least visible part of the house as the woman’s domain and modern American restaurants upgrading the image of food laborers into professional (but predominantly male) chefs, there still exists in Mexico hardly unscathed spaces resistant to the machinations of the western kitchen. Referring to them as cocinas públicas (public kitchen), Pérez and Abarca (2007) point out the need to reexamine the blurred boundaries between private and public spheres of eating, weakening the dialectic between household and restaurant cooking practices structured by western notions of dining:

The public kitchen, on the other hand, underscores the influence of social and cultural capital such as customers becoming like extended
family, instead of capital gain and fame. The public kitchen moves culinary practices from the sphere of domestic production to commercial production without losing the familial ethical and moral values of caring, collaboration, and mutual benefit (Pérez & Abarca 2007, p. 139).

The *cocinas públicas* responded to the needs of the Mexican public in numerous ways. Aside from the communal relationships that they foster, Long-Solís (2007) points out that street food in Mexico sustained both the dietary and economic requirements of the country. Mexico’s informal working sector under which street food has been classified produced 678,254 jobs compared to that of the formal economy which has only created less than 600,000 (Reforma, cited in Long-Solís 2007, pp. 216-217). The work generated by the informal sector softened the blow of modern and global streamlining that poses a threat to job security. Despite such contributions, street food and similar practices carried out in *cocinas públicas* still occupy a precarious position in the bureaucratic imagination of the Mexican government and decidedly upper class who constantly invoke hygienic concerns to discredit the informal food sector. Street vendors are left to navigate the terrains of the actual city and policy implications on their own, striving to create more dynamic spaces that blur the highly regarded distinctions between—among other things—private and public domains, urban and rural life, home and restaurant, gender, race and class. The displacement of such constructs thwarted the stability of development-oriented food practice in the country. This provided Mexico the opportunity to generate informal yet much-needed jobs that helped sustain the economy, feed the public with affordable food, enrich local traditions, and foster a sense of solidarity and community.

Food spawned a diverse set of arguments rethinking the conduction and replication of modernity. While it offers no coherent discourse unifying all these concerns together, it still provides a significant interpretive model that clarifies the extent to which dominant concepts of development and its many universalisms facilitate the participation of Third World identities in an arena where there are
hardly any means to measure the impact of their knowledge and traditions. The different power relations that permit and restrict access to food illustrates Philippine cuisine’s investment in the interests of the elite, easily raising a number of concerns regarding ideas that pass off food practices as indicators of a cohesive society. To force a Philippine cuisine ‘is of interest to only a number of people’ (Palanca 2002, p. 149). The dramatic increase of restaurants in the last few decades reinforce eating as a leisurely middle class activity whose articles of trade have done little to represent the extent of regionalism and plurality in the country. Instead, a great majority of restaurants that have succeeded consigned constructs of the foreign as a means to establish the difference between the elites and the masses. What solidifies is a problematic cuisine whose emphasis on mechanizing skill and standardizing products conceals cultural traditions underneath the veil of corporate enterprises and elitist formations today. In food, the expediency of using salt, sugar and saturated fat regimented what several social nutritionists refer to as ‘globesity’, the global coalescence of medical conditions such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, bone disease and diabetes in both developed and developing societies (Nugent 2005). Matejowsky (2009), for example, observes that this phenomenon has proved problematic among the socially mobile middle class youths of Dagupan, a city in the province of Pangasinan, where class positions are constructed along the lines of access to food associated with modernization.

Another important point explored throughout this thesis is how Philippine cuisine reinforces patriarchal attitudes central in the establishment of class, racial, regional and other constructs of social hierarchies. Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 1) maintains that ‘constructions of nationhood involve specific notions of both “manhood” and “womanhood”’. The gendering of Philippine food is a starting point marking the inflexible absorption of public and private domains in the matrix for the national cuisine. At the foreground are men who pursue ideas of food as part of the public enterprise—their efforts effectively professionalized with their names inscribed in different publications, and their activities remunerated through
restaurants and other food related enterprise. On the other hand, private domains remain exclusively female. Women are relegated to two confines in the house: the ‘clean’ and ‘dirty’ kitchens. The former has all the functionalities of a working kitchen but is seldom used as it is reserved for staging a woman’s ability to maintain order and cleanliness in the house. The latter, usually found in the backyard is used to do all food-related work. The presence of the two kitchens in middle class Filipino households present a confounding image of a woman—the housewife and/or breadwinner, mother, even the domestic help assisting her—twice concealed from the public institutions that allow her to secure wealth and welfare.

Inasmuch as the notion of food as leisure dominate the invocation of culinary practice, many symbolic inferences associated with food commodities reproduce a stringent structure of reacting towards the west. In ‘Creating a Rice Crisis in the Philippines’, Walden Bello (2009a) illustrates this idea by making connections between the impact of neo-liberal economic restructuring and the production of rice. Once a staple commodity in the country, rice production suffered tremendous deficits mainly due to pressures by the IMF and World Bank who made the payment of foreign debt a priority, thus compromising a number of agricultural programs. The country’s entry into the WTO in 1995 also contributed significantly to the demise of agricultural production as trade liberalization allowed for the influx of cheaper rice imports. The current rice crisis is not an isolated case and a structuralist reading suggests that the perpetuity of foreign imposition compromised the culture of Philippine food. Philippine cuisine becomes a speakable construct only in the presence of a more established western entity that may or may not give shape to its local counterparts, or, to speak more crudely, towards its local hybrids.

In food studies, the incorporation of practices from Non-European cultures described to pass off as ‘gourmet’ and ‘cuisine’ can be interpreted as a form of what Lacan (1977, pp. 91-104) calls mimicry. Philippine food assumes a form and practice apart from its own to become that which is not, but does so just the same if only to maintain legitimacy while evading the scrutinizing gaze of an authority who
sees lack in any object that is not unified with the totality in which its source of
power operates. Food exposes the ambivalence of relations consistent with
colonialism. The labeling of cuisine within an arena where cuisines do not
necessarily function exposes the problematic character of the whole process. On one
level it accepts and even naturalizes the dominance of a set of practices rooted in
specific cultures and traditions, thereby pegging these cultures and traditions as the
source of reason, even if such reasons have to be elaborated further in light of the
over-imposing structures of western practice. To speak of cuisine forces parallelisms
between two cultures, where parallelisms may not necessarily exist, and where the
specificity of the perceived inferior culture is lost. It also illustrates the duplication
of control. The image of the East—often barbaric and uncivilized—has been used as
a foil to further amplify the west's image of itself. For Said (1995, p. 21), ‘the value,
efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient
therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as
such’. In The Location of Culture, Homi Bhabha (1994) sees the ambivalent structure
of colonial relations in a more positive light. By engaging the problems of colonial
authority and authenticity, Bhabha destabilizes pervasive pluralist attitudes towards
cultural aggregation thereby challenging the dominance of multiculturalist strategies
in favor of hybridity. For Bhabha, such attitudes only amplified cultural relativism
where the understanding of a culture becomes dependent on 'pre-given contents and
customs' (p. 34) thus strengthening essentialist identities in the process. Instead,
hybridity reiterates the need to see the fluidity of different cultures and the
importance of their interactions with one another, postulating the possibility that
even traditionally othered cultures are able to contribute not just to the culture of
the West but also to its own development.

In a lot of ways the class struggles, relationships, and social dynamics
engulfed in defining a Philippine cuisine have yet to address issues that work within
the contexts of a nation whose physical and—to borrow from Benedict Anderson
(2006)—‘imagined’ boundaries have not been truly defined. I interpret the anti-
colonial responses of newly formed nations as counterfeit revolutionary struggles that only revive European history and knowledge. This postulation reverts to the conundrum that Spivak (1988) spoke of: can the subaltern speak and, in this case, speak about its taste, assert its own culture and evade the totalizing tendencies of an imposing global order? The problems of nation building is magnified considerably in Zeus Salazar’s classic essay ‘Ang Pantayong Pananaw: Bilang Diskursong Pangkabihasnan’ (a rough translation reads ‘Perspectives For and By Us: As Discourse for a Civilization’, 2000). Salazar notes the need for establishing an indigenous perspective in Philippine historiography, one that consciously strives to narrate personal and collective experience through the dislocation of the indigenous from that which is decidedly western. Reviewing longstanding practices in narrating Philippine history as one that has constantly addressed and validated the viewpoint of outsiders, Salazar’s critique foregrounds an apparent problem not only in Philippine historiography but also in the historiography of Philippine food. As a viable symbol of these collective identities, the danger of articulating any form of cuisine is that it is always constrained by prevalent colonial norms whose infusion into local practice always assumed a privileged position, thus quelling any possible contribution that the latter may have engendered. The absence of questions that cast doubt over the privilege it enjoys becomes critical in assessing Philippine food scholarship. The inscription of the varied contexts and histories it defines do not necessarily reflect the aspirations that nation building should espouse.

The ambivalence of memory proves inconsequential in this regard and its use in gluing a nation together needs to be investigated further. While memory can be potent in the induction of collective affairs, its power sways deceptively. In Remembrances of Repasts: An Anthology of Food and Memory, Sutton (2001) investigates the intersections between food and memory in order to highlight how forms of remembering blur identity formations. In the case of national identities, memories facilitate the links between modern systems acting out their connections towards imagined pasts, possibly ignoring the distinct experiences of individuals and groups.
in order to uphold existing narratives of unification and collective consolidation. Building on Foucault’s and Deleuze’s attention towards the body, Probyn (1999a; 2000) illustrates food’s intersections with different bodily functions and symbols as expressive of individual identities more inhabitive of the moment. Stating that ‘the materiality of eating, sex and bodies to draw out alternative ways of thinking about an ethics of existence, ways of living informed by both the rawness of a visceral engagement with the world, and a sense of restraint in the face of the excess’ (Probyn 2000, p. 3), the specificities of identity corrode dominant concepts regarding collective consolidation. The gustatory experience, in particular, assembles connections between the self—the alimentary tract, sensory experiences, intimate and personal registers of pleasure and memory, etc.—and the communal domain where negotiations between global economies are consolidated and dispersed.

Philippine food has yet to find that specific syntax that does not dislocate the numerous localities and subjectivities it represents from the products and practices altered significantly by global commodification. Owing to the fact that the establishment of a national cuisine was never a formal undertaking, the homogenization of food practices into a cuisine calls for the closer examination of the remnants of postcolonial domination and its influence in positioning global capitalism within specific nation-states (Cook & Harrison 2003). The making of a collective food culture happened as early as the arrival of Spain in the 16th Century, when economic resources started to be mobilized towards the production of key goods deemed vital to the Spanish empire. However, conscious attempts at articulating a national cuisine only happened three centuries after, with the transfer of the Philippines to the United States, and radical measures were needed to assert sovereignty from the new regime while responding to issues involving public health, nutrition and education. The idea of a Philippine cuisine is, at best, reactionary towards the presence of other cuisines that represented systemic order in other
societies. Philippine cuisine exists only because it is useful in harboring the illusion for the elites who control interest in managing the nation-state.

How collective consolidation was engineered can be traced to the coming of the Spaniards. The next chapter explores and interprets the cultural transformation of the archipelago according to the systemic alteration of everyday lives and their homogenization under a common set of food symbols. Rice becomes a critical victual facilitating this process and its increased production presents a two-pronged process that has simultaneously lent different localities a common symbol for belonging while limiting the available food options for an entire colony. How the limited options to cultivate food and the lack of food itself became acceptable norms in Philippine society will be explained through another food-related symbol, the dining table, where religious ideology has infused itself to the everyday practice of eating.
What does a country eat? Cookbooks never run out of dishes to write about, often describing ingredients and even the act of cooking itself as proprietary forms of providence developed in specific sites and through rigorous methods developed over time. On the other hand, those who face starvation and grave threats of malnutrition have a different response, challenging the assertions made by culinary excersises brandishing the privilege of a select few insistent on upholding their lifestyle at the center of the nation’s affairs. The transformation of food into an elaborate cultural practice encapsulated by the enforcement of culinary tradition speaks highly of the intrinsic bonds between food and nationalism. As defined in the previous chapter, cuisines elevate and transform the material experience of food into communal knowledge, asserting the tastes and preferences of the dominant social class to represent the culture and lifestyle of the entire nation. The study of cuisine as a cultural form provides an opportunity to look at food as an elitist project, fashioning the need to affirm privilege in controlling both the material and symbolic resources of groups and individuals. In the case of the Philippines, the story of Philippine food’s contribution to culture, nation and class building efforts can be traced back to the coming of Spain, which ruled the Philippines from 1521 to 1898, and when food’s numerous symbols began to be consolidated across the archipelago.

If the best of Philippine cuisine evolved through the feasts that accompanied religious celebrations, the infiltration of the seemingly benign dining table on the home offers insight in reconstituting the customs of the ordinary. This chapter
highlights the connections between the public celebrations of feasting during the Spanish occupation of the Philippines and the concurrent cultural transformations it has shaped within the private realms of corporeal experience. The dining table connected the trivialities of everyday life to the grand celebrations commemorating the cycles and passages deemed important to the community. The fiesta, held at least once a year in Hispanized towns around the country, became a pervasive symbol of Filipino identity combining religious doctrine with folk beliefs, expressing a number of layered and textured meanings (Wendt, 1998). Despite the multiplicity of ideas they convey, however, the fiesta remains to be an organic structure unifying the seemingly incoherent and disparate activities organized under the auspices of the parish priest and wealthy people within the town, the cultural symbols and social codes that structure the hierarchies of the entire archipelago, and the fusion of different beliefs and rituals situating numerous identities within the islands. The fiesta is a strong homogenizing agent inculcating—among other things—the dominance of Christianity over other religions, the enactment of critical functions sustaining collective livelihood such as periods of planting and harvesting, and the commemoration of fabled and actual events that become the basis for a collective identity. The manner Spanish missionary friars became not only 'parish priests [who learned] languages and [lived] among their converts in an effort to translate Christianity into local cultures' but also administrative agents of the colonial government who regulated law and everyday life through 'church teachings and guidelines' (Abinales and Amoroso, 2005, p. 51) offer intricate constructions of belonging at a communal level that has dramatically altered the personal lives of the colony.

When it comes to food, public feasts generally associated with the fiesta trickles down to the private sphere in a noticeably divergent manner. Elite households enjoy the privilege of novel proteins, complicated food preparations and a number of choices, while a noticeable lack can be observed in less-privileged homes. Although economics and social hierarchies are obvious sources for
understanding such a disparity, the role religion played in maintaining class inequality is just as important. Philippine food practices during the Spanish period presents a compelling example of the persuasive power of the colonial state and in transforming the colonized Other into a social being whose acceptance of hunger is contingent upon their integration within the structure of modernizing societies. My contention is that this transformation is not only built upon symbolic expressions centered on a set of common dishes but have more to do with the widespread memorialization of hunger accompanying religion’s formalizing power. The influences for the feasts that complement these fiestas traverse a number of cultural, political and economic geographies enabling the determination of everyday life, and where poverty becomes institutionalized.

Focusing on religious thought as the central force in establishing the economic and political mandate of Spanish colonial rule, this chapter discusses religion’s efficacy in ‘providing stable meanings [that] organizes and structures reality’ (Turner, 1991, p. x) of Filipino life. It then looks at the religious meanings of the dining table and the dining room, and how their presence in upper and middle class Filipino households fractured the organization of domestic life. Occupying a significant chunk of space in the house, the dining table’s formality has rendered it more as a public space for the staging of expectations required of wives and mothers. Seldom used for everyday meals, dining tables became obligatory fixtures utilized in feasts where guests are invited. Feasting and fasting are then compared. Historic readings of available materials about the evolution of feasting activities reveal interesting shifts in the notions of proper meals and how the production of victuals for it paved the way for the reconstitution of the economy. In particular, the transformation of rice and other key commodities illustrates the bifurcation of class whose divisions are constantly reinforced in day-to-day activities only to harbor an illusion of confederacy during feasts and important ritual celebrations. While feasts mark an abundance of food, fasting becomes the norm for everyday life. Analyzing fasting as an obstinate symbol of suffering, I explain its embodiment of hunger in the
public imagination through a reading of key religious texts widely circulated during the Spanish period. The inscription of suffering in the everyday life of the peasant class has searing implications on religion’s power as can be gathered from the numerous peasant uprisings that have culminated in the 1896-1898 Philippine Revolution against Spain. By this time, hunger became familiar and made itself indelible in the day-to-day life of an entire population whose efforts are directed away from their subsistence and towards the production for profit-oriented monopolies.

FAITH AND THE MAKING OF THE PHILIPPINES

Spain’s arrival in the 16th Century faced the challenge of consolidating a number of prehispanic tribes under one colonial system. While the imposition of the name Felipinas, after King Philip II (Felipe in Spanish), reoriented the future and identity of these different groups, much more had to be done in order to unify an archipelago with a plurality of social, economic and political structures (Arcilla, 1998, pp. 14-22). Religious ritual proved beneficial in this regard, and the fiesta became one of the most visible signs of a new religion and culture. Its presence in the different localities of what is now known as the Philippines illustrates the crystallization of a new symbolic capital legitimizing the unequal distribution of power, wealth and control.

Prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, trade activities with China, India and the Middle East affected food practices in the archipelago. Reid’s *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (1988) notes that trading activities within the Southeast Asian region blossomed around the 1400s which in turn stimulated religious exchange, initial urban expansion as well as early forms of state and capital accumulation and trade specialization. Wade (2009) asserts that this ‘Age of Commerce’ happened as early as the tenth century taking note of significant increases in population growth, monetization, maritime linkages, and the development of industries. For Reid
(1988, 1990), the intensification of trading activities meant the diminishing value of prestige goods leading to the secularization of many cultural products in Southeast Asia. The archeological studies exhuming earthenware, porcelain, bronze, jewelry, gold and other implements from different burial sites suggest the utilization of these goods in religious and/or cosmic functions. Reid asserts that the period became emblematic of globalization and cosmopolitanism in the region as cultural and commodity exchanges blurred distinctions not only between the traditional royalties and the merchant elite but also between the different cultural practices lending plurality to the region.

A number of examples provide evidence for the commercialization of the archipelago through trade. The proliferation of Filipino words originating from the Indian Sanskrit such as diwa (jiwa in Sanskrit, translated in English as ‘meaning’ or ‘essence’), diwata (devanta in Sanskrit, meaning ‘deity’) and bathala (god) all suggest the exchange not just of material goods but also the pervasive influence of India in lending shape to the country’s cosmological understanding. The excavation of a prehistoric burial site in what is now referred to as Novaliches, a municipality in Manila, as well as the unearthing of celadon wares in Mindoro by Beyer (1948) hints at regular and sustained contacts with Chinese traders. The reverse is also true. Chinese historical accounts from as far back as the Sung Dynasty reflect trade emanating from different locations in the group of islands that now comprises the Philippines, whose treasury was supported to a great extent by duties on foreign trade. One of the earliest recorded interactions comes from Butuan in Southern Philippines (Scott, 1984, pp. 66-67). Chinese records indicate the coming of tradesmen from the beginning of the 11th Century who brought in an unusual array of goods such as camphor, cloves and slaves. Meanwhile, Junker (1999) notes how trade with China coupled with tributary relations in various prehispanic societies aided in the development of more complex political systems prior to the arrival of Spain. Several areas within the country also exhibit attempts to participate in
systemic trade through the circulation of the *piloncito*, tiny gold bullet-shaped pieces used as currency in different parts of Southeast Asia (Wicks, 1992, pp. 289-290).

While Reid’s observations of secularization may ring true for a number of areas in Southeast Asia, I find that the arrival of the Spaniards has, in some ways, reversed the process in the colony that they established. The christening of the name *Felipinas*, later on Filipinas, have not only aligned the islands to Spain, it also conditioned the need for political homogenization among different groups that did not necessarily identify with each other. The introduction of Christianity meant the coalescence of religious practices that easily became hegemonic within Spain’s 300-year reign, thus altering the political, economic and social affairs of the colony significantly. Despite a clear mandate on the separation of church and state in contemporary Philippines, the Catholic church still maintains a hegemonic presence in determining the form and direction of public culture, influencing serious political upheavals. The most significant among these is the appeal of Jaime ‘Cardinal’ Sin on Radio Veritas to provide a human shield for a faction of Armed Forces of the Philippines soldiers who broke away from the command of then President Ferdinand Marcos, culminating in the 1986 EDSA Revolution. The church continues to uphold a stringent stand on marriage and family planning policies, and successfully fended off pressures to legalize divorce and state-initiated distribution of artificial contraception in the Philippines. Christianity’s presence in the country has congealed in numerous performances and rituals. A number have drawn attention towards the corporeal enigmas that are attributed to faith, particularly that of sacrifice rituals such as self-flagellation and nailing on the cross (see Peterson, 2007, Tiatco and Bonifacio-Ramolete, 2008). Others focus on how such expressions find themselves in the performance of different cultural texts (1999, Tiongson, 1992). While others have articulated how the ideology behind such performances of faith aid in shaping a collective consciousness that permeate into other affairs of the state (Ileto, 1979, Rafael, 1998).
As cultural practice, religion imparts a heavy imprint on the manner in which food impregnates concepts of integration to different localities within the national and global arenas. The Philippines’ alignment to a broader and more global market happened not only through the trading practices that Reid observes, but also through the consecration of ‘cultural practice’ itself (Hornedo, 2001). Food is not only expressive of being Filipino but, more than that, it is expressive of the entrenchment of Catholic thought. This power registers in the Filipino imagination in numerous ways. Chicken, pork and beef symbolizes the presence of power, while fish—the most logical protein source for the Philippines—signified the lack thereof. Phelan (1959, pp. 111-113) notes how the Spanish reign saw a rising demand for domesticated proteins, constrained by the need to acclimatize highly favored meat sources by the Spaniards such as beef that were not available locally. The few supplies that were available cost more and could only be afforded by the well heeled. Religion justified the imbalance, asserting the birthright and moral superiority of those who are blessed in what otherwise could be interpreted as a gluttonous existence, defending privilege as necessary to the responsibility and dominion they hold over others. As changing technologies made different victuals available, it redefined symbols of civility expressing the ability to partake of the refinements of urbanity and sophistication that immediately conjures notions of contemporaneity, progress and an enlightened purpose best expressed in an individual’s role and contribution to society. Feeding one’s self properly—whatever properly connotes—indicated the ability to sustain living standards idealizing what being civilized should be. The food of the Spanish elite that consisted of the above-mentioned proteins as well as time-consuming cooking methods and imported ingredients became emblematic of refinement that was to be aspired for, while the simple and more accessible food of the Filipino indio represented crudeness and vulgarity.

The disjuncture between cultural and economic historiographies amplify the need to reexamine connections between seemingly opposing but dialectically
associated notions such as pleasure and labor, taste and class, appetite and hunger. Customs, practices, traditions and specific articles (such as those dishes that comprise a national cuisine) reify into cultural symbols concealing the upheavals set forth by restructuring control. The Christianity imposed in 16th century proto-Philippines illustrates an account of such a concealment that consolidates the many meanings of food into an ideology whose main triumph may not be the spreading of systemic religion alone, but the servitude of a group that—after being given a name and a sense of sovereignty—has found itself reinstated constantly into enslavement under different world orders.

THE DINING TABLE

Since the Spanish period, the cultural imagination surrounding the dining table positions important issues affecting the material realities in which its numerous representations operate. The dining table became—and remains—an important site in the reproduction of collective ideology within domestic spheres. In particular, the inscription of biblical themes of feasting and fasting present a fascinating commentary on the internalization and reconstruction of poverty through numerous contradictions both in public policy and cultural consciousness. Experiences from the Philippines after the Spanish occupation and, to some extent, a few of its neighboring Southeast Asian countries struggling to modernize themselves shed insight on the dining table’s syncretic character for staging not just the reproduction of social ideology within the domestic sphere, but also the colonial specters that multiply the forms of control the dining table helps to assert and subvert simultaneously.

Discussed only recently, the dining table encapsulates a vast array of cultural insinuations (Charles and Kerr, 1986a, Bell and Valentine, 1997, Charles and Kerr,
1986b, Beardsworth et al., 2002, Murcott, 2002, Fischler, 1986, Lupton, 1996, Turner, 1984). Bell and Valentine (1997, pp. 63-66) outlined the dining table’s role as ‘an important site for the socialization or “civilization” of children’. At the core of this civilizing process is the establishment of the virtues of proper nutrition attainable only through a ‘proper’ meal that, according to Charles and Kerr (1986a, p. 412), is conceived through the consumption of ‘meat (or fish), potatoes and vegetables’. Harkening back to functionalist notions of food discussed in the previous chapter, balanced diets affected wellbeing, and became synonymous to development and productivity. For nutritional science, the very idea of eating takes on a practical role, one that can be reconstructed from chemical and biological processes allowing the body to function (Lupton, 1996, pp.6-7). This becomes a core concept in family dinners as parents strive to mediate between prevalent culturally constructed concepts of health with indulgent and pleasurable eating. Parents use the dining table as an instrument to regulate knowledge and understanding about eating, internalizing notions of health in the choices their family makes when it comes to what they consume, and rationalizing these choices with numerous socially and culturally constructed functions. The purpose of such educational coaxing is expressive of a hegemonic intrusion towards the body’s condition, demanding specific methods of maintenance attuned towards its capacity to perform and contribute to the family and society. Likewise, the installation of gender constructs significantly induces decisions that bring food to the table. Beardsworth et al. (2002) notes how the reinforcement of femininity happens through specific diets that are generally more ‘virtuous’ as opposed to men whom they describe to be ‘robust’. Women are inclined to make dietary choices based on self-image, health and nutritional views, and ethical food production and consumption while men are seen to uphold more traditional diets centering on the intake of meat. The consequences of gender-based constructs become more evident when comparing single and two-parent households under welfare. In British households where both mother and father are present, traditional notions of a
proper diet revolves around meat, while households managed by a single mother often consume less meat (Charles and Kerr, 1986a). In these instances, food is no longer just a means to survive; it also speaks of the infringement of a higher order on one’s personal domain, asserting how the maintenance of health, wellbeing, identity, sexuality, class and religion all become ‘a general metaphor for the structure and function of society as a whole’ (Turner, 1984, p. 177).

The dining table remains a malady in the Philippines as traditional customs and ways of eating alter its usual function, dismissing the formality it represents in the process, conveying a different set of cultural practices in need of disentangling. Growing up in the Philippines in the 80s, the space of the dining table represented a convergence of incongruities. Like most dining tables situated in a middle-income household, ours was made of local hard wood called *narra (pterocarpus indicus)*, and was held in high regard by my mother since she inherited this from her mother. It was heavy, unyielding and demanded a privileged position as it sat in that one special room in the house saved for special occasions. Only these special occasions never materialized into the formal affairs that utilize the dining table. Drones of relatives, friends and neighbors come in for events such as birthdays, baptisms, anniversaries and Christmas that it was impossible to have any formal sit-down dinners. The chairs that matched the dining table were moved either to its sides or in other areas such as thoroughfares and the living room where more guests can be accommodated. The dining table—splendid and majestic as it is—is often covered with a tablecloth, banana leaves, even newspapers so that it can be used as a buffet table. A huge spread is then laid out on it: big pots of slow cooked stews, serving platters filled with *inihaw* (a collective term for things that are grilled from pork barbecue to squid), the customary *enchilada* (salad), Filipino-style spaghetti and hotdogs for the kids, and at the center was always the *litson* (roasted pig). Guests moved around it in one direction to gather in their own plates the things that they would like to eat, and moved out eventually to find a place either in the sides of the dining table (if the dining room was big enough) where the dining chairs are, to the living room or even
outside the house under make-shift canopies filled with plastic chairs and tables. Feasts were never formal, and such occasions merited the coming of unexpected guests, who are always welcome to participate in the festivities.

On regular days, the dining table and dining room was used exclusively for dinner. Unless the house was small, lunch and breakfast was to take place in the kitchen where another table was placed. In the 80s, ply or lightwood was a popular material for this second table. It was finished with a plastic or vinyl veneer and mounted on foldable steel legs to make its transport around and outside the house much easier. Plastic replaced it eventually. This table took the brunt of the daily chores. Aside from the usual meals eaten here, it also served as a catchall where groceries were laid, vegetables were chopped, mail was placed, homework was done, and bills were sorted out. While cooking can be done in the same kitchen, bulk of the food preparation was reserved for another problematic structure in the house. A second kitchen, referred to in the Philippines as the ‘dirty kitchen’, took the brunt of daily cooking chores and was situated usually in the backyard and right behind the ‘clean’ kitchen. The dirty kitchen from my childhood was the complete opposite of our indoor kitchen. It sported cheaper white tiles, a cement floor, a wall-mounted island with a relatively larger sink, an improvised roof, a two-burner gas range on top of an old desk, and scores of hooks and clasps where pots and pans and other kitchen implements that were cheaper than those stored in the indoor kitchen were hung. Even if it was often smaller and not as equipped than the actual kitchen, it worked harder and provided the functions that were relevant for cooking—whether for everyday use, or for those huge family gatherings. The dirty kitchen lived up to its name, as this was where all the work was done: from the simple such as cooking sinigang (sour soup) to the downright messy like taking out the blood of a freshly slaughtered pig for dinuguan (pork and blood stew).

The Filipino often interprets the dining table, the dining room and the kitchen as emblems expressive of the need to hide the chaos of day-to-day living in order to live up to appearances. For the housewife and/or mother, it meant keeping this
particular area of the house in order as it visualized her domain. How she kept things clean and organized reflected her ability to perform her roles effortlessly, and a clean kitchen and dining area meant the smooth enactment of nurturer, emphasizing her ability to feed her family and in instilling values associated with cleanliness, and traditions that are linked with close family ties passed on from one generation to the next. My mother forbade mess and clutter in these areas, often instructing us—both her children and househelp—to hide the clanging of kitchen implements, and the odor and peelings of garlic and onions outside to generate a calm and pleasant demeanor in serving food. Hence, my mother always brought breakfast and lunch from the dirty kitchen to the table in the ‘clean’ kitchen, or dinner to the dining room in an attempt to preserve the order and tranquility of the space and what it represented.

The dining table occupies a sizable chunk of space not just in more privileged households but also in the aspirations of many other locals whose symbols of a good life includes the ownership of one such piece often inciting the colonial vestiges it assumes as a strategy to delineate control. Ironically, while the dining table enacts a certain sense of control and prestige, it does not completely utilize the cultural trappings it was meant to perform, exhibiting a number of disparities between the ideals it imposes and the realities in which it operates. Little has been said about this particular character of the dining table and its actual place in the development of social organization in the Philippines.

The making of the Philippines consists of Spanish colonization’s many trimmings, and the use of the dining table in the confines of the house marks one of the more mundane yet symbolically charged rituals altering everyday life. While its exact origins are impossible to locate, the dining table’s symbolic significance in the Philippines developed alongside the introduction of Christianity under the Spanish conquest. These evangelizing missions took time to develop, and they spread rather unevenly throughout the country (Schumacher, 1984). The lowlands of Luzon
harbored the most significant changes as missionary work started as early as the 1570s and became fairly established by the 1630s. Conversion of the Luzon highlands started at the end of the 17th Century. By this time, Jesuit missions in the lowland areas of Visayas began and spread as far as the northern coasts of Mindanao. With the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768, however, Catholic missionary activities significantly declined especially in the many mountainous areas in the country. Despite the uneven spread, Christianity entrenched itself firmly in the Tagalog region, which figured significantly in the revolt against Spain, and emerged as the country’s center of power.

I peg the start of the symbolic shift of the dining table along with the celebration of the first mass in the island of Limasawa in 1521 where the alter was to give food—through its use of bread and wine as symbols—a specific liturgical significance. The entrenchment of Christian tradition not only broke new ground, it also reinvigorated itself among the Spaniards who, at this period, associated the appetite for conquest with some form of spiritual transcendence. Thus, many documents from Magellan’s discovery and Legazpi’s annexation of the islands as a Spanish colony to Chirino’s Relacion (1969) and Zuñiga’s An Historical Overview of the Philippine Islands (1966) are replete of Spain’s religious ascendancy over the so-called Moros (Moors) and pagans that inhabited the islands. Consider, for example, Pigafetta’s narration of a mass Christian baptism of a pagan queen and her subjects:

After dinner the priest and some of the others went ashore to baptize the queen, who came with forty women. We conducted her to the platform, and she was made to sit down upon a cushion, and the other women near her, until the priest should be ready. She was shown an image of our Lady, a very beautiful wooden child Jesus, and a cross. Thereupon she was overcome with contrition, and asked for baptism amid her tears. We named her Johanna, after the emperor’s mother; her daughter the wife of the prince, Catherina; the queen of Mazaua (Limasawa), Lisabeta; and the others each their [distinctive] name. Counting men, women and children, we baptized eight hundred souls (Pigafetta, 1962, p. 160).
Magellan’s fleet demonstrated their power continuously while they scouted the archipelago that it was difficult to ascertain whether these conversions took place through sheer ‘contrition’ consistent with what Pigafetta reported, or if these assimilations into Christianity were done to avoid violent encounters and possible enslavement. The establishment of Spanish control became a religious mandate, affirming the medieval structures that were beginning to deteriorate in Europe. Food, which accompanied almost every facet of Catholic experience, has been implicated in the observation of important ritual observances that emphasized suffering. A central discourse imbibed here is Christian tradition’s grounding of the Eucharistic celebration in the Last Supper, whose alleged historic roots has been embroiled indeterminably with its liturgical significance (Daly, 2010). The Last Supper marked the transition from the old into the new covenant, the inordinate passage from the physical ‘Promised Land’ (represented by Jerusalem) into the spiritual promise of salvation and eternal life in heaven. Such a journey found itself articulated through Christ’s sacrificial death, symbolized by the partaking of his flesh and blood through the Eucharist, ultimately embracing suffering as a means for the redemption of eternal life. The commemoration of food’s religious meaning can be seen in the preponderance of images of the Last Supper, reproduced in the form of paintings, woodcarvings, tapestries, stone and metal works. Today, despite the presence of other influences that have redefined the dining room—especially the rationale articulated by nutrition and home economics programs from the American period—the dining table remains equated to the altar.

FEASTING AND FASTING

An important dichotomy subsumed in these religious observances is the tension between feasting and fasting. In these observances, the dialectical features of these customs reworked food’s significance in the new colony’s perception. As the public partakes in a grand meal, the presence of the dining table easily signifies
notions of thanksgiving, reward, hospitality and commensality. On the other hand, its non-use on regular occasions is equally important as it inculcates the idea of transcendence of the material world, affliction, sacrifice and a blind dedication towards the impending reward for hard work.

Both feasting and fasting unified periods of indulgence and abstention with phases of collective work and celebration. Numerous ritual celebrations memorializing the liberation from suffering characterized the experience of feasting. Town fiestas celebrated the lives and suffering of saints as the exemplars of a Christ-like life. Christianity superimposed the lives of many saints upon local deities and natural processes believed to have interceded in the propagation of specific products intrinsic to a particular locality. San Isidro de Labrador (Isidore the Laborer), celebrated for his affinity to the poor and to animals, is patron saint of a number of towns and municipalities in the country. His intercession along with Sta. Maria Torribia, his wife, is celebrated in the famous Pahiyas Festival in Lucban, Quezon popular for its use of colorful kiping (rice wafers) that were displayed all throughout the town commemorating a bountiful harvest. The Nabas Bariw Festival in Nabas, Aklan also paid homage to San Isidro for the successful yield of the bariw fiber (*Pandanus copelandii*) used in the production of hats, mats, bags and other goods that are on display during the festival. Likewise, the *Higantes* Festival (Festival of Giants) in Angono, Rizal features a parade of ten-foot *papier mâché* giants dressed in colorful fishermen’s clothes in honor of San Clemente, patron saint of the coastal city and of fishermen. The Holy Week that culminates in Easter presents more morose displays grounded in religious symbolism. The Moriones Festival in the island of Marinduque offer a *sinakulo* (passion play) of Roman centurions wearing *morion* masks to emphasize the story of Longinus, the soldier present during the crucifixion whose failing eyes were miraculously healed by Christ’s blood. Tiatco and Bonifacio-Ramolete (2008) discuss cross-nailing and self-flagellation rituals embedded in the passion play of Cutud, Pampanga as vows of sacrifice demonstrating attempts for devotees to hone in to their enlightenment through pain and suffering. From a
religious standpoint, these elaborate displays and parades as well as the variety shows, talent competitions, sports tournaments, beauty pageants, prayer rituals and, of course the customary feasts that accompany them all inscribe the realization of a year’s hard work. It becomes symbolic of the transcendence of suffering and instigates the communal participation of the town as an allusion to the Church’s attempts in achieving its promise of collective redemption.

Inasmuch as the inscription of religious meaning burrows itself in these festivals, they also illustrate the indigenization of Christianity as they combine both religious and folk traditions. In some ways, these replicated old forms of feasting in precolonial Philippines. Prior to Spanish conquest, feasting reproduced social relations positioning the subordination of commoners under chieftains, and lesser tributaries under more powerful polities. Elaborate feasts celebrated events such as weddings marking the merging of two societies, harvests and conquests. These feasts instilled:

(1) Sponsorship (though not always exclusively) by elite individuals (most frequently, chiefs); (2) the performance of sacrificial rites using animals (usually pigs, chicken, or water buffalo), other subsistence goods, or manufactured goods contributed by individuals in a tributary or subservient role to the sponsor; (3) elite exchanges of valuables (e.g. porcelain, gold jewelry) as part of ongoing reciprocal exchange partnerships; (4) reallocation of meat and other feasting foods for consumption according to kinship ties and social rank relations with the sponsoring elite; and (5) the conferring of social prestige on the feast’s sponsor in accordance with the feast’s lavishness and the social debt created through the sponsor’s presentations (Junker, 1999, p. 314).

Feasting activities reiterated the centrality of the chiefs who subsidized these events, and the participants—whether they were part of the ruling class or commoners and slaves—contributed to the feast directly or to the rituals that accompanied it. The accumulation of products and/or forced labor became the contributions of commoners and slaves. Many feasts took place after harvest season,
when granaries were fully stocked with rice and other agricultural goods. For the elites, their lavish gifts of rare porcelain, jewelry, finely crafted weapons and other prestige goods reflected the power they wielded and their willingness to create new or further strengthen existing alliances with the host, eventually expanding notions of kinship ties across different communities. This system of tributes emphasizes the centrality of kinship networks in cultivating social hierarchy within and among these communities and eliminated the need for ‘impersonal bureaucratic machineries to regulate intra- and interregional affairs’ (Rafael, 1998, pp. 14-15). Rather than dispersing differences between competing polities through conquest and subjugation, the constant reaffirming of alliances and connections symbolized by these tributary feasts held tensions in check. Ritual significance of actual and imagined genealogical connections these feasts serve to protect, therefore, governed the enactment of political functions, a feature that was consistent in many river-based societies in Southeast Asia (Day, 1996). The ruler, referred to mainly as the datu, commanded control based on indebtedness (Rafael, 1998, pp 138-139, Scott, 1984, pp. 99-111, Jocano, 1966). Persons of this particular rank held a considerable following through a series of obligations showing a distinct capacity to engage his community in raiding and trading activities, consequently contributing to the accumulation of surplus goods and slaves. These surpluses eventually became important capital distributed among those ruled by the datu, and became the basis for the tributary obligations reproducing the subjects’ indebtedness to the datu, whose title was not protected by any clear external sanction that perpetuated his rule. Under this scheme, social structures became very fluid. Anyone with aspirations of power sought recognition through constant negotiations that required another’s servitude or contribute to mutually beneficial alliances. The attainment of rank became dependent on the exchanges one carried out and the resulting recognition these exchanges afforded.

As such, the many fiestas and feasts instilled similar notions of control and prestige in Hispanized communities. Many of these religious festivals demanded the
participation of everyone in town, and service was extracted from the populace in all forms possible. In one of the correspondences to his brother the principal Filipino nationalist, Jose Rizal, Paciano, writes:

Corpus Christi was celebrated day before yesterday with more splendor than in previous years for the reason that the chapels were more luxurious, having been entrusted to the members of the Dominican and Franciscan associations and I don’t know what other groups who spent a whole night decorating them only to knock them down the next morning after the Mass.

Ahead we have the town fiesta. They are talking about contributions, one third of which is assigned to Masses, at the regret of many, about fifteen mysteries in the style of Biñan [a town in the province of Laguna, Jose and Paciano are from Calamba], about new alms for the confraternity that is in great difficulty, but not a word about public entertainment. In short, it seems that we imitate wholly Biñan, the model town in the opinion of some.

This is the time to pay land rent at the Hacienda and contrary to the general custom they accept the money without issuing any receipt to anyone. Has this any relation to the important reforms of the general or it is nothing more than one of the arbitrary nets of the administrator? I’m more inclined to the latter one, though I would like it to be the first one (Rizal, PM 1993, pp. 98-99).

Much of what was consumed in these short periods did not only demand for contributions that went directly to the festivities. The appointed hermanos or hermanas (‘big’ brothers or sisters tasked with the management of the celebrations), expended resources taken from duties levied from the peasants who labored on their land. Many of the religious festivals coincided with the harvest season, when granaries were fully stocked and numerous taxes—such as kita, bandala, adwana, compras reales, polos y servicios, to name a few—were excised from the populace who not only made contributions to their respective haciendas (or estates) but to the Church and the government as well. For the figureheads, the role of mounting such festivities projected their prestige and status that it was common for any town to have families and haciendas trying to outdo each other. As to how these contributions were accounted for, similar to the dismay expressed by Paciano,
leaves much room for speculation. Nevertheless, the town carried out these celebrations, treating commoners with lavish spectacles and feasts filled with dishes of Spanish names that could only be sampled in these special occasions.

Similarities with precolonial feasting activities stop at the installation of social prestige. By this time, the networks that unified different communities together disappeared as politics transferred the control of the network-savvy datu to a central administration that installed its own appointed leader at every unit of social organization. The cabezas ran districts and villages, the gobernadorcillos took charge of municipal governments, the alcalde mayors administered the provincial units, and the gobernador general oversaw the whole colony and reported directly to the Spanish throne. The same political structure also confounded its edicts through the installation of a religious order within the colonies. The Recopilación (1943), which compiles Spain’s numerous ordinances in its colonies, reiterated numerous religious laws alongside policies of a political, military and financial nature. Although the celebrations and the participation they demanded seem to emanate out of a religious mandate, their enactment also repositions the centrality of the newly constituted land-owning nobility and friars who were responsible for subsidizing these feasts and in mobilizing sets of elite and peasant tributaries within the networks of the new empire, thus creating a fissure between the indigenous population who paid tribute and those that collected it. Backed by foreign military strength and religious ideology, this new indigenous elite promoted the notion that the King’s dominion was to become exemplary of Christ’s deliverance, making it known that all contributions to the state were aligned with that of the church. Hence, state and church colluded in collecting taxes, bestowing a hierarchy based on the presumption that the new bureaucracy was grounded on a divinely ordained patronage system.

These contributions materialized because of fasting, which is also a product of religious indoctrination. As much as these feasts marked important celebrations within the communities where Spain’s laws were in effect, they only transpired a few times a year and represented breaks from the routines marked with eating
activities that were in no way similar to the highly anticipated feasts. The introduction of the encomienda or pueblo system forced previously mobile traders, hunters and gatherers to live within fixed settlements reflecting Europe’s geographic imagination (Phelan, 1959, p. 191). At the onset, the Spanish administration utilized land as property, establishing it as an important object in the accumulation of wealth and power. The extensive titling of land effected a drastic change from precolonial times that conceived of landowning as communal in spirit. The Spanish pueblo also became an intrinsic model for the reorganization of social life as one’s physical proximity to it determined one’s social standing. The parish church and town/municipal hall sat opposite each other in the plaza center, and organized the economic order and social hierarchy around it. Lumbera and Lumbera (1982, p. 31) make a pointed distinction between the taga-bayan (from the pueblo) and taga-bukid/bundok (from the fields/mountains) in relation to the privilege bestowed upon them by the church and state. The taga-bayan enjoyed a sense of centrality, and the term later on described the modern, urbane and civilized. On the other hand, the taga-bukid and taga-bundok became a derogatory term for people who come from the country, perceived as traditional, unrefined and uncivilized. Later on, the stinging distinctions between town and country will affix itself in the development of the national identity as bayan crystallizes to denote the nation with Manila, the national capital, assuming the proverbial signifier of progress and development. Meanwhile, the rest of the country suffered the stigma of positioning itself underneath the capital’s imagined supremacy, absorbing the terms taga-bukid and taga-bundok. Often employed in feudal economies patterned after Europe, the encomienda system limited the mobility and work opportunities of particular groups into specific localities. Land owners maintained privilege over the labor of the serfs or peasants coerced to work not just on the former’s land but also to render them a number of services.
As work carried on, the perceived quality of food and eating habits shifted drastically in both time and space. Religious feasts marked the passage from one cycle into the next offering the much-needed reprieve from hard labor, the opportunity to allocate surplus as well as collect taxes, and to celebrate religious rites. The consumption of Spanish dishes stressed notions of privilege and pleasure to such an extent that it soon found its way to everyday meals. Another important shift in food practices can also be observed in relation to one’s proximity to the pueblo. As the more urbane and civilized town dwellers enjoyed food replicating some of the mostly Spanish dishes that were to be found in fiestas, more traditional cooking fare dominated the meals of those situated on the periphery. The ‘Spanish influence entered from a position of ascendance,’ writes Fernandez (1994, p. 224). Fiesta dishes became an aspirational symbol that depicted the ability to partake in excesses:

The food of the colonizer was deemed superior, urbane, “civilizing”, greatly to be desired, even though expensive and rich. Unlike Chinese food, Spanish food became mainly fiesta food. The stuffed capons (relleno) and beef rolls (morcon, mechado); the stews of meats, sausages and vegetables (cocido, pochero); and the rich desserts (leche flan, brazo de Mercedes, sans rival) with ingredients and combinations richly beyond Filipino patterns and budgets, are today the food for family reunions, Christmas, entertaining important guests, and feasts (Fernandez, 1994, pp. 224-225).

The overindulgence in novel protein sources distinguished the taga-bayan’s meal from that of the taga-bukid. Food identified as Spanish demanded for protein sources that were either not yet available in the Philippines or, if they were accessible, required unwarranted amounts. The desserts that Fernandez enumerates, for instance, illustrate both. Traditional sweets such as rice cakes employed more starch and not a lot of protein. All three desserts mentioned by Fernandez demanded the employment of eggs which, although available locally, had to be used
in large amounts. Many of these desserts also demanded for milk and butter, products that were not readily available until the introduction of bovines in the country. Fundamental to the development of protein sources is the domestication of cattle to supply beef for elite consumption absent in the archipelago prior to Spain’s arrival (Phelan, 1959, pp. 111-113). Early attempts at cattle farming since the 1580s were relatively unproductive. The colony first experimented with breeds from Mexico through the Galleon Trade, but these did not acclimatize well. Although the smaller-sized Chinese and Japanese imports proved more successful, the 300 Peso tax collected from all cattle ranches between 1632 and 1633 suggest that their numbers were less than ideal. These figures changed gradually in the course of Spanish occupation as beef slowly became an important food commodity. By 1886, towards the end of Spanish reign, there were reported estimates of 555,016 cows in the country, providing at least one cow for every ten members of the human population (Montero, cited in Bankoff, 2001, pp. 417-418).

Labor also harbored the distinction between the meals of the nobility and the peasant. The meat dishes that Fernandez enumerates above require more time and effort to prepare. *Morcon* is a roulade of beef filled with other meats and vegetables, strung tightly before being stewed for hours in a pot. And although *relleno* uses fairly simple ingredients, the preparation can be quite tedious as it demands much skill and time to gut, debone and separate the flesh (usually fish or chicken) from the skin that needs to remain intact. The removed meat is then minced, seasoned and mixed with an assortment of chopped vegetables or other proteins before it is steamed, sautéed or fried. The cooked mixture is stuffed back in the skin from which the meat was removed, to be cooked a second time—fried, baked, grilled or steamed—before serving with a rich savory sauce. Like the *morcon* and *relleno*, many of the meals served in the pueblo reinforced the *taga-bayan’s* status, inflecting the complexity of what was then novel ingredients, rich sauces and seemingly delicate preparations of Spanish and even Mexican food to represent civility, superiority to the countryside and the conquest of nature. While reserved primarily for the everyday consumption
of the upper classes, it also required the concerted efforts of the lower classes responsible not just for the production of the ingredients but also in learning and appropriating the skills needed to make these dishes work in the colony.

In contrast, traditional protein sources consisted mainly of fish. The locations of many villages along the coasts and rivers proved beneficial in supplying more viable sources of protein from different species of fish, eels and crustaceans. Archeological data suggests that fishing implements found in Philippine precolonial societies generated more food than traditional hunting practices (Fox, 1966, p. 14). Even though there was an abundance of wild pigs and water buffalos, hunting and preparing them proved too laborious and time-consuming that it was reserved for special occasions. Spanish and Mexican dishes demanded for by colonial administrators eventually made novel protein sources aspirational, thereby institutionalizing upper class consciousness in the pueblos. Nevertheless, cooking practices utilizing fish continued to be enriched in the peripheries. They were more simple and straightforward. Compared to the thick and rich sauces essential in Spanish cooking, the preparation of fish required mostly water, salt and a souring agent like the citrus *calamansi* or vinegar. They utilized ingredients that upheld the ecological balance of available resources, and the simplicity of their preparation meant they could also be prepared in the fields using makeshift implements. Work entailed long hours, and cooking and eating became mobile activities. The preparation of food took place in improvised kitchens in the countryside. Here, men, women and children gathered together not only to work but also shared resources and food with one another, espousing a more communal nature to the simple meal. Even if such meals required humble ingredients and preparations, the subtle alterations in cooking styles produced a diverse range of tastes that sustained the Hispanized peasantry.
FASTING AND THE EMBODIMENT OF SUFFERING

The sustenance of the non-landed colonial subjects underscores an important cultural achievement of the Spanish conquest. How suffering became acceptable to a large segment of the population shifts attention back to the role of religion. This section magnifies key concepts found in a number of religious texts simultaneously influential during the Spanish period and critical towards the installation of suffering. The normalization of suffering is fundamental in refocusing collective efforts away from everyday subsistence and towards the monopolistic production of key products that determined the maintenance of political control and social differences. Through a Christ-figure that entrenched feudal notions of lordship within local hierarchical concepts, the non-landowning Filipino became perpetually indebted to the service of the landlord, resulting to the induction of widespread hunger and famine. As they strived to meet imposed quotas on rice and other valued crops, the state and the elite ignored collective sustenance. Religious idealism proved simultaneously beneficial in this regard: it obscured the responsibility of empire and its anointed elite to alleviate existing social conditions; and, through a suffering Christ, offered a rationale for salvation through the acceptance of poverty. Despite threats of food shortages besieging its occupation, Spain was able to maintain the disparity between its upper and lower classes for more than three centuries. This established the former’s power as they indulged new food sources requiring production processes that can only be met by usurping the hard work of the latter. Not only did the local peasantry struggle to mobilize their efforts to fill the granaries and reserves of their landlords, they were also left with the difficult task of finding ways to subsist for themselves.

In many ways, notions of fasting transcended its religious efficacy and became successfully ingrained at marking the boundaries separating the elite from the peasant class. I employ the Marxist definition of class that looks at hierarchies as by-products of relationships determined by ownership of production (Marx, 1976). Spain engaged in a project in the colony that idealized the lower classes’ rank based
on virtue while actually maintaining the hierarchies that subjugated them through the possession of land. The notion of private ownership of land was unheard of, and colonial policy directed the disavowal of local customs in seizing and converting land as Spanish property. The crown was at liberty to distribute property as rewards to loyal military and civilian servants. The distribution of land in this manner not only marked the distinctions between nobility and commoner, it also accustomed the colony to a homogeneous structure of political and social organization. Prior to Spain’s arrival in the islands in the 16th Century, there was no unified form of political and social hierarchy that was consistent throughout the archipelago. Scott (1975, p. 9) notes two general patterns of social organization differentiating the hierarchies in the north from the south. The most prevalent structure was the barangay, which Jocano describes as society built around strong kinship ties of a ruling family (parents, children and relatives) and their slaves. These communities co-existed for most part but were politically independent from each other. It was only until the arrival of Islam in the southern islands that the widely dispersed barangays began to be given a semblance of a political structure (represented by the sultanates) beyond the customary reach of kinship obligations (Corpuz, 1999, p. 13). However, with a scope of power infiltrating most of the archipelago, Spain concentrated these barangays around Manila. Under this set-up, the datu was able to preserve their customary functions through the assumption of the title of the cabeza de barangay (barangay head) tasked with the duty to collect tribute and recruit officials to help with administration duties (Arcilla, 1998, pp. 16-17). Despite retaining control over his old domain that allowed him to ‘engage in various tactics of enrichment, such as demanding excess payment and reviving debt slavery’ (Abinales and Amoroso, 2005, p. 57), the cabeça’s power was actually limited and was diluted in a long succession of figures above him. One historian describes the chain of command to be so variable that even after a century of rule in the Philippines, the administrative structure kept changing:
At first, people living together in one place were in the charge of an encomendero, a Spaniard who, for a commission, received all the figures from the barangay heads and assigned certain males to specific public services called the polo. When the annual tributes totaled 500 or more, the pueblo was erected as a municipio, whose top official was a gobernadorcillo [literally, 'little governor'], equivalent to today’s town mayor. He was assisted by four lower officials: the teniente mayor or town deputy, the juez de policía charged with peace and order, the juez de sementeras in charge of lands and crops, and the juez de ganados, in charge of livestock and the butchering of animals for sale.

Several municipios formed an alcaldía, (later provincia) governed by the alcalde mayor (later gobernador provincial). The latter could not enact laws, but merely implemented orders forwarded through the Manila office from Spain. He hardly made any decisions, although he recommended certain measures to the governor general in Manila (Arcilla, 1998, p. 17).

A formidable religious structure offset the lack of a clearly defined political configuration. A Royal Order promulgated in 1503 assured the Church’s place in the operations of encomiendas favored to receive land and tributes in their colonies in exchange for the conversion of pagans to Christianity. Legazpi, the first Governor-General appointed to the Philippines, granted religious orders like the Agustinians vast tracts of land in Cebu and Manila, two of the biggest urban centers in the archipelago attracting trade long before Spanish arrival. With the Church’s position assured through the land granted them, the friar and the religious ideology was to become critical in managing the state’s affairs:

A key figure in the local administrative set-up was the parish priest. In general, he was the supervising representative of the Spanish government for all local affairs, whose visto bueno (endorsement) of approval was required on almost all acts of the local officials. He assisted at the elections of the local officials, and his appraisal was necessary for the nominees. He was local school inspector, health inspector, prison inspector, inspector of the accounts of the gobernadorcillos and cabezas de barangay. The census lists, tax lists, list of army conscripts, register of births, of deaths, of marriages—all
required his approval. All these and numerous other miscellaneous functions were delegated to him by law.

His moral influence on local officials was likely to be far more extensive, and it seems clear that generally these officials sought—or received—the advice of the padre on all local affairs. Finally, the laws required that his opinion be sought when a confidential dossier was being drawn up for the administrative deportation of vagrants, or of persons whose loyalty was suspect—a circumstance of grave import to the nationalist movement (Schumacher, 1997, p. 11).

Religion’s moral influence extended beyond administrative duties and towards the habitus of daily life. Having the monopoly not only on the economic means of production but also the cultural capital to reproduce their consciousness, the systemic manipulation of collective systems during the Spanish period reflect both the tastes and the behavior demanded for by the Church. The concept of physical fasting easily lent itself to the aggrandizement of suffering. The denial of bodily sustenance became symbolic of the denial of worldly desire. It naturalized the acceptance of the status quo, and cultivated a preoccupation with a religiously conceived afterlife that can only be achieved through the transcendence of this world’s materiality.

Religious doctrine reproduced in a number of ways the idea that the here and now was a fleeting construct beside the permanence of the afterlife. The pasyon, the generic term for narrative poems comprised of octosyllabic cinquains, retold the story of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection while assimilating the form of traditional Philippine epics (Mojares, 1983, Reyes, SS 1982). Although written in form, its constant performance lent it an oral character that easily became popular throughout the country. Christ’s life could be likened to traditional epic heroes. Virtuous, able to perform miracles and wise, the pasyon’s Christ possessed all the important attributes justifying his ascent as a leader. His journey from the humble beginnings of his birth to his redemption in heaven offered a quest projecting the collective desire for deliverance, salvation and the righteous life. With Christ as the central figure, the pasyon modifies the Biblical narrative to fit both evangelical and
political schemes of the Spanish regime (Rafael, 1998, Ileto, 1979, Tiongson, 1975, Perkinson and Mendoza, 2004). In particular, Ileto’s revaluation of the pasyon as an important account of ‘history from below’ challenges the popularity of historical appraisals attributing the entry of enlightenment sensibility and the establishment of nationalism to the European-educated ilustrado. Ileto sees the pasyon as a tool providing the masses with subversive ideology, and its language—replete with both religious flourishes and pre-enlightenment principles—supplied the vocabulary towards a succession of peasant resistances culminating in the Philippine Revolution against Spain.

If Ileto presupposes a sense of hope in the transmission of religious tradition, it is also possible to look at the same religious imagination as a source for countless symbolisms stirring tensions between the internalization of suffering and the naturalization of mundane routines of day-to-day living—in which food figured heavily. The 1882 version of the widely circulated Casaysayan nang Pasion Mahal ni Jesucristong Panginoon Natin na Sucat Ipag-alab nang Puso nang Sinomang Babasa (The Story of the Beloved Passion of Jesus Christ Our Lord That Will Consume the Heart of Any Reader, in Javellana 1988) begins its story with the Old Testament edict on pride. Consistent with its biblical origins, Adam and Eve’s dilemma with the forbidden fruit here establishes the constraints confounding man’s will in Christian pedagogy:

That arbol de la ciencia [tree of knowledge]
was none other than the manzana [apple]
taboo for Adam and Eve,
for to eat its fruit
meant sure perdition.
(Javellana 1988, p. 46, stanza 59, trans in p. 159)

The eating of the forbidden fruit hails the presence of both good and evil—the form of knowledge structuring Spanish Christian teachings—and signals the capacity towards malice and selfishness. The failure to observe the forbidden fruit’s
inviolability has paved the way for the indoctrination of original sin, eventually positioning Christ’s coming. Suffering, then, is believed to have been brought upon the world because of this defiance and passed on from one generation to the next through intercourse (Fitzgerald and Cavadini, 1999, pp. 607-614). However, the capacity to sin equally demands for the volition to do good, and the birth of Christ signals the need to cleanse ‘the darkened souls / of those fallen in sin’ (Javellana 1988, p. 164, stanza 237). Christ, in a way, is a transfiguration of the forbidden fruit. Only this time his presence does not validate the existence of evil directly, but the opposite: if man has the volition to choose evil, he also has the capacity to be good. Christ symbolized that choice. His passage as man, borne lust-free from the womb of a virgin mother, becomes necessary in realizing the presence of self-sacrifice, obedience and suffering. If the consumption of the forbidden fruit led to sin, the consumption of Christ, ritualized in communion and taught with intentions to be practiced in everyday life, was believed to lead to goodness.

The consumption of Christ is a complex and multifarious experience, and his passage into the Philippines does not necessarily translate into a concept cohesive with the intentions of religious doctrine. As it is, the image of Christ as lord confounded notions of aristocracy and religiosity in feudal Europe. The word lord, derived from hlafweard which meant bread keeper, reflected old Germanic customs of tribe leaders providing food to his followers (Oxford 2005). The organization of these feudal societies not only ensured the smooth operations within the manor, it also stabilized hierarchical structures that were nearly impossible for individuals to disrupt. Bloch (1961) argues that much of the structures of feudal life were conditioned by ‘lordship’. Here, non-political entities such as social relationships and cultural vestiges are argued to be able to configure the political control within a given society. In the case of feudal societies, Boutruche points out that lordship is rendered through the ‘power of command, constraint and exploitation [... and] the right to exercise such power’ (quoted in Davies, 2009, p. 2).
Religion, I argue, existed not solely for the purposes of prayer and ritual. Instead, the need to reaffirm either an existing order or a new one that is to be enforced upon society warrants its existence. Reverting to Marx’s valuation of ownership of production, this current set-up of work significantly reduced the farmer into a wage earner simultaneously losing ‘connection with the object of labor and become objects themselves’ (Christiano et al., 2002, p. 125). In the case of the Philippines, the alienation brought about by the objectification of the laborer is not only delivered by the need to meet quotas and profits, the deification of oppression and poverty in the image of Christ also justifies it. The characterization of the Casaysayan’s Christ laid out an ideal detrimental to an already overworked peasant class. The new deity addressed material needs by feeding thousands with a few loaves of bread, and performing a miracle to allow fishermen a bountiful catch. He was also commiserative towards excess, transforming water into wine at a wedding banquet that had far too many guests. However, the same Christ mangled earthly providence with heavenly salvation. Whereas scripture and other foundations of religious thought evoked a Christ that has done so much to overcome fear and trepidation, the Casaysayan downplays this characteristic in order to intensify his divinity (Javellana, 1988, p. 33-34). Here, the Casaysayan’s anonymous author has Christ in the pivotal scene at Gethsemane declare what is a heresy in Catholic thought: ‘dili aco tauong tunay’ (I am not a true man) (Javellana 1988, p.91, v. 1495). There were only a few moments in this pasyon that Christ is beset by weakness or self-doubt, thus imparting a hero with an unwavering understanding of his mission and completely transcending his humanity.

The term ‘lord’ impregnated religious constructs to different Filipino words, reconstituting the social and political hierarchies they once represented. The Kapampangan word guino, for instance, came to mean lord, even though it originally expressed master. The same can be seen with kinship terms. In Ilocano, the word apo, which originally meant grandfather, has also come to express lord. The widely used Tagalog word panginoon, assimilated into the Filipino lingua franca as lord,
traditionally denoted a superior for whom one worked. Although lord and *panginoon* are both expressive of a system where have-nots are subsumed under the production processes of those with some form of capital, the two terms vary. *Panginoon* was used in reference to ‘a familiar chief with whom one served, with whom one worked and with whom one shared the fruits of joint labors with him’ (Hornedo, 2001, pp. 166-167). What it connotes is different from the European notions of the (feudal) lord. *Panginoon* underscores a certain sense of camaraderie fostered between him and his employee in that they both have had a hand in the tedious aspects of labor. In contrast, the lord—at whatever level of the feudal pyramid—stood outside most processes of production and above the peasant laborer. Where the *panginoon* remunerated services by sharing the output, the lord reaped a significant amount of it often inciting the protection he offered as leverage.

The word lord imposed its feudal connotations upon local and customary expressions of class structures that were by no means homogenous in the archipelago. According to Scott (1982), after examining the major differences between class structures at the start of the Spanish occupation, much of Luzon was organized around what Juan de Plasencia categorized into four ‘estates,’ namely *principales, hidalgos, pecheros,* and *esclavos;* while the islands in the Visayas can be classified into three ‘orders’ consisting of *datus, timawas* and *oripun* as noted in the accounts of Miguel de Loarca and the Boxer Codex. Scott proceeds to recount how such categories inflected in these writings by early Spanish settlers simplify the existing social structures of the locals. Useful in this discussion is how the term *principales,* or the ruling class, conflate different Tagalog social and political ranks together:

The Spaniards called all members of this First Estate, whether actually occupying positions of rule or not, *principales.* Since the Real Academia Española defines *principal* as a “person or thing that holds first place in value or importance and is given precedence and preference before others,” it is a suitable term, more so than any English equivalent. None of the accounts give a Filipino equivalent
for this word, but it was surely either maginoo or some other derivative of poon/puno ("chief, leader"). Plasencia translates “Lord God” as Panginoon Dios [panginoon, whose root word is poon], and one of the leaders who surrendered the Port of Manila in 1571 was Maginoo Marlanaway. The force of the word is made clear in the San Buenaventura dictionary: punó is defined as “principal or head of a lineage,” gino as “noble by lineage or parentage,” and magino as “principal in lineage or parentage,” and señor (lord) is equated with all three (Scott, 1982, p. 99).

Through a Christ figure characterized as both god and man, the enforcement of Christianity in the Philippines carried an ambiguous idea of lordship. The principales were the ruling elite in Spanish pueblos who extracted supremacy either from birthright or monarchical concession. Under the Regalian Doctrine, land ownership determined positions under the monarch who, in turn, distributed these lands to his subordinates. The privilege exempted the principales from any form of forced labor and from paying taxes, and bestowed them with the rights to vote and be elected into office thereby congealing their hold on political control further. All these were enforced through the belief that responsibilities laid down by God established privilege. As Spanish education, mastery of the Castilian language and wealth were important prerequisites in the maintenance of their position, the privileged, in principle, were also tasked to carry out responsibilities towards those situated beneath them. Their visibility as key figures that funded town and religious activities reinforced their stature as important patrons of social, civic and religious affairs. The privileges, however, far outweighed the duties they performed as the loyalty entreated in lord-vassal relationships that Spain enforced were by no means congruent to that of Europe. The fusion of traditional precolonial nobility with the Hispanic upper class generated a more divisive society held together by the dependence of the esclavos or oripun/alipin on the extortion of the principales, who readily perpetuated loans and favors that worsened the enslavement of the former.

The peasant serving under the lord was to collectively become the alipin, a word which has taken on the meaning of slave. In his discussion of the Lord’s Prayer
compiled alongside other missionary teachings from the 17th and 18th C. in the volume entitled Declaración de la Doctrina Christiana en Idioma Tagalog (Declaration of Christian Doctrine in the Tagalog Language), De Oliver (1995, p. 5) preaches that God is ‘not only the Father of the noble, of great men, of those with gold, rather he is also the true Father of evil men, the poor, the abandoned and the enslaved’. The poor and the *alipin*—categorized here in the same vein with the evil and the abandoned—were imagined to have a paternal affinity towards God. The Declaración implants an image of God as the righteous father who defends the weak and instills a sense of justice, flattening out existing structures that stratified society at that time. But the Declaración’s God is also a father figure that demanded indentured servitude:

‘You owe debt to God for a lot of things, your soul, the rice, the clothes’ (De Oliver, 1995, p.12). The image of the just father is offset by his portrayal as creditor who—although willing to overlook his people’s debt to him—sought to be gratified through obedience and constant service:

The rich man who has many slaves, and many wives, teaches them what to do, no one is free from his command, so that all his slaves follow his will, he enslaves them, others he orders in the fields, others to fish […] therefore no one is spared from their own work.

It is the same with the Lord God, who assigns and commands us what to do, he wishes for everyone to obey him, since he is the true Lord not just of mankind, which is why the heavens never stop, nor the sun, those are the commands of God to them; and so with the seas, they are told by the Lord God to not cross the shore, the winds may push them […] the waves may grow […] they still rest upon the sand marking the boundaries God made (De Oliver, 1995, p. 107).

These depictions of relations between lord and man, and consequently of lord and vassal, presume a latent form of control which conveniently lends itself to the process. Kaut (1961) notes how the traditional value of (*pagtanaw ng*) *utang na loob* translates into a contractual and reciprocal obligation among Filipinos, particularly that of the Tagalogs from where the term emanates. Loosely translated as ‘debt of prime obligation’ (Kaut, 1961, p. 256), and ‘lifelong debt to another for some favor
bestowed’ (Ileto, 1979, p. 9), *utang na loob* manifests itself as a form of social control that appeals strongly towards personal affiliations. Used on its own, whether expressed out loud or said to one’s self, exclaiming *‘utang na loob!’* implores despair and reproach for how things are turning out, a plead to give one a break as though fate or the universe owed it to him or her. It is not a facetious expression blurted out randomly, but indicates a serious and often personal conflict. Children are taught to show *utang na loob* to their parents for their life and for raising them. Friends reciprocate *utang na loob* to each other, using the term as a means to admonish the lack of loyalty, camaraderie and gratitude for very grave situations threatening relationships. To call or describe someone as *walang* (without) *utang na loob* is a grave insult worse than cursing. Likewise, the concept is present in religious catechism as it also describes man’s indebtedness towards God. The concept is entrenched in feudal relations. Peasants are forever bound by *utang na loob* to their creditors, often finding themselves paying back for favors granted to them.

In *The Gift* (2002), Mauss constructs the gift-giving or exchanging processes as an ascription not just of material wealth but also the circulation of social relationships. Generosity is never bereft of self-interest, and any act of giving is often laden with the expectation of repayment that is meant to solidify or enhance one’s social standing. Applying this notion of exchange and reciprocity, the debt imagined to exist between entities where *utang na loob* is present can never really be paid for—at least in material terms—and burrows into personal matters that call into question one’s character. The word *loob*, literally meaning inside, is the root word for a number of other critical Tagalog concepts, all of which present grave implications towards how *utang na loob* can be stripped and pragmatized. *Kaloob*, literally a gift, implicates a willingness to offer a gift unbridled by any expectations of reciprocity. Transformed into the verb *ipinagkaloob*, the gift is given with the understanding that there is no material or physical obligations attached to it, and is charged with an emotional value that speaks highly about the giver’s affinity towards the recipient. Used with *utang*, meaning debt or loan that is payable, it impresses a
paradoxical thought towards utang na loob. It is a loan or a debt that is offered out of one’s own volition, and payment is not expected. But payment is necessary. And though that payment may not take any material form, it is incremental and adds up to a series of obligations that perpetuate one’s subservience and fealty within a hierarchy. It permeates into yet another important precept that calls attention to one’s kalooban, or one’s inner being:

You should therefore love that the Heavenly father must take you as his children, and if you have accepted that you are his children before, proclaim that you are his children; so that his love for you grows stronger. Why, if you do not allow the father to enslave you, should you expect to inherit his wealth? Yes, Christians, if you achieve that kind of loob, the Lord God will tenderly adopt you here on earth and enslave your souls, and will give your loob much comfort, and will avenge your noble loob against the evil loob who do you wrong, and he will bestow you with everlasting life wherever you may be taken. (San Jose, 1994, pp. 394-395)

The fulfillment of this deliverance, of course, points to an indefinite time and place, as can be gleaned from this passage from San Jose’s sermon. The invasion of the loob creates an affective space conditioning the dispensation of reality into an oppressive structure in which God, ‘the true Father of enslaved men’ (‘totoong Ama, nang pagaalila sa tawo’) (De Oliver, 1995, p.4), becomes its rationalizing signifier. As the display of empathy and affinity that are more emotional than pragmatic project specific expectations, the inability to pay the material manifestations of these gifts and favors accumulates into a series of obligations that have no finality except in the religious and/or spiritual deliverance of one’s kalooban:

It is probably why, Christians, you should act now and obey God, do not incense him; do what is holy, while the time for action has not yet passed, so that your souls be relieved in heaven, so that you may claim your place in God’s land. The person who is lazy to farm during the rainy season will die hungry in summer, he who does not sow: if he does not force himself now to work according to God’s command, will die hungry in Hell. (De Oliver, 1995, p. 187)
Displacing hunger with spiritual transcendence, and redemption with debt payment, the landlord is afforded the ability to manipulate the *kalooban* of his constituents to his favor. It is in this regard that the boundaries blur between State and Church, with the former relying on the latter to manage a significant amount of both private and public enterprises. Although the Church was most vocal about the exploitation of civil labor early in the Spanish reign, they were culpable for many abuses. One of the earliest documented cases is that of the Friar Lorenzo De Leon, who was deposed as Agustinian provincial superior in 1607 after accusations of coddling a number of Agustinians involved in illicit trading activities that constituted of undervaluing the prices of rice, cloth and other goods contributed by their respective parishioners and selling these for large profits (Phelan, 1959, p. 103).

Even towards the termination of their reign, the Church’s ability to subjugate peasant labor became common knowledge. Connolly (1992, pp. 7-23) identifies how the Colegio de San Jose established by Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa in 1601 was handed over to the Dominicans in an attempt to bolster revenues after its decline in the hands of secular clergy. The college, which started out as a boarding school for Spanish residents in Manila, relied heavily on funds drawn from land holdings. It was first administered by the Jesuits in the 17th C. who consolidated revenue to acquire the San Pedro Tunasan hacienda (now the town of San Pedro, Laguna), one of the most prosperous of Jesuit estates. With the expulsion of the Jesuits in the Philippines in 1768, the *colegio* and its holdings were turned over to a succession of secular clergy based in the cathedral of Manila with whom the educational services and administration of these haciendas became mismanaged. Rent collection became arbitrary and favored the relatives and friends of its administrators with some debts amounting to more than twice the annual rent. The foundation was turned over to the Dominicans in 1877 with the expectations of reorganizing the enterprise to make more incremental profits. Such aspirations would bear no fruition as the direct control of the clergy in San Pedro and in other...
estates became embroiled in the turmoil of the colony’s struggle against Spain and consequently the United States that was triggered by the 1896 Revolution.

ONGOING REVOLUTIONS

The 1896 Revolution against Spain was the culmination of a long history of uprisings fraught with tensions of having to erect the nation and the impassioned retrieval of the collective *kalooban* suppressed under the machinations of colonial rule. Politically, the moment saw the fortification of nationalist sentiment demanding reforms that have blossomed from differing revolutionary aims brought about by rigid social stratification. By this time the class of *principales* identified in the beginning of Spanish rule started to fragment as the rigid social norms characterizing their group no longer sustained their interests. Cullinane identifies four stereotypical characteristics conflating the Filipino elite towards the end of the Spanish rule: ‘wealth (the haves), ethnic origin (the creoles and the mestizos), office holding (the principalia), and education (the ilustrados)’ (2003, p. 9). While these categories appear useful in defining the various sources underscoring privilege, they also oversimplify the manner in which control has been ascertained (more detailed discussions can be read in Fast and Richardson, 1979, Rafael, 2010, Schumacher, 1997).

The extent to which the homogenizing efforts of the Spanish colony failed to construct a unified identity for the upper classes deemed responsible for inspiring nationalist sentiment can be seen, for instance, in the plight of Filipino *mestizos*—Filipinos of a mixed ancestry—who were the earliest critics of colonial rule. Their hyphenation resulted to a precarious cultural and social condition that burdened the Spanish-Filipino with much resentment towards their ambiguous position in society. Although they were allowed to accumulate wealth and land as well as numerous positions in the bureaucracy, their standing also prohibited them from garnering the control enjoyed by ‘pure’ Spaniards. This was evident in the struggle towards the
secularization of Philippine parishes that questioned the discharge of Filipino and Filipino-mestizo secular priests in favor of Spanish friars from religious orders (Luengo, 2000). Pedro Peláez, who was of mixed ancestry, was the first non-Spaniard to become Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Manila and fought for the equal treatment of non-Spanish priests in the Church’s administration. His struggle went as far as the Vatican only for him to perish in an earthquake that demolished the Manila Cathedral. His struggle for equal opportunity was taken on by Father Jose Burgos, whose death in 1872 in the Cavite Mutiny along with priests Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora triggered a series of uprisings leading to the 1896 Revolution against Spain.

Similarly, the ilustrados—the intellectual class educated in Spanish and exposed to European enlightenment ideals—sought reforms oriented towards the integration of the Philippines and Filipinos in Spain’s operations (Cullinane, 2003). If the demoralized mestizo demanded for equality within Philippine society, the ilustrado looked beyond the racial distinctions that burdened them and into the insurgency that materialized not just in their class but also especially amongst the masses. Jose Rizal, the most revered of ilustrados, warned against the despotism of colonial rule and how it may end up in a bloody revolution. The integration he asked for reflected in his earlier appeal for the realization of civil rights crucial in improving the economic conditions of the colony through its conversion as a Spanish province thereby warranting representation in the Spanish Cortes, and more liberal conditions that allowed the press to discuss the affairs of the time and for citizens to assemble freely.

Both mestizos and ilustrados highlighted the conventional concerns defining the manner in imagining Filipino nationalism. A third strand of revolutionary precepts only examined in the last few decades is the participation of the urban working class—who were neither mestizo nor ilustrado—in aiding the revolution’s fate. Philippine history books often single out Rizal as the brains of the revolt, and shipyard employee Andres Bonifacio, whose mobilization of a group of city laborers
that expanded into the revolutionary group of the Katipunan, as the muscle that executed Rizal’s plans. But Bonifacio and the Katipunan’s intentions demanded for far more radical reforms that went beyond the mere abolition of Spanish control and the installation of egalitarian principles. Bonifacio’s contributions have been reassessed and his connections to the rising number of working class intellectuals who did not have the same opportunities as their *ilustrado* counterparts (Ocampo, 1999). For historians like Schumacher (1991, p. 182), Bonifacio ‘can be considered *ilustrado*, even if a self-made one, in spite of his lack of formal education’. Despite not being able to receive education from sought after European universities, Bonifacio’s infiltration of a foreign company ‘gave him [and others like him] opportunities for advancement’ (Schumacher 1991, p. 182.). Their struggle reflected their *sama ng loob* or ill feelings not towards the Spaniards who discriminated against them nor for the political atmosphere that disenfranchised them, but for the *ilustrados* whose reformist ideals abandoned the causes that represented the working class and the revolutionary nationalist sentiment that promised to unify different social classes together. The Katipunan’s influence spread in the provinces surrounding Manila, and the peasant resistance sparked by *utang na loob* to the elites they served who, by this time, became convinced of the possibility of independence after the wealthier Filipino-Chinese and statesman Emilio Aguinaldo wrestled control of the Katipunan from Bonifacio and declared an independent republic on 12 June 1898.

Although Aguinaldo’s ascent gave the revolution the support it needs from the wealthier Filipinos, the peasant’s participation in it cannot be completely undermined merely as the brutish force behind the upheaval. The Manila-based elites like Aguinaldo, who have been behind the Katipunan’s fight, appropriated the peasant cause. Manila-based workers not only had to endure agricultural work but also forced labor requiring them to take on unpaid menial work such as building ships, constructing roads and infrastructure, and even take on mining for more than three centuries of Spanish occupation. Collectively referred to as *polo y servicios*, the
system of forced labor developed alongside the *encomienda* in order to supply the workforce needed for public works, it became a requirement for men aged sixteen to sixty to render services for forty days a year, thus taking valuable labor away from the fields. Another public duty that burdened many commoners was the *vandala*, which obligated different pueblos to sell their rice to the Spanish treasury at prices determined by the government. The government exploited this system, often undervaluing the price of rice in order to demand larger quotas the excess of which was used by scrupulous provincial governors allowed to participate in trading activities. A few properties were exempt from making such tributes to the crown, but the exemptions granted proved problematic. They were arbitrary and benefitted mostly ecclesiastical landholdings and a few estates whose landowners were close to high-ranking officials. Worse, the haciendas or estates not granted discharge bore the burden of filling the quotas left out by those who were exempt. Then there were also those personal obligations that are anchored on the laborer’s indebtedness to the landlord. The cultivation of the former’s land became more fundamental than the work in the fields allocated for peasant sustenance. And where there was no work on the hacienda, landlords could have redirected worker efforts towards other tasks such as construction, grazing, and gathering of raw materials which were then transformed into some other product that could either be used in the haciendas or for profit.

The church, colonial administration and landowning elites directed the efforts of both rural and urban workers towards commercialization. The transformation of rice from prestige good into a commodity became the most decisive symbol of peasant affliction. If in the past rice was produced in limited quantities for tributary offerings to chiefs and overlords who reserved them for important ritual functions, it has become the main component in everyday meals as the entire archipelago struggled to produce rice to fill granaries and reserves. While it is tempting to read rice’s transformation in this manner as a step in the process of flattening out hierarchies from the Philippines’ precolonial past, the manner in which it has been
made commonplace is very revealing of the country’s entry into a more complex system of control and subordination. Rice transformed into a prime commodity for taxation early on. In 1595, after three decades of demanding cash tributes, Gov. Gómez Pérez Dasmaríñas enforced mixed tributes, half of which was to be paid in cash and the other half in goods usually in the form of rice. This came after Bishop Domingo de Salazar who used the pulpit to denounce the crown for collecting and even increasing tributes in encomiendas that were not receiving what Spain promised to give its new colonies, namely an organized government and religious indoctrination. Although the move was meant to ease the burden of taxation, it proved more detrimental as it allowed Spain to control prices devaluing the value of rice, thus increasing yield demanded from tributes. As a result, the 17th and 18th Centuries saw a number of local revolts happening throughout the archipelago most of which protested the increasing number of taxes particularly on quotas affecting rice production, which was significantly devalued. For instance, the 1660 Maniago uprising in the province of Pampanga was the result of such devaluation of rice. Because Pampanga was relatively prosperous and well organized, it drew the attention of Spanish authorities that exacted more tributes in the form of rice and forced labor. Don Francisco Maniago, himself from a well-heeled family, was a charismatic leader who stretched the truth in order to boost local support, even making false claims an army of Kapampangans successfully invaded Manila. He took advantage of the Dutch invasion and stirred the locals into a rebellion that soon attracted the attention of neighboring provinces in Luzon. His success was short-lived, however, as Governor Manrique de Lara slowly recaptured each rebelling town in Pampanga one by one forcing Maniago to surrender. And although many similar revolts that happened throughout the country were also momentary, they were consistent in protesting the commodification of rice, highlighting the deflation of peasant labor and the lack of rights to land ownership.

The 1789 opening of Manila’s port intensified the commercialization of cash crops. The Spanish colonial government gave permission to American, British,
Portuguese and French ships to enter Manila, resulting to increased output in order to meet growing market demands. Attention towards intensified production of cash crops translated to less work on food production. During this time the local economy became completely dependent on rice, which was used to pay tribute to the state and as rent for complex landholding arrangements that emerged in the monastic estates and in private haciendas. Trade’s surplus—if there were any—was to become a source for food. Since there was hardly any left, much of the goods for sustenance had to be bought back from the crown which sold it at far more exorbitant amounts. The manipulation of the price of rice was evident from the very start of Spanish occupation. In 1580, four reales bought 400 gantas of rice (approximately 800 kilos) and in less than three years, the same amount could only buy 40 or 50 gantas (Corpuz, 1989, p. 102). The increasing exploitation of the value of rice came the need to intensify its production along with other cash crops. While this impacted food production positively, taxation absorbed the increase in output, fueling the usurpation and expansion of property for the nobility who demanded for larger and more productive estates. On the other hand, an increasing number of landless peasants fended for themselves, often borrowing food against the taxes they paid. With food surplus at the disposal of the elite, the system exploited cheap sources of labor forcing the absorption of lower classes into agricultural work. And because of high taxation, it was difficult for them to escape such work, accumulating more debt as time progressed.

Underscoring the overzealous monocultural production of rice is Spain’s failure to develop other potential sources of food and sustenance. The development of a limited amount of crops and goods specific to Spanish merchant interests ignored the expansion of other potential sources of food given that the limited attempts at the taxonomic and biological investigation of the flora and fauna. Religious missionaries whose efforts are reflected primarily in different dictionaries and grammar books circulated for colonial instruction also undertook this task. While the knowledge imbibed in many of these sources do enumerate names of
certain species and descriptions based on their uses, the epistemological understanding of their numerous functions leave much to be desired and is often entangled within Spain’s attempts at mastering a number of languages following its mandate on not using a common lingua franca. López-Lázaro (2007) makes a poignant case for the Americas and how the Spanish Crown, whose imagination could not overcome the narrow-mindedness of medieval thinking that exalted hunger and suffering, neglected biological exploration. Imagining Spain’s way of life as the absolute singular truth rendered serious implications in the expansion of its empire using the cross to legitimize the grabbing of land from so-called pagans, and the chastisement of the products of the world outside Spain’s comprehension as works of the devil. Such an attitude was also apparent in the Philippines. The 1621 Tamblot Revolt in the province of Bohol started after Tamblot, a local babaylan or spiritual leader for whom the uprising was named, disputed Christianity’s supremacy and challenged a Spanish priest to a duel determined by producing rice and wine from a bamboo stalk to see which god was greater. Accounts in ‘Medina’s Historia 1630-34’ compiled in Blair & Robertson (1903, v. 24, p. 116) claim that after both religious leaders prayed to their respective gods and bamboo stalks were cut, rice and wine reportedly flowed out of Tamblot’s piece but nothing came out of the Spanish priest’s. Tamblot’s triumph supposedly allowed him to win back recent converts to Christianity and fortify local opposition against Spain. Unmindful of the local wine making processes of the time, the historic records in which this account appears dismisses Tamblot’s victory saying that it was the work of the demon. Whether or not there is veracity to the depiction, its inclusion in historic accounts emphasizes the lack of Spanish efforts in trying to evolve the local cultural traditions of its colonies and its corresponding ecologies within the empire’s concerns.

The task of developing policy out of existing biological constraints was left to wily entrepreneurs whose quest for profits appealed significantly to the Crown’s waning treasury. The cultivation of ginger in Mexico and the Caribbean was done through the encouragement, first, of Philippine Governor Guido de Lavezaris who
in 1573 recommended the introduction of the tuber whose ability to withstand long travel made it an easy candidate for cultivation in the Spanish colonies in the American continent. Although the crown did not necessarily turn down the proposal, it also didn’t do anything to activate it thus making the passage of ginger happen rather slowly. It was the prompting of Manila-based Jesuit Juan Bautista Román eleven years later in 1584 that convinced Spain to take his recommendation of acculturating spices from Asia. This after Román appealed to ‘the monarchy’s laissez faire attitude on such matters given the freedoms royal permission granted’ (López-Lázaro, 2007, p. 13). By growing such products in American soil, Román envisioned the importation of spices to Europe from Mexico and, in so doing, cutting off supply from the Italians who at this time lorded over Spanish markets. The entrepreneurial character of botanical experimentation resulted into an undocumented epistemology of resources, which, arguably, hurt both Spain and its colonies in the long term.

Such neglect is made starker in light of the environmental and pathological problems resulting from Spain’s operations in the Philippines. Worst among these consequences is the demographic collapse that plagued Spanish conquest in the first half of the 17th Century. Commonly attributed to this decline is the bloodshed resulting from the Moro raids that started at the end of the previous century and the Spanish-Dutch wars between 1609 and 1648 (Phelan, 1959, pp. 100-101). The resettlement of the population within the new towns that Spain erected also contribute significantly to the number and suggest a rash ignorance of and disregard for environmental conditions affecting the disturbance not just of plant and animal species, but human living conditions as well. The natural landscape was cleared in able to pave the way for taxable properties, leading to a series of locust attacks that diminished both profits and sustenance. One friar describes an infestation in 1687 in this manner:

The locusts were so many that in dense and opaque clouds they darkened the sun, and covered the ground on which they settled.
These insects ravaged the grain-fields, and left the meadows scorched; and even the trees and canebreaks they stripped off the green leaves. These locusts were so voracious that they not only laid waste every kind of herbage and verdure, but they entered the houses and gnawed and pierced with holes every kind of cloth; and those who flapped sheets and coverlets at the locusts to drive them away—as is usually done at other times in the invasions of this pest, with some effect—on this occasion found that the only result was to ruin these articles, for the locusts ate them, and destroyed them with their poisonous jaws (cited in Corpuz, 1989, p. 104).

The ignorance and disregard for human and ecological resources provide an incisive commentary about Spanish policies oriented towards commercial expansion and which bureaucrats—deemed inefficient at best—executed. The consequences on food are overwhelming. The agglomeration of rice, beef, pork and chicken as the stuff of culinary or collective popular tradition must be read alongside the inequality they espouse given not just the power relations to which we can easily read into, but also in light of the ecological and ethical problems they have imparted. It also embedded hierarchical distinctions using the establishment of a sophisticated repertoire of ideological and institutional structures. The reorganization of the archipelago into *encomiendas* and *pueblos* in the beginning of Spanish rule served to maximize efficiency in managing farmlands in the guise of religious indoctrination. It consolidated labor towards the production of profitable resources while positioning the same labor into a complex system of control, neglecting their lack of nourishment in favor of reproducing their subjugation under a complex hierarchy that extends beyond their reach. On one hand, the reorganization of Philippine landholdings on a public scale ensured that the resources of those in the periphery were mobilized towards the nobility concentrated in the centers of these different *pueblos*. The nobility, in turn, directed these resources towards Manila which, consequently, found ways to convert these resources into capital through commercial enterprises legitimizing the re-selling of almost the same set of products back to the peasants producing them and towards a larger market first represented
by the Galleon Trade monopoly and by the consequent opening of the port of Manila.

While these movements seem to affix themselves towards matters affecting the public sphere, their manifestation within the private realms of Philippine society is just as, if not more, powerful. Materially, it presented a set of dishes on the table that explicitly fabricated a cultural tapestry around the importance of rice and proteins such as beef, pork and chicken, which, in many ways, represented providence and deliverance but have also evolved into implicit symbols of paucity and oppression. Meals—both simple and festive—revolve around rice, and now impart an important construct that communicates a clear sense of collective belonging. Symbolically, however, as the availability of such victuals become more and more scarce on the dining table, they also impart a sense of lack and alienation. Not being able to perform the ritualistic meals that congeal one’s connection to the nation, it also constructed a rhetoric around religious consolation, peddling the image of an agonizing Christ as a model to accept the simple meal and the physical discomfort it represents as a means to attain spiritual fulfillment.

If Spanish colonization anchored the Philippines’ culture on religion, the American period in Philippine history from 1898 to 1946 relied mostly on science to rationalize the conversion of daily life into an integrated national system. A striking feature in this shift is how the American colonial government took on the challenge of feeding the nation as public policy included provisions for concerns like nutrition, sanitation and education. Although the production of food was not left to the rhetoric of eternal salvation that archaic Catholic teachings preached, the Malthusian reliance on technology promised to create more food for a growing population despite the limited resources. Most importantly, American colonial rule made promises to feed both rich and poor. Although the parallelism with the European shift from feudalism to the enlightenment is striking, the installation of scientific principles in the production of food pathologized indigenous and local traditions further. The next chapter discusses the historic legacy of the United States
on Philippine food, whose use of science has left a number of contradictions: the relegation of local food practices further into the periphery, the transformation of processed food into victuals that are more palatable than dishes made from fresh ingredients, and the insistence on propagating the Filipino’s identity as a farmer while simultaneously conferring power to an educated elite situated in the city.
Spain’s consolidation of the group of islands comprising what is now known as the Philippines into a distinct political unit cultivated a culture that was centered on the edicts of religious thought. Religion not only presented a new faith, it also transformed disparate identities into colonized subjects whose integration into the system meant the reconfiguration of attitudes, behaviors and habits. Whether simple or grand, meals were substantiated through rice, thus providing an opportunity to frame collective symbols of belonging. Rice and the dishes that complemented it packed Philippine food with symbols that allowed the intricate and complex lifestyles demanded for by the empire to infiltrate everyday life. The previous chapter discussed some of these symbols: the dining table, the fiesta and the cycles of work involved in agricultural production and how their implications in collective Filipino life connect to the religious doctrines dispensed during the period. These practices created new cultural forms that made suffering and hunger acceptable constructs in the life of the poor, aiding the restructuring of Philippine society into divisive hierarchies. With landed elites controlling most of the facets of the economy and politics, their privilege gave them a louder voice at the dawn of Spanish rule. The landed negotiated for either political restructuring under the crown or for complete independence, ignoring the numerous uprisings from the lower classes that clamored for land reform. The revolutions that started as a means for the non-land owning Filipinos to seek land reform became a revolution for the elites and their attempt to champion their interests in the inevitable formation of the nation.
With the transfer of colonial control to the United States, the clamor for independence became more intense. Food indirectly contributed to these debates, with narratives of unification and integration constituting a significant trope in many cookbooks that appeared during the U.S. occupation of the Philippines from 1898 to 1946. During this time, cookbooks simultaneously projected a multiplicity of cultures owing to the numerous influences on food, and charismatic accounts of foodstuffs that supposedly unified the nation. Following the secularization of publishing activities aiding the revolutionary struggle against Spain, locally produced cookbooks appeared as early as 1913, and identified indigenous dishes and widespread cooking conventions that started to lend distinctiveness to Philippine cuisine. Sta. Maria (2006, p. 60) cites the 1918 cookbook Condimentos Indígenas by Pura V. Kalaw, wife of the nationalist newspaper El Renacimiento’s editor Teodoro M. Kalaw, to have aided this cause as it was ‘translated into many dialects and used throughout Peacetime’. As attempts at manufacturing a national identity became necessary, food lent a set of symbols essential in imagining how the archipelago was unified, indirectly contributing to sentiments aiding two nationalist struggles: first, against Spain; and consequently counter to the United States which was convinced that Filipinos were unable to govern themselves. Sinigang, adobo, menudo, kinilaw, nilaga and a host of other dishes appearing in numerous cookbooks and periodicals provided potent symbols for collective belonging.

Applying Marxist and Postcolonial critiques of nationalism generates discourses that look at the national cuisine as another means to legitimize the exploitative and alienating tendencies of imperialism and capitalism (Bartolovich, 2002). The propagation of foodstuffs that aided the formation of collective identity has also been replete with processes that fostered alienation and subjugation. As was illustrated in the previous chapter, obliging the combined labor of the colony to produce commercial crops during the Spanish occupation resulted to the collective veneration of hunger through a set of religious symbols that not only positioned farmers underneath the social strata, but also made their suppression acceptable and
even desirable. Fiestas and religious feasts, the Eucharistic celebration, the formulaic prayers and the fusion of indigenous ritual with Christian belief all contributed to the development of a food culture whose value and meaning became dependent on the rigid social hierarchies marking Philippine society.

The culture forming after the transfer of Spanish imperial control to the United States immediately antiquated the religiosity of Spanish customs and pushed Philippine food to confront American-derived formations of modernity. The national cuisine symbolizes the performance of cultures that do not only emanate from imperial and capitalist machinations but also from contesting cultural movements enriched by the contributions of both the powerful and the disenfranchised. While the continuation of the cuisine-building project under the Americans presented a new foundry of ideals inspired by science, capitalism and the championing of democratic ideals that seemed to have been in direct opposition towards religious principles, they still imbied the structure of traditional social hierarchies. Old configurations of control found its way into the culture and society laid out by the new colonial order. The economic manipulations of the old elite aligned with American capitalist interests, and created an economic climate that transformed food into a more complex critical symbol multiplying notions of privilege and control. This was most evident in the manner food became expressive of actual and imagined divisions between the elite who created fortresses out of the domestic spaces they occupied and the rest of the public who were forced further into the peripheries. Health and food professionals emphasized stringent sanitation and nutrition requirements through home economics courses required in primary and secondary education. Domestic space acquired a high premium, and became a vital centerpiece in American imperial design. Cordon off public from private space, the kitchens and dining rooms erected through a combination of public policies and cultural performances created an abode where convenience, speed and efficiency became desirable. Many housewives and housewives-to-be were schooled
in the nuances of a domestic education that valued processed foods, shorter preparation times and the transformation of cuisines into fashionable commodities.

If the upper class continued their domination in the new colonial regime, how could the contributions of the marginalized be quantified? The Filipino lower class’s achievements echo what Bourdieu defined in France as a ‘working-class “aesthetic” […] which is constantly obliged to define itself in terms of the dominant aesthetics’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 41). As the upper class was being rewarded with private homes emblematic of control and privilege, the lower classes were fed with highly romanticized representations and visions repurposing old Catholic ideology to accommodate new discourses venerating the nation. During the Spanish occupation, a ‘working class’ or ‘peasant class’ in the contemporary European sense left no significant imprint in the determination of collective life. The articulation of their identity relied heavily on determining means of production—especially land ownership—and their choices rested on religious rather than socio-political motivations. By the time of the American occupation, a clear working class identity emerged. A discursive collection of values and principles consoled Filipinos situated in peripheries of both the city and countryside. These values exalted the centrality of the marginalized in nation-building efforts, promoting the working/peasant class as a distinct social identity possessing the agency to alter the affairs of the state.

The Filipino as a farmer became one of the most widely disseminated yet insidiously coercive portraits of collective identity, idealizing labor in the field despite suffering the depravity of not being able to partake of the commodities circulated in the city. With hardly any authority over the products that distinguished the upper classes, the lower classes’ continued persistence to bring food to the table accentuates their contributions. The framework of upper class meals changed drastically as it co-opted lower class food and labor. Philippine cuisine presents an extensive narrative of domestic knowledge gathered from unnamed cooks and servants. Numerous cookbooks feature so-called family recipes whose origins come not from the authors themselves but from a disenfranchised group with no capacity
to affix their names in print and other formal avenues documenting collective activity. Puyat-Limcaoco and Kawpeng’s *Assumption High School Class of ’79 Cookbook* (2009, p. 130), for instance, candidly offers recipes not developed by the authors and instead presents ‘favorite[s] from the former cook of my Dad’. The usurpation of the efforts of the lower class extends beyond the appropriation of recipes into print. Much can also be said about how their relegation into the periphery as the ‘Other’ affected the nourishment initiatives of nation-building efforts.

The division of between the upper and lower classes despite a seemingly unified nationalist front begets interesting discussions especially if examined through the materiality of food. The dislocation between the class-centric dishes slowly beginning to form the national cuisine, and the underlying processes marking the economy and culture of the countryside underscores a number of dilemmas between different social relations. Before these can be discussed however, it is necessary to first establish the historic and economic contexts that characterized the American occupation of the Philippines. The next section focuses on the economic climate during the American period and the ramifications of the numerous policies enacted on the cultural practices of the archipelago. Ironically, many of these policies were nestled in the purveying views that looked at the inevitability of social evolution and development to quell social inequality and bring forth structural change. The United States’ mandates on ideals like education, free trade and developmentalism in the Philippines aimed to expand and empower the middle class, promising the eventual eradication of poverty in the process.

**U.S. COLONIAL POLICIES IN THE PHILIPPINES**

After decades debating about expansionism, the United States—then an emerging industrial power—got its first taste of imperial domination at the end of the 19th century at Spain’s expense. Republican William McKinley, who won over Democrat William Jennings Bryan in 1896, succumbed to mounting public pressure
instigated by media reports of Spanish exploitation in Cuba. With McKinley’s Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation, the United States rationalized that it came ‘not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends, to protect the natives in their homes, in their employment, and in their personal and religious rights’ (McKinley, 1898). McKinley proffers the American public with servings of Spain’s last colonies, satisfying its expansion overseas that not only upheld America’s self-proclaimed commitment towards human rights in an attempt to differentiate itself from the empires of Europe, but, more importantly, also made it possible to secure more raw materials and consumer markets vital in boosting its economy (Miller, 1984, Diokno, 2002).

But the Philippines that the United States secured from Spain already amassed an identity, predicated by the name given to it in honor of Spain’s King Philip II, a sense of solidarity as a nation evidenced in revolutionary movements against both Spain and the United States, and a set of practices that readily lent itself to the economic, political and social devices not just of its colonizers but of a commercializing world order. The idea that the Philippines was its own nation antagonized American ambitions, as it imbibed a number of counter-colonial strategies and provided a golden opportunity for America to appease its conscience (Kramer, 2006). If Spain justified its imperial ambitions through the cross, America did so by championing the significance of democracy, and taking advantage of ‘a world contracted by electricity and steam’ in upholding progress (Kramer, 2006, p. 1). It allegedly aided the Philippines twice: first from Spain, and second from Japan during the Second World War. American colonization spurred and encouraged a type of nationalist discourse as it took the cause of Filipino liberationists in both instances, substantiating its presence in the former Spanish colony. Treating the Philippine-American War as an insurgent problem, it took on a racialized stance best expressed by Theodore Roosevelt, McKinley’s successor, who defended American action in the Philippines saying that the war ‘extended the boundaries of civilization at the expense of barbarism and savagery [which] has been for centuries one of the
most potent factors in the progress of humanity’ (cited in Kramer, 2006). Convinced of its mandate of civilizing Filipino savages deemed unfit to rule their own territory, the United States craftily positioned itself in the archipelago delaying the recognition of independence until its democratic ideals—actualized through shrewd political and economic policies—had been satisfied.

The orchestration of American benevolence resulted to, among other things, an education that inculcated American supremacy, and an economy that anchored itself to US markets. Education policies intensified class structures anew as it solidified the centrality of English in the nation’s affairs (Bernardo, 2008). Although Tagalog was the rubric of the Filipino language, the use of English in schools subsequently reiterated the existence of a larger international system to which locals became doubly alienated. Tagalog, Bisaya, Iloko and other local languages became antiquated systems of communication that were utilized primarily in wet markets, in the street and other venues of a more informal nature, and became associated with the uneducated and the impoverished. English represented a more rational and progressive mindset, one that made a specifically American modernity seem superior against ‘the colonial fiction of “little brown brothers”’ [or] if one desires a more literary example […] Kipling’s (in)famous poem exhorting the Americans to “take up the White Man’s Burden” and “serve… Your new-caught sullen peoples / Half devil and half child” (Ick, 2008, p. 121).

As for the economy that the US imparted on the Philippines, dependency on American trade impacted the country’s image of its nationhood as well as the measures it took to reproduce such an image. Even though the Philippines was achieved a level of self-sufficiency in producing rice during the Spanish period, the years of wars first against Spain and eventually against the United States took its toll, leaving the start of American occupation with a staggering deficit. The United States did all it could to offset the problem, but its measures only benefitted private companies whose commercial interests readily supplied the capital to enact
American imperial ambitions on its new colony. Responding to the aspirations of business left the problem of self-sufficient food production in limbo as the production of raw materials complementing the American market required more effort. The passing of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act in 1909 intensified agricultural activity as Philippine products garnered free entry into the US market. Increased agricultural production under the Americans made the most of existing Spanish economic design and reconsolidated the country’s peasant labor towards the export of goods such as sugar, corn, coconut, tobacco and hemp. While the economic mandate inevitably aided in capital accumulation, it also hurt local food production. The periods between 1902-1910 and 1920-1930 saw the highest rates of agricultural growth during the U.S. occupation of the Philippines (Hooley, 2005, p. 467, see Figure 1). Despite the growing numbers, rice production declined. In 1903 rice cost three times more than it was a decade prior and comprised nearly 40% of the country’s total imports.

The United States enforced a number of policies designed to address the issue of declining agricultural food production. The investments in major irrigation systems helped in this regard, and became the showpiece of American efforts in the new colony. Small artesian wells rose in number, from as little as 51 in total in the entire country in 1910, it grew to over 1149 a decade later (Hooley, 2005, p. 467). Likewise, the construction of dams on the Angat, San Miguel and Talavera rivers became significant in increasing agricultural productivity in the rice hub of Central

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cultivated Area (Th h)</th>
<th>Production (Th m ton)</th>
<th>Yield (per h) (m tons)</th>
<th>Artesian wells (no.)</th>
<th>Population (Th per)</th>
<th>Rice (m tons per capita)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>739.3</td>
<td>493.0</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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<td>7395</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>1192.1</td>
<td>810.8</td>
<td>0.68</td>
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<td>8723</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>1484.9</td>
<td>1562.8</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1149</td>
<td>10613</td>
<td>0.147</td>
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<td>1930</td>
<td>1812.8</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>2080.4</td>
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<td>2579</td>
<td>16577</td>
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Luzon, increasing the irrigated areas in this rice growing region to as much as 20% in 1918. The effects on rice production were dramatic. From 1910 to 1920, rice yields increased by more than 50%, and another additional 20% in the decade after. The amount of rice imported also decreased to 5% of total imports in 1925 (Hooley, 2005, pp. 467-468).

While the abrupt changes brought about by the Americans do not necessarily equate to rapid shifts in colonial processes affecting the Philippines, food production suggests that the continuities are equally as incisive as the revolutionary changes between Spanish and American regimes. Efforts to solve the problems brought about by the patterns of land tenure and ownership emanating from the Spanish period accompanied the dramatic changes in infrastructure, exerting pressure on ‘the new colonizers […] to implement an agrarian policy that was intended to give land to the landless, to rationalize the system of land registration and the issuance of land titles, to break up landed estates, and […] do something to improve tenancy conditions’ (Bauzon, 1975, p. 11). The redistribution of land became a priority.

While the US colonial administration exerted efforts at the start of their occupation of the Philippines, they were far from making considerable and lasting impact on the problem of land tenure. Let me emphasize two important efforts by the U.S. colonial administration. First is the purchase of Church-owned estates for redistribution that started in 1903. Fearing how friar lands posed a source of tension for the new colonial government and that the Church ‘was well positioned to take advantage of the rapid expansion of commercial production of export crops and the sharp appreciation of land values’ (Connolly, 1992, p. 2), the U.S. colonial government sought to secure control of church properties. While the whole venture appeared noteworthy, it was a considerable failure:

The very groups expressing the most discontent over the issue—well-to-do Filipinos, both inquilinos [tenants] of the haciendas who were enemies of the friars—were precisely the ones whom the American regime was trying to conciliate. In December 1903, after two months of difficult negotiations between the Roosevelt
administration and the Vatican, these friar lands, amounting to some 410,000 acres (approximately 166,000 hectares) with some 60,000 tenants on them, were purchased by the colonial government for $7,239,000, supposedly for resale to the tenants. The Philippine Commission subsequently surveyed the estates and instituted a program leading to ownership of the tenants in twenty-five years. But almost all the lands ended up as haciendas owned by Filipinos of the upper class (Connolly, 1992, p. 3).

A second initiative encouraged the formation of independent farms by allocating 24 hectares of land for individuals and 1024 hectares for corporations through grants provided by the Homestead Act of 1902. Despite the glaring numbers and the intentions of these strategies, they were not enough and merely spoke of the lackadaisical efforts exerted by the United States to understand the root of the rice shortage more comprehensively:

[The provisions of the Homestead Act] was a generous amount for many poor families, and numbers of applications grew steadily over the ensuing years. But a large number of applications for homesteads failed, partly because many potential settlers were often not aware of the legal status of the land they wished to settle. If the land was not considered to be in the “public domain,” the application was refused. In addition, if the homesteader was not able to cultivate at least one-fifth of the land allocated within five years, he lost the claim, which was then given to another applicant. In parts of Luzon, some homesteaders found that the land they had cleared and farmed was registered by some of the powerful landlords in the area and in effect taken from them by a legal titling procedure of which the homesteaders were ignorant (Booth, 2007, pp. 37-38).

The failure could be traced to the government’s lack of foresight to survey land systematically before they were offered to the public. Even those with successful applications were doomed to fail since most of the land that could be re-appropriated did not have the adequate infrastructure connecting farms to markets and lacked access to basic services such as health care and educational facilities (Bauzon, 1975, p. 12). The coming of the Americans did not make any significant
improvements to the problem of land tenure, and only aggravated the problem even further. Beyond land reform initiatives, the United States courted the Filipino landed elite and curbed policy to favor them in order to help with pacification efforts in the countryside. Owen describes the relationship between the American colonial government and the old Filipino elite as ‘compadre colonialism’ (Owen, 1971). A term of endearment designating the relationship between a parent and the godfather of his/her child, the utilization of compadre as an adjective underscores how the United States nourished their connections to the Philippines’ old elite through a conservative land tenure policy, and a showering of nepotism on tariff and duties.

Thus the dramatic improvements in agricultural production during the first half of American occupation resulted to deficits that forced the reliance on importation (Spencer, 1949). Efforts on agricultural production diverted attention towards cash crops and away from producing rice as the primary staple for domestic consumption. Even though importation of rice helped augment shortages temporarily, it also created dependency on foreign imports, which the colonial government conveniently maintained not just as a way to compensate for the deficiency but also to keep rice prices low (Barker et al., 1985, p. 254). Rice importation became the most convenient solution to the latent dissatisfaction and discord brewing in the countryside. In the long run, however, the move proved detrimental in upholding more sustainable rice and food programs and, instead, created a culture of governance reliant on the foreign market until today. Even the attempt to redistribute land was offset not only by the rapid pace of expansion that traditional tenancy systems experienced but also the lack of careful planning and rigor on implementing policy. All these are reflected in the continuation of rural unrest that escalated in the 1920s and culminating in the formation of the Huk movement in the 1940s (Kerkvliet, 1977). With no land to till or opportunities outside the traditional land tenure schemes, many peasant farmers were left with no choice but to subscribe to agricultural activities oriented towards the supply of
industrial raw materials. These farmers became dependent on the American market, and vulnerable to its fluctuations first experienced during the First World War. Having formalized a few economic structures that were not entirely dependable, the transitioning of the economy to accommodate the production of raw materials proved fatal. In the 1930s, for instance, the depression in the United States left a growing number of abaca (Manila hemp) farmers without rice and wages, leaving them to make ends meet on their own (Owen, 2001).

**SWEETENING THE COLONIAL ENTERPRISE**

The transformation of agricultural activity into an enterprise that supplied the raw materials for American industry was the United States’ biggest contribution to the Philippines. Sugar, in particular, curried favor from the new order. As early as the 1850s, attempts to align the Philippine economy to rising demands in the world market were initiated by a number of American and British companies based in Manila. The decade saw rapid growth in sugar production marked by the shift from small farms with animal-powered mills to large haciendas with British-imported steam mills (McCoy, 1983).

By 1913, with the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act in full swing, sugar became the most sought after agricultural commodity that its production and manufacture demonstrated both the social dynamics employed in the traditional farming of rice as well as improvements that pushed for the mechanization of the enterprise. The former was most evident in Central Luzon where sugar production developed from a tenancy system patterned after rice farming (Larkin, 1993, pp. 27-35). Since the 18th Century, the province of Pampanga in Central Luzon produced—in limited quantities—a red sugar cane from which the high-grade *pilon/pilones* sugar has been processed. The province’s relative proximity to Manila, which was the only sizable market at the time, also helped in stimulating its progression. The Spanish intrusion in the province altered the pre-existing indigenous political hierarchies, creating
positions for traditional chiefs to reclaim the titular role of *cabeza de barangay* (the figure head for a subgroup under a municipality) that came with the power to administer land, elect municipal heads responsible for collecting taxes, and the ability to pass on their title and the privileges accompanying it to their descendants. With this much political control, the *cabezas* curbed the social and economic resources of the province to maximize sugar production, effectively bifurcating the province into a ‘two-class society, made up of those in charge who monopolized positions and wealth and those who furnished labor for *principalia* and colonial needs, [which] gradually replaced the more complicated prehispanic society with its various gradations of class, rank and labor obligations’ (Larkin, 1993, p. 31). Laying out the foundations of a feudal agrarian economy, the system made the most of available workers by devaluing labor outputs significantly, thus increasing yield and maximizing profits for a number of figure heads and their respective families.

Meanwhile, a second pattern of sugar production happened in the island of Negros, situated in the Visayas group of islands, located south of and further away from Manila. If the elites in Central Luzon relied on the nearby capital for manufacturing, their counterparts in the Visayas had much more concentrated control of the land and of production, making the distinction between upper and lower classes more pronounced:

Sugar was produced on large, centrally administered haciendas that occupied prime land and made the island a virtual mono crop zone. Faced with the problem of establishing a labor-intensive industry on a labor-deficit frontier, Negros planters used debt to bind their wage laborers to the hacienda. By the century’s turn, Negros island had become the archipelago’s main sugar producer and her planters, its most affluent elite (McCoy, 1983, pp. 139-140).

According to Friend (1963, p. 180), ‘cooperative centrals’, which contained mills that were set-up to facilitate the production of sugar cane gathered from surrounding sugar plantations, kept sugar manufacturing afloat towards the latter
part of Spanish occupation. Land for these plantations were leased out to peasant families at exorbitant rates that it was almost impossible to recover from debt. Faced with far less workers, the Negros sugar industry exploited the tenancy system while exploring different technological innovations in order to make the enterprise work. Light steam-powered mills delivered sizeable amounts, but not substantial enough to churn out the quality needed to become competitive in world markets. In comparison, Cuban and Indonesian sugar plantations, which captured large chunks of the international market during this time, already abandoned steam mills in favor of larger and more efficient centrifugal mills that produced higher quality sugar.

Although sugar was turning into a profitable commodity, property owners from both Negros and Pampanga could not afford the cost of new technologies. The Spanish-American war, however, proved beneficial to this cause. Even though the industry was hurt by the war, wily proprietors saw the cessation of Spanish rule in 1898 as an opportunity to corner the United States as a new market and therefore lobbied for the tax-exempt entry of sugar to American shores resulting to the passing of the Payne-Aldrich Act. Extensive lobbying on the side of Americans also hastened the process. Sugar became a significant commodity justifying American colonial aspirations on the islands. In 1908, Herbert Walker, the American soil scientist of the U.S. Department of Interior’s Bureau of Science, was assigned to conduct a systematic study of Negros in order to ascertain the viability of sugar towards potential investors. In his report, not only did he guarantee the profitability of sugar in the island, but also assured them that the United States’ superior scientific knowledge benefited both empire and colony alike saying that ‘the average yield of the island is greatly reduced by the comparatively large number of small growers who lack either the resources or the ability to properly care for their cane’ (cited in Tucker, 2007, p. 34). This allowed the annual movement of 300 thousand tons of sugar duty-free, and also provided an impetus for American and other foreign entrepreneurs to invest in new equipment boosting the industry’s viability.
that between 1914 and 1927, seventeen large centrifugal factories replaced the 820 steam and animal mills in Negros Occidental (McCoy, 1983, p. 141).

The high investment on the technology needed to produce export-quality Philippine sugar and transporting it across the globe made sugar an expensive commodity for US consumption. Philippine sugar also confronted the ire of sugar farmers, manufacturers and importers in the United States who had investments elsewhere, and all of whom were adamant against any form of competition from the new colony. Despite these obstacles, the insular government established a few but critically vital measures propelling the local sugar industry forward. The Underwood Tariff Act of 1913 went beyond the original scope of the Payne-Aldrich Act and removed any limitations on the amount of sugar imported from the Philippines. To aid this development, the colonial government set-up the Sugar Board in 1915 and the Philippine National Bank the year after. The former was authorized to administer the development of new and modern centrals, and the latter was tasked with financing the enterprise by handing out crop loans to sugar planters. The changes that happened in the national level coincided with a number of developments overseas. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1914 made the entry of Philippine sugar in the United States East Coast possible. The biggest break, however, came with World War I, when the commotion in the Atlantic upset the transport of beet sugar from Europe to the United States, fueling the rapid expansion of Philippine sugar transported through the Pacific. By the 1930s, the local industry was at its optimum level, reaching its biggest harvest in 1934 at the height of worldwide depression. These developments engineered the mechanization and modernization of Philippine sugar, effectively binding its production to a larger global economy (Tucker, 2007, pp. 32-37).

Attractive as it may seem, the escalation of the Philippine sugar industry was also a very problematic undertaking that reflected the many inconsistencies of American colonial policy. It negated the establishment of grass roots democracy that the United States preached in many of its strategies as it saw a number of American
entrepreneurs combining forces with the old Filipino elite. Together, they curbed the political and economic changes to their advantage thereby expanding the scope of power of the Filipino upper class. The rise of sugar production in the Philippines witnessed the resuscitation of an old elite class who shifted their wealth from peasant structures patterned after Spain’s feudal economy into commercial enterprises aligned with American capitalist interests. ‘Negros society has been seen as unchanging,’ and demonstrates ‘an ossified view that closely approximates the more general perception of the Philippine class structure as dominated by an immovable, permanent, even eternal, landed elite whose rule is sanctioned by tradition’ (Aguilar, 1998, p. 4). Inasmuch as technology played an important role in the conversion of the industry, the development of sugar is more reflective of the hegemonic influence that its producers were able to wangle at a political level, modifying their power according to the varying levels of symbolic and material capital available in the contexts they traverse:

Indeed, throughout the twentieth century sugar has been the oligarchy’s crop par excellence, and a crop whose fate has remained intimately intertwined with that of Philippine democracy. Through the mobilization of plantation workers and other dependants in elections, after all, landowners from early sugar-growing areas of the Philippines gained mayorships, governorships, and seats in the national legislature […] Members of the powerful ‘Sugar Bloc’ in Congress used their considerable power to obtain the PNB [Philippine National Bank] loans, import licenses, franchises, tax and tariff deals, and regulatory breaks which would them to transform themselves from ‘sugar barons’ into a key segment of the Philippines’ embryonic industrial bourgeoisie (Hedman and Sidel, 2000, p. 73).

McCoy (2009, pp. 429-430) illustrates this by examining the case of Eugenio Lopez who, after accruing wealth in Negros sugar, ‘had used presidential patronage to secure subsidized government financing and dominated state-regulated industries, thereby amassing the largest private fortune in the Philippines’. In half a century, the Lopezes shifted their source of wealth from landholdings and into formidable
companies in almost every critical industry. Some of these companies include Meralco (Manila Electric Company), Negros Navigation (shipping), the Manila Chronicle (newspaper) and ABS-CBN (broadcasting).

The imperial rhetoric of preparing the Philippines for self-sufficiency through free trade only resulted to an opposite and highly undesirable trajectory. By aligning itself to the economy of the United States, production in the Philippines concentrated on delivering vital agricultural materials offshore, thus neglecting local needs. Rice production, in particular, suffered as farmers became reliant on wages to purchase food rather than grow food themselves. As a result, the United States became the Philippines’ biggest trading partner. The turnaround was nothing short of frightening as the Philippine agriculture latched on almost exclusively to the U.S. market. If in the first decade of American occupation (1899-1908), agricultural exports only comprised 23.7 percent of the countries total foreign trade, it grew to 62.9 percent in 1916-1925 and 71.4 percent in 1926-1935 (Tan, 2008, p. 68). And even though this partnership was not to last long as many American-based agriculture players lobbied for the separation of the Philippines in order to minimize or eliminate completely the presence of cheaper Philippine goods in their turf, the Philippines was completely dependent on the U.S. market for their products. Despite gaining independence from the United States after the Second World War, the Philippines continued to enjoy some form of privilege in accessing the American market through the Bell Trade Act (also referred to as the Philippine Trade Act of 1946) which guaranteed, first, the duty-free entry of a restricted amount of Philippine exports to the United States until 1954, and the gradual addition of taxes from 1954 until 1974; and second, the unrestricted and unlimited quantity of U.S. goods exported to the Philippines. The Bell Trade Act not only put the Philippines at an economic disadvantage, it also included provisions that allowed the United States to stretch its neocolonial dominion on the former colony (for a more detailed critique of the Bell Trade Act, see Pomeroy, 1992, pp. 156-161).
The industrial restructuring of the Philippine economy affected food’s conversion into a tool that effectively widened the gap between social divisions. Racing to intensify the production of cash crops, free trade fueled an exceptional expansion in the landholdings of the traditional elite whose accumulated capital did not trickle down to the laborers beneath them. This privilege became evident in the manner in which food fortified privileged positions, transforming domestic space into sheltered domains demarcating the isolation of the upper class and their lack of culpability in confronting issues pertaining to collective hunger and poverty. As Filipino elites pursued the promise of a democratic market economy, they also built confines on foundations that edified the value of consumerism, effectively devaluing peasant labor whose wages were simply not enough to purchase the meals that were to become part of what was then being constituted as the national cuisine. Food processed, prepared and pre-cooked in factories, packed in vacuum-sealed bottles and tins, frozen and transported from distant places and re-cooked and assembled in households using the latest technology all became emblematic of class and social mobility.

This development is most evident in how the meanings of public and private spaces changed during the period. The complex and ambiguous dichotomy between notions of the public and private structured human pursuits and maintained centrality in demarcating the limits of social life. Weintraub identifies four dominant frameworks that generate a variety of meanings differentiating the domains of the public from the private:

1. The liberal-economistic model [...] which sees the public/private distinction between state administration and market economy.
2. The republican-virtue (and classical) approach, which sees the “public” realm in terms of political community and citizenship, analytically distinct from both the market and the administrative state.
3. The approach […] which sees the “public” realm as a sphere of fluid and polymorphous sociability, and seeks to analyze the cultural and dramatic conventions that make it possible.

4. [The feminist tendency] to conceive of the distinction between the family and the larger economic and political order—with the market economy often becoming the paradigmatic realm (Weintraub, 1997, p. 7).

A common strand tying these frameworks together lies in the manner language accounts for how a particular concept is valued over another, disrupting any possibility that looks at the permanence of signification. Weintraub’s postulations suggest that the spaces dividing the very concepts of public from private spheres are constantly contested and inherently complex. The valuations affecting—for lack of a definitive word—the Philippines’ ‘public kitchen’ illustrates the complexity and shifting conceptualizations of public and private spaces. I adopt and translate the term from Pérez and Abarca (2007) who used the Spanish words cocina pública to refer to a set of social, economic, political and cultural values surrounding the development of a Mexican cuisine outside the usual trajectory of restaurants whose cooks and chefs are often depicted as the organic intellectuals responsible for positioning the unarticulated traditions of local customs within the rationalized and established systems of modern life. Arguing for the Mexican masses, Pérez and Abarca look at public kitchens and the performative act of cooking in the streets as indicative of the participation of the masses to alter and control public life. Through food preparations and communal meals in the streets, the public is given a space to congregate, sharing important resources that would otherwise be too expensive to procure by individuals or family units with a small income, and fostering affective ties between food providers and consumers.

Although the public kitchen is echoed in the vibrancy of street foods in the Philippines, the idea that the kusina—the Filipinized equivalent of the Spanish word cocina or kitchen—is an unbound domain whose limits diffuse in public space does not necessarily sit well in the Filipino imagination. Owing to colonial practices obsessed with imperial fantasies that created borders to delineate space, the kitchen
actualizes the inclination for territoriality and thus remains a guarded entity in the Filipino mind. The guardedness of the kitchen mimics the containment of public life best exemplified in the fortification of the Spanish pueblo shielding the center from the periphery. Immediately the home/town dweller is positioned as an outsider, and the kitchen and the town is secured as the vessel containing cultural supremacy. Lico notes this design to be consistent in Old Manila itself with ‘Intramuros [as] self-contained colonial city, built exclusively for the habitation of the Western elite’ (Lico, 2003, p. 22). Like the walled city and clearly demarcated pueblo, physical and ideological walls meant surround the kitchen and everything that it stands for from the deluge of contesting cultures and practices that proliferate outside. The kitchen does not only serve to contain food and activities associated with eating, it also imagines a series of boundaries: proper and improper sanitation, safe and unsafe food, progress and barbarism, the modern and the primitive, power and subservience. However seemingly rigid these boundaries are, the variegated interests of a number of players and actors across time and space permeated these lines, complicating the image of the nation in relation to a number of constructs such as the performance of gender, the place and scale of formal and informal economies, and even the relationship between empires and colonies. While it is tempting to recast the role food has played in the grand narratives of national unification, I would like to reexamine food and how its infiltration between public and private spaces amplifies the divisive nature of Philippine nationalism. Before I discuss the impact of American occupation on this topic, allow me to trace the changing significance of the kitchen in Philippine history.

The demise of public kitchens can be attributed to the political, social, cultural and historic circumstances that alienated them, thus diffusing their significance in the popular imagination. Prior to Spanish conquest, communal meals are an ardent feature in different Filipino communities. Junker (1999) reiterates the importance of communal feasts in structuring hierarchies within and among precolonial Philippine societies that participated in reciprocal exchange partnerships.
The feasts commemorating the connections between different localities were so grand in scale that contributions from the entire village were necessary. Birth, death, harvests, the succession of leadership, conquests, trade alliances and other events deemed important to the whole tribe merited feasts that gathered the resources of the entire village in order to brandish the ruling chief’s ability to mobilize his constituency and the resources they amassed under his rule. These feasts enhanced the status of the ruling elite, and were equally important in defining the lives of the commoner as both cooking preparations and the feasts themselves diffused the boundaries dividing kin from neighbors and outsiders. Although the requirements of the ruling chiefs—whose functions as peacekeeper and community organizer took precedence over the village’s other activities—dictated the form and direction of collective labor, their feasts ritualized a sense of belonging and camaraderie within the community, between communities that would otherwise bear no relation, and provided a reprieve from routine.

With the arrival of the Spaniards, traditional feasting celebrations were incorporated into systematic religious festivals. Numerous town fiestas became the centerpiece of Spanish colonial organization. Each town successfully integrated within the Spanish pueblo system commemorated annually the life of a patron saint. Not surprisingly, most of these celebrations coincided either with the harvest season or the anniversaries of historic events important to the locality. This not only supplied the produce needed to mount the fiesta but also became important tools to reproduce important religious ideals. For instance, the famous Ati-Atihan Festival of Kalibo, Aklan in the island of Panay is an amalgamation of pre-Spanish and colonial Spanish conventions. The festival infused the celebration of the arrival to the island of ten Malay chiefs who fled Borneo and drove away the indigenous Ati with veneration to the Santo Niño or the Holy Child believed to intercede in the mass conversion of locals around the archipelago. The fiestas in the Philippines reified the significance of foreign religion in the everyday lives of the locals, attaching saints to the accomplishments and memories of the community. Fiestas became integral in
signifying the power of religion, often providing the culminating climax for work carried throughout the year as expressive of the eternal salvation promised after a lifetime of suffering and affliction. Despite being religious in function, fiestas continued to reinforce old forms of social and political structures. The town leaders utilized these events as an opportunity to reiterate their centrality in the community’s affairs, funding many of the activities and directing their resources including the labor of their constituents whose participation meant the continuation of communal food preparation and feasting.

These feasts only transpired a few times a year and was not enough to sustain the practice of shared meals. A more significant factor in maintaining this can be attributed to the increased labor demands that accompanied Spanish occupation. Hoping to turn the colony into a profitable enterprise, Spain did all it could to commercialize agricultural production by focusing on key products. Amassing large quantities of crops like rice, tobacco and hemp, it was able to transform a predominantly subsistence-driven economy into the beginnings of industrial production. In particular, the production and consumption of rice changed dramatically. Although rice has been in existence in the archipelago long before Spanish rule and has been the preferred food in most parts of the country, its use as an everyday staple proved too laborious and time-consuming (Scott, 1994, pp. 35-36). It was considered a luxury item and figured heavily in a number of ritual and ceremonial observances. With focus attuned towards its commercial production, rice became readily available as a food staple and became a vital component in colonial taxation. In the 17th Century, it replaced the cash tributes first demanded from Filipinos in the century prior, and became the currency for rent in religious lands and private estates throughout the country. By doing so, the Spanish government was able to control the price of rice, devaluing it in order to extract more tributes that fueled its rabid production (Corpuz, 1989, p. 102). The country’s increased output of rice was offset by its utilization in taxation, thus intensifying the need for the nobility to take over more land and absorb more
workers. It is in this climate of devalued peasant labor that communal meals thrived. As work in the fields became more intense, it left far less time, energy and resources for carrying out domestic chores. Farm workers pooled their resources together and transposed the preparation of food from their living quarters and into the field. The increased pressure to produce commercial crops left many peasants struggling to feed themselves as much of their energy has been co-opted to satisfy increasing quotas and to pay for accumulating debt.

Although these kinds of food habits were valued positively eventually, it is important to note that communal eating activities during the Spanish period first suffered the stigma of pathologization. Assigning the house as the woman’s domain effectively created a rift between domestic chores carried out privately and publicly. Tasks such as cleaning, doing laundry and cooking were held with so much disdain that their enactment was carried out in private, a privilege enjoyed mostly by the upper class who partitioned the spaces they occupied. Cleanliness became an over-elaborated virtue, and it was taught that the order and organization of the house reflected the desirable quality of the woman who managed it. That stigma carried over to food-related functions. Modesto de Castro’s Urbana at Feliza (1938), a proto-novel first released in 1864, featured an epistolary exchange that revolved around proper conduct and virtue. Through a series of 34 letters, oldest sibling Urbana (urbane) instructs younger sibling Feliza (happiness) with the edicts of religious beliefs and how these should be applied to specific circumstances and interactions in daily life. In one of these letters, Urbana inculcates the virtue of cleanliness to her sister Feliza about the use of the proper utensils for eating:

It is not unusual for us Tagalogs to use cutlery for eating, and I will write about the different rules to follow. I know you don’t need much of what I have to say since you have been using them properly, but it is important for us to remind others who don’t realize the importance of using cutlery because what will happen to someone who uses their hands to eat after being invited to a banquet? They will be forcibly shamed. It is my wish that the habit of using cutlery becomes inculcated throughout the Tagalog region. All European
countries, as well as America, practice this habit, and it would be wrong not to. Even the Chinese, although they don’t use cutlery, use their chopsticks because they don’t want their hands to get dirty and be ridiculed. (translated from Tagalog, De Castro, 1938, p. 55-56).

The disavowal for the practices represented by eating with one’s hands dispenses a premium on the banquet and other conventions that require the table and eating within hygienic spaces. Parallel to the appraisal of Elias (Elias, 1994, pp. 85-88), concerning Europe’s adoption of the fork that became expressive of externally imposed regiments of self-control and discipline that erected a sense of distinction, Spanish eating habits indicated cultural elaboration. Through the rituals and decorum embedded in eating, the elite classes utilized European manners much to the detriment of customary eating habits whose lack of elaboration and formality became synonymous to being unclean and uncivilized. Virtue notwithstanding, cleanliness implicated several important traits on food. Immediately casting consternation towards pagkakamay or the customary habit of eating with one’s hands as a backward convention, it attached sophistication towards the use of cutlery as an important device not just for eating but as a way to distinguish the educated and the urbane from the rest of the public. The Filipino’s sense of propriety with regards to their meals would absorb the necessity of being located within the confines of the dining room and in the formality structured by eating on the dining table. As a result, it isolated shared meals in communal spaces and consigned it as a crude and uncivilized practice.

DOMESTICATING SUBJECTS UNDER THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

Speed, convenience and efficiency became the most pronounced food legacy of American colonial rule. With the ratification of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act, the scope of industrialization extended beyond American shores and the Philippines became an instant market of surplus goods. Breakfast cereals, canned meat, oatmeal, milk, cocoa, cheese and softdrinks topped a kilometric list of products brought into
the Philippines, and many of them benefitted from having labels that exaggerated their nutritional merits, freshness and taste. These products were not easily embraced in the Philippines and attracted criticism initially. Many of these pre-packed, pre-mixed and processed foods were hardly accessible and proved too expensive for many Filipinos. It was mostly well-to-do households who adopted such tastes, converting these food items into symbols of class derided by majority of the country. Depictions of excessiveness and gluttony appeared as early as 1900. Sta. Maria (2006, p. 24) points to an example from the magazine *The Excelsior* which featured an editorial cartoon that ‘poked fun at the food-focused culture that had evolved among upper class Manilans’. Satirizing the excessiveness and gullibility of the upper class who bit into what was perceived as just another American fad, the cartoon depicted an obese little boy gnawing what appears to be either a turkey or large chicken leg, flanked by three elder women and a dining table filled with a huge spread of food in the background.

The negative stigma was not to last as the United States countered popular opinion with a barrage of propaganda materials that meant to correct perceptions about the new culture they were trying to implement. Through textbooks utilized in public and private schools, advertisements, as well as numerous other books and pamphlets that were distributed to religious congregations, markets and other public spaces, the colonial administration bolstered the value of their food products. Manufactured by the government and private enterprises alike, these manuals covered a wide variety of topics such as grammar fundamentals, public speaking, Christian values and US history. Food was one of the most popular topics and often intersected with issues of health, nutrition and hygiene. Science became the rationalizing lens that asserted the ascendancy of American food practice over local customs and championed values such as speed, efficiency, practicality and the ability to contribute more to society. It engendered food practice, assigning power of domestic food production to women and used this to assert their contributions to society. It is in this rhetoric where American colonization figured prominently in
changing perceptions about public kitchens. The focus on the productivity of individuals and their potential contributions to society elevated food’s significance anew.

The American occupation of the Philippines that started in 1898 only reinforced negative attitudes towards public eating even further. Armed with a clear mandate that strived to elevate hygiene and sanitation in the new tropical frontier, American policies looked at the climate and environment of the Philippines with malevolence and disgust (Anderson, 2007, DeBevoise, 1995). The newly formed Philippine Commission, a body comprised of appointees by US President William McKinley, established the Bureau of Government Laboratories in 1901 which intended to make available ‘adequate facilities for investigation into, and scientific report upon, the causes, pathology and methods of diagnosing and combating the diseases of man and of domesticated animals’ (US National Archives and Records Administration Act No. 156, Section 2, Record 350-3466-0, cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 111). The United States asserted its authority by configuring the Philippines as its ecological other, constructing and construing the local environment as needing emancipation from poverty and disease. Using science as the basis for its rhetoric, it confronted the peculiarity of local disease as a way to orchestrate ‘biomedical citizenship’ (Anderson, 2007, p. 3). The implications are manifold. Politically, it provided a basis for assuaging American guilt over their involvement in imperial activities over Spain’s former colonies. Their construction as infantile and unhygienic subjects strengthened purveying views of the Filipinos’ inability to govern their own country.

Likewise, these efforts resulted to racialized concepts of health, constructing the foreign body’s purity as an antigen that needs to be reproduced in order to combat the local body seen as the threatening source of contamination. ‘Filipinos of every grade are sworn enemies of sanitation’, wrote one American doctor stationed in the country, and it was hoped that ‘these defects and others will be remedied, however, when American ideas are disseminated’ (Devins, 1905, p. 108).
Surveillance and instruction intensified, and American efforts to rationalize the many specimens of disease and malady that they encountered in the tropics only amplified further the cultural dislocation dividing the empire and colony. The use of science to probe infectious organisms and contaminants only magnified the superiority of American life as the yardstick of progress that has yet to be achieved by the Philippines.

This division could not be any less obvious in the manner Americans looked at food. A 1922 cookbook entitled *Good Cooking and Health in the Tropics* stated that:

Food is often dangerous in the Tropics because the domestic servants who handle it may be carriers of disease. In the past it has been the custom in Manila to examine all food-handlers before they were permitted to work in public eating establishments. In places in which there is no assurance that that has been done, it is safest to depend only on foods which have been cooked and are served hot (Gaches, 1922, pp. 300-301).

Interestingly enough, the perceived dangers stem from the habits of the locals that many visiting Americans found highly irregular and unsanitary. Instead of looking at a number of environmental conditions that contributed to the breeding of disease, the cookbooks and materials circulated by health and sanitation departments often attributed the problem as the consequence of cultural depravity. The same cookbook offered a stern warning to incoming American expatriates:

The *amah* (nanny), cook, and all house *muchachos* (servants) should be free from tuberculosis, syphilitic and nervous disorders, intestinal parasites, amoebae and all skin diseases. The employer should have all the servants examined by the family physician for the above-mentioned diseases, and should receive from him a written certificate of the condition of health of each servant. Stool examinations should be made once in every six months, or even oftener in case of bowel trouble. If this precaution is taken, it will largely contribute towards the good health of your children and the household in general (Gaches, 1922, p. 315).
The explicit recommendation to test household staff and kitchen hands implicates a long list of directives helpful in transforming the kitchen into a significant emblem of American domestication. While government policies and civic bureaus meted out considerable changes in the manner public space was to be cleaned and disinfected, the private household was not spared from the same project. The kitchen replicated the fervor of trial and experimentation carried out in the public sphere, and brought home the vital undertaking to reorient bodily functions. Even at home, the Filipino body became the object of abjection as the new social mores generated suspicion towards the body and what it excreted. The very beginning of American rule saw the influx of textbooks that issued generalized prescriptions aimed towards the betterment of health and well-being. Philippine schools used titles like Essentials of Health: A Text-book on Anatomy, Physiology, Hygiene, Alcohol and Narcotics (Stowell, 1899) and Housekeeping and Household Arts: A Manual for Work with the Girls in the Elementary Schools of the Philippine Islands (Fuller, 1911) in the hopes of countering local tradition and influencing the attitudes and behavior of a new generation of Filipinos.

Aside from providing a foundry for casting principles of sanitation, food became representational of a rising sensibility on collective organization and purpose. Hygiene was just a means to achieve the more important goal of feeding the entire population, and the principle became jargon for the period that saw domestic functions being streamlined. At the core of this streamlining process is highlighting the importance of using modern cooking techniques to produce the healthiest eating options as a critical attribute determining a woman’s position in society. The decisions housewives and mothers made with regards to food became the foundation for developing healthy and productive citizens, and so the period was bombarded with images in cookbooks, advertising and media of what the new modern Filipina was supposed to be. Donning traditional Spanish dresses while working modern cooking equipment, her traditional persona of subservience and piety has been upgraded to include that of a knowledgeable house manager who
added up the nutritional values of different food items and condensed hours of work into more efficient processes through the use of new tools and processed ingredients.

CONTAINING COLONIAL BODIES

The three decades of US rule saw the proliferation of images of healthy individuals populating a well-oiled society. By the 1930s, food advertisements began to shed traditional Spanish colonial outfits in place of more modern and westernized clothing. The period also employed racialized western bodies as vessels of modern life. Many of the advertisements of this era repurposed advertising materials of American companies that featured white families, or, in some instances, locally produced advertisements adapting the syntax of their American predecessors using images of mestizo Filipino families. These ads portrayed the mother and housewife as well as her spouse and children deeply ingrained with the functions and activities of the western family. Women wore modern clothes and performed cooking tasks in far less time with far better results using the knowledge emanating from the laboratories and the classroom. They served their food to their happy, healthy and active children whose enthusiastic faces not only indicated their satisfaction for the food but also buttered up their potential through activities that, according to a Quaker Oats ad that populated newspapers and magazines, they performed with ‘life and vitality, (and) never sick or cross’.

The omission of the traditional imagery of Filipinos in favor of western bodies rejuvenated aversions towards activities that dealt directly with food production in favor of consumption. The overtly racialized depictions of Filipinos reconstructed the functions of food anew and aligned it not just with productivity and efficiency but also with different forms of play and leisure. Connecting food to ideas of pleasure in this manner reified the past as the point of departure for the modern ways associated with new food practices. Food generalized the passage from
peasant affliction characteristic of the old feudal enterprise and into the era of a capitalist order, thus facilitating the mass reception of a rigid set of ideals that positioned the importance of American domesticity in both the home and the state. The purity of race became synonymous to the purity and desirability of class, and not to mention the purity of food itself. The processed, pre-packed, preserved, time-saving and branded foods introduced by the United States made explicit the new social organization modifying the colony. The ability to purchase these commodities clarified one’s social standing thereby transforming a horde of canned goods, restaurant dishes and kitchen appliances into desirable symbols that enhanced and modernized privilege and control. The stocking of pantries and fitting of kitchens with modern appliances effectively fortified private from public space. Binding the confines of the home into exclusivity, the once fluid kinship and communal ties that were in place in precolonial Philippines have been rendered rigid by the need to protect merchandise stored at home.

The promise of leisure lured many Filipinos into adopting the changes brought about by American occupation and was complemented eventually by the significant rise of entertainment venues, shops and restaurants. Their presence not only signaled dramatic changes in the manner and customs of eating but also solidified the arrival of an emergent middle class who brandished their ability to dine out and navigate the different customs demanded by the new spaces of urban life. As more and more restaurants sold the promises of modern living, communal meals in public kitchens became a repository of the nightmare that was agricultural labor. In defining privilege and social mobility, restaurants also erected the national image through constant juxtapositions of local food with the foreign. The increased number of frozen, preserved and processed foodstuffs stretched the repertoire of the national cuisine to satiate the needs for upper class distinction and identity. Some were obscure, utilizing ingredients that were hard to source such as French-derived turkey poults appearing in the pre-WW2 diaries of Pacita Zamora. Many, however, latched on to the national cuisine smoothly due primarily to the multitude of
products sold to cook them. Spaghetti, for instance, despite being of Italian origins, found its way onto local tables, demonstrating the muscle of industrial production whose processed noodles, canned tomato sauce, bottled catsup, frozen hotdogs and processed cheese have become ordinary staples in the urban middle class Filipino pantry. These products did not only promise efficiency, they also minimized handling times and, therefore, the risk of contamination. By expanding its scope to embrace influences from overseas, the American occupation transformed Philippine food into what Doreen Fernandez (2000, p. 58) described as ‘Spam culture’, favoring processed over fresh food. This has searing implications on food production and consumption. In search of foreign flavors, the Philippines exported their best produce and opting instead to purchase excess American imports in cans and bottles. In 1909 alone, it is estimated that U.S. imports rose by 129% from the previous year (Corpuz, 1999, p. 226), redirecting consumption choices towards more pronounced forms of convenience, speed and purpose, as well as mimicking health and nutrition slogans that became, as far as food is concerned, one of the lasting legacies of U.S. imperialism:

As a teenager, I will never forget the humbling generosity of a family who offered us shelter from a storm while we were vacationing on one of the beaches of northern Luzon. The family was poor and lived in a nipa hut. As we climbed into the small space and sat on the floor, they put before us one deliciously steamed pompano. Pompano was rarely available in Manila markets at the time and was often inexpensive. As I looked with wonder at the miracle meal placed before us, they profusely apologized that they had no canned goods to offer us (Besa and Dorotan, 2006, p. 108).

Marshaling both product and upper class consumer identities inward into the sheltered domains of private space pushed the efforts and lifestyles of laboring classes further into the periphery. Their limited representation in the spectacles of visual advertising not only alienated them from the whiteness and purity of the home where these products are situated, but also effectively censured their history and
ways of life from the nation being constituted through these homes. In this regard, images of the lower classes were to be affixed to advertisements for alcohol and other vices like tobacco, thus reinforcing existing stereotypes about the backwardness of non-modern lives. Alcohol, in particular, has always been a litigious commodity even during the Spanish occupation. Spaniards made conflicting assessments of Filipinos and their consumption of alcohol. From the very start, they were convinced that ‘natives sustain life by eating little and drinking much—so heavily that it is a marvel if they are not drunk all the time, or at least from noon on’ (De Artieda, cited in Alegre, 1992). Yet, the stereotype did not translate to liquor sales. Bowled over at how Filipinos did not drink as much as the subjects in their colonies in the New World, Spanish bureaucrat Tomás de Comyn recommended more festive gatherings after reporting that the Filipino was ‘by nature sober that the spectacle of the drunken man is seldom noticed’ (cited in Sta. Maria, 2006, p. 175).

The American period saw the continuing struggle to bolster the sales of alcohol by targeting the lower class, reproducing stereotypes of drunkenness and carefree attitudes towards work. Alcoholic print advertisements situated the peasant body out in the fields, and were often depicted to turn to drinking in order to relax while stealing moments away from or after work. The marketing of alcohol repurposed peasant bodies into a commodified cultural sign and constructed their lives around work. It laid emphasis on alcohol’s dual purpose of fueling the body and the prize that one can look forward to after a day’s labor, thus resuscitating old Spanish functions for the fiesta. This time, however, the celebratory character of peasant drinking reinforced existing ideals of consumerism. Displacing peasant bodies from the sheltered environment of the home, tying their identities to work romanticized their subservient position in a structure dominated by the cultural sensibility emphasizing the exclusivity and seclusion of upper class leisure.

Ironically, the same dichotomous relationship pushing private and public spaces further away from each other also provided a logic that blurs the boundaries between them. As commodification strived to congeal drinking as a social activity
performed in public, it also provided a venue that allowed for the reproduction of
the public kitchen and communal meals. ‘Drinking goes on in all our islands,’ writes
Alegre (1992, p. 13) whose anthropological survey of alcohol consumption touches
upon the need to look at alcohol’s connections with food and social interactions:
‘where there is drinking there is almost always food that accompanies it—and the
most normal way is not to drink alone, i.e. it is a social act’. The social aspect of
alcohol manifests in an old Filipino custom referred to as tagay, the common Filipino
term for the sharing of drinks. Alegre (1992, p. 15) describes tagay as a process
where individuals learn to look beyond their own interests and where ‘sharing
becomes the norm and giving the rule’. This context of drinking has not only
dissolved the physical and symbolic barricades that obstruct social interactions from
taking place, it also served as an archive for a set of dishes that clearly have no place
in the rigid confines of private dining spaces. Collectively referred to as pulutan,
these accompaniments featured:

A little of the past… But something new: a different *pulutan*. And if
one is lucky, a bit of the future, something untried: *kinilaw na balat
ng baboy* [pork rind ceviche], *initaw na baby eel* [grilled baby eel],
indigenized *sashimi*. *Pulutan* democratizes: all is possible—locust,
*kamias* [ginger lily], sea cucumber, newly born mice (from]
Paombong, Bulacan), goat’s penis and balls (called bat and ball in
Cuenca, Batangas). Plant, insect, animal—all of the digestible in the
living world. *Pulutan* reaches out, explores, opens horizons as the
drink anchors one to the familiar (Alegre, 1992, p. 15).

*Pulutan*—in the dichotomy of public and private domains—is forgotten and
peripheral food. Its relegation to the fringes of the nation speaks volumes about the
manner that identities in the center cleanse itself off of what it deems repulsive and
unpleasant, relative to the variegated standards and fashions of taste and distaste. It
is, on one hand, pathologized, and conveniently belittled in order to impose upon it
a sense of distrust for the risks entailed in its manufacture and consumption, thus
making the familiar and the established and modern ways of life or means of
preparing food appear more reasonable. It is also deliberately exoticized. Its position in the periphery is subject to stern surveillance, pushing it as far away as possible without really letting go. Standing in the margins, *pulutan* becomes the irrational and unpredictable representation of the imagined geography of what the center does not want itself to be. Fast-forward to the present, the exoticism of *pulutan* becomes clearer. Foodstuffs that categorized under the broad spectrum of *pulutan* are slowly being revived as a means to reify a sense of collective identity in an attempt to reclaim the past despite numerous attempts to erase them from collective memory. A number of them graduated into the broader confines of street food in urban areas not just as accompaniments to beer but also as cheaper alternatives to restaurants and supermarkets, feeding even students, professionals and families. American TV shows like *The Amazing Race* and *Fear Factor* vilified fertilized duck embryos known locally as *balut*. Despite this, the center reappropriated it countless times, repurposing it as an important cultural and economic commodity in a significant number of commercial establishments especially those promoting Philippine tourism. One restaurant, which carried the slogan ‘street food *na pinasosyal*’ (street food with class), offered *balut* glazed with red wine sauce, an unlikely combination for many Filipinos.

The ambiguity between public and private kitchens is most emblematic in the manner Philippine domestic architecture has accommodated old remnants of privilege in the design of the kitchen. The inclusion of what Filipinos refer to as the ‘dirty kitchen’ confounds the kitchen’s compartmentalization in more affluent households. Often located out in the backyard and in the least visible part of the house, the dirty kitchen replicates old attitudes about class and privilege by making distinctions between the kinds of work deemed acceptable in the sheltered confines and protected commodities of the main kitchen, which houses the best equipment, fixtures and furnishings that the homeowner can afford. The brunt of the work is dispensed to the dirty kitchen, leaving the main kitchen as a showpiece for guests to display the cleanliness and management skills of the homeowner. The presence of
the dirty kitchen is also emblematic of the revival of rural social structures in urban homes. Normally assigning the dirty kitchen as the househelp’s domain, the ease or difficulty in performing everyday tasks amplifies the division between homeowner and servant. Because the costs of labor for help with domestic tasks are relatively lower compared to the cost of utilities and the investments made in staging a kitchen, hired domestic workers were often seen as incapable and unworthy of working in the main kitchen even though they were expected to bolster the position of their employers’ family in society.

FROM DOMESTIC KITCHEN TO THE NATIONAL CIVIC ARENA

By the middle of the twentieth century, the stratification of Philippine society expanded beyond the control and access of land in the countryside and into the struggle for commodities in the city. Manila was the centerpiece of this transformation, and its accumulation of commodities and infrastructure displayed the economic vitality that became the impetus for imagining relationships beyond the family, community, religion and race. Prior to colonial contact, Manila was already an established port whose geographic location proved significant:

Manila was ideally located since it opened to the sea and at the same time was within a harbor. Vessels that docked in its port were protected from strong winds, creating favorable conditions for trade. The Pasig River that flowed out into Manila Bay provided access to the interior of the settlement and connected to Laguna de Bay, an interior lake surrounded by important parts of Southern Luzon. Toward the north, the Pampanga River connected to various parts of Central Luzon. Goods brought to Manila therefore could easily find their way into the interiors of Luzon (Torres, 2010, p. 14).

Although Manila was not as lucrative compared to its neighboring provinces that were either blessed with an abundance of a particular resource and/or have developed a particular trade or commodity, Manila sat at their center, and attracted
an assortment of traders, conquerors and ideas. Spain immediately recognized Manila’s strategic value for trading activities, and its foundation as Spain’s colonial capital in 1571 provided another node that brought Europe closer to China. The trade routes also proved beneficial in delivering ideas—religion especially—in the archipelago’s largest island in the hopes of expanding its empire across the Pacific.

Meanwhile, cultural forms accompanying the city’s physical transformation characterized the US takeover of Manila. Most notable is how its redesign reflected the resurgence of urban planning in the United States. Under the broad strokes of American urban planner Daniel Burnham, Manila became an extension of the City Beautiful Movement, which advocated for the inclusion of grand monuments and other aesthetic enhancements:

Just as [Burnham’s] mall had opened Washington [D.C.] to the Potomac River, so he now turned Manila towards its magnificent bay. The centerpiece of Burnham’s plan was a grand concourse that arced about the inland walls of Intramuros, which he preserved, from the Pasig River to Luneta’s end at Manila Bay. An elongated plaza of government buildings along the inland sector starting near the Pasig would yield to a widened Luneta Park that planned to extend further into the sea on land fill from the ongoing deep harbor dredging. To the park’s north side would lie a projected Manila Hotel and to its south a row of grand structures to celebrate colonial dominion—the Army-Navy club, the fleet admiral’s residence and quarters for the U.S. Army commander. Luneta’s junction with the sea was ‘the natural starting point’ for a wide boulevard that was to sweep along the bay all the way to Cavite, the future Dewey now Roxas Boulevard (McCoy and Roces, 1985, p. 21).

The intention was to reinvigorate the urban spaces threatened by industrial decay as a means to instill a sense of moral and civic virtue to its constituents. Inasmuch as kitchens became one of the more significant sites for demonstrating the role domestication played in distinguishing between public and private spaces, Burnham’s Manila also cordoned off the capital as an inviolable space that maintained collective order in a grander scale. It had buildings reminiscent of
Greco-Roman architecture, wide sprawling streets that made room for both speedy movement and leisurely recreation, and provisions for important civic facilities such as schools, libraries, hospitals, municipal buildings and even museums. Just like the kitchens that isolated the household from the threats of unhygienic food, Burnham’s plan placated the need to disinfect the city and provide a structure that would help rectify the many social ills affecting it, highlighting the significance of American technology and democracy in transplanting the celebrated civilizations of the west into the Eastern tropics (for a more detailed discussion, see Lico, 2003, pp. 28-36).

The grandness of this plan also reflects the extent in which the city detached itself from and alienated the countryside. Within its confines are a growing number of civil servants, educated professionals and salaried employees whose contributions to society were overtly enhanced. For instance, Governor-General Francis Harrison propped up the number of local civil servants from around 6000 at the beginning of his term in 1913 to more than 13,000 in 1921 (Benitez, 1940, p. 393). The move was beneficial on two counts. First, it provided more service to the colonial administration that was in dire need of figures to illustrate the positive impact of American policy. Second, and more importantly, it presented locals with new aspirations by rewarding those who invested in education and training to participate in the colonial bureaucracy. Although very little separated the wages between urban professionals and farm workers, the dwindling supplies and increasing prices of rice in the same period proved beneficial to the former who were guaranteed steady incomes to purchase food. Despite attempts by the colonial government to negotiate the prices with Chinese merchants and the deteriorating quality of rice being sold in the local market, wholesale prices for a cavan of rice that cost a little under 6 pesos in 1913 in Manila ballooned to more than 14 pesos by 1919, marking the first significant rice crisis under the American period (see Figure 2). This not only affected rural wages but also made job security in farms outside the city extremely volatile.
The pervasive threats of food shortages and lack of stability in doing peasant work resulted in a seething conflict that pitted urban centers against the countryside. Equipped with stately privileges and an extensive network of capital activity, cities like Manila effectively asserted its power over the rest of the country, discharging the new fashions, forms of entertainment, transport, commerce and technological implements that were to actualize the nation they envisioned. This vision is even made more attractive and beguiling by the manner monetization made it restricted, and how the fusion of different cultures and influences made it appealingly elaborate. Urban dwellers lost the capacity to be self-sufficient, and struggled to take on more modern professions and lifestyles that made the reliance on markets, stalls, stores and restaurants seem logical, and even natural. The dislocation from production, however, became exceptionally attractive and can be understood to reflect, yet again, elite interests in mapping the trajectory of the nation’s modernity. The spatial pattern of post-war metropolitan growth has reflected much more a
modernity of private wealth and mobile labour than a modernity of rational state planning’ (Pinches, 1994, p. 18).

If the city simplified the means of acquiring a variety of edible commodities through rabid consumption, the opposite was true for the countryside. Even if the symbols of modernity trickled down from the city to different towns across the country and wages ingrained in farm labor, workers are still expected to be self-sufficient as colonial configurations and statewide restructuring force them to compete for limited land and jobs. For instance, in a field study conducted in the 1970s on a deliberately unnamed Tagalog municipality situated 4 hours away from Manila, it was evident that the existing opportunities for work did little to alleviate the long-standing problems of the rural poor:

The province was more progressive and modern than the average Philippine province. Its proximity to Manila and the large number of white collar workers commuting weekly to the city were their criteria for progressivism. Paradoxically, however, were more depressed through absentee landlordism and tenancy. As in all towns and cities of the Philippines, there were many squatters. The agricultural land had been divided among tenants to the point that earning a subsistence living was difficult. Despite many signs of progress such as electrification, schools, hard-surfaced roads, television and radio, poverty was widespread. Many families in the town where we lived had difficulty serving three meals a day (Foley, 1976, p. 6).

The situation was no different during the American period. Four decades prior to Foley’s assessment of a Central Luzon town in the 1970s, a bitter political fight in the Partido Nacionalista (Nationalist Party), which has been at the helm of liberation efforts for the Philippines since its inception in 1907, saw the revival of peasant uprisings emphasizing the divide between city and rural life. In the beginning, the party’s pursuits were built upon residual activities and ideals of the old Katipunan, the most active and vocal political bloc challenging Spanish supremacy. Having members of radical origins, the Nacionalistas were constantly
under surveillance and often fended off suspicion and charges of sedition as they rallied for Philippine independence ‘under the protectorate of the United States of America’ (Philippine Commission 1904, p. 40). The Nationalistas grew in strength through a number of local officials—both appointed and elected—who joined former revolutionaries and laborers. Their motives, however, were circumspect as their allegiance to the liberation cause was muddled by ambitions to wrestle control away from the ruling Partido Federalista (Federalist Party) whose political control secured them a tight monopoly over many economic activities in the country:

Unlike the Federalistas, whose party leadership was dominated at the top by old guard ilustrados of Manila, the positions of authority in the new party had yet to be decided. For a number of leading provincial political figures it was becoming increasingly clear that “Nationalists” would control the assembly and that leadership in the assembly would be determined not by the two delegates from Manila (be they Nacionalistas or Progresistas), but by the seventy-eight delegates from the provinces. Nacionalista leadership was up for grabs (Cullinane, 2003, pp. 307-308).

The Nacionalistas became the most dominant political party during the American period, having taken over major electoral seats forming the different legislative arms of the Philippines from its inception until the Second World War. However, having been infiltrated by ambitious politicians, they also lost sight of their original purpose. They conveniently called upon their constituents to muscle their way around the colonial government with threats of mass demonstrations and uprisings, but turned a blind eye on land reform, unjust wages, suffrage and other issues affecting both urban and rural poor. Government attention was directed towards satisfying American conditions for the liberation of the colony, and responded with more ornamental measures that gave the Philippines increased chances at solidarity without necessarily touching upon the issues that compromised emerging middle class interests. For instance, public school education produced unprecedented literacy rates, creating a professional yet significantly unemployed
workforce. Most alarming were the intensification of health and sanitation programs that resulted to more than double an increase in the population from 7 million in 1900 to over 16 million in 1940 (Populstat, 2003).

Just as urban elites lobbied for emancipation from the colonial government, a wave of peasant uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s reappeared and clamored for the reforms ignored by the self-proclaimed nationalists. Benigno Ramos’s Partido Sakdalista (from the root word sakdal, to accuse, inspired by Émile Zola’s J’accuse), formed in 1933, was the most critical against the Nacionalistas. It championed more radical political reforms benefiting both rural and urban poor alike. Most importantly, the Sakdalistas questioned the Nacionalistas’ sincerity on the independence issue. They demanded for immediate emancipation, opposing the provisional ten-year Commonwealth government that carried a long checklist of conditions that needed to be satisfied first before sovereignty could be granted. Accompanying the independence clause were, among other things, the use of local languages in public schools, the formation of a Philippine army, the adjustment of wages, and comprehensive land reform provisions questioning the legitimacy of existing landholdings by known families and the Church. The Sakdalistas immediately found followers from a wide cross-section of Philippine society who ran key electoral offices in the Tagalog region. Needless to say, their numbers in government were not enough and the party doubted the merits of exerting all that effort in the legislative process against the possibilities offered by revolutionary action given the support they have amassed in Central Luzon. On 2 May 1935, Sakdalistas stormed several towns in Manila carrying crude armaments in the hopes of channeling popular support into more radical forms of social upheaval. The revolt never gained momentum, and the United States belittled it as yet another ‘political demonstration of a minor party among fourteen million Filipinos’ (Fujita-Rony, 2003, p. 163), and subdued the uprising within three days. Fleeing to Japan, Benigno Ramos resurfaced during the Second World War to lead what was left of
the Sakdalistas to collaborate with the Japanese who promised the Sakdalistas emancipation from American rule.

MANUFACTURING AGRICULTURAL IDENTITIES BEYOND THE AMERICAN REGIME

The fall of the Sakdalistas was not entirely futile. At the very least, it revived old concerns regarding the censure of the lower classes in matters affecting public policy. Although historians interpreted the Sakdalistas’ course of action as the effect of ‘religious fanaticism’ and ‘alien-oriented agitators’ initiated by socialists and communists (Simbulan, 2005, p. 159), and the results they achieved barely made any ripples compared to what the Katipunan had done against Spain, their cause is useful in linking old and contemporary peasant movements with each other, marking the urgency to reexamine the connections between oppressive economic and political structures with the irony in which cultural practices have been utilized to conceive the nation. With the Philippines’ liberation in 1946, the state rewrote nationalist sentiments in the countryside by containing the negative sentiments emanating from concerns of poverty and hunger. While peasant movements continue to hound the authority of the government long after colonial rule, there exists a cultural sphere where a set of nationalist discussions arose and have took interest in glorifying the ‘Filipino identity’ as one that remains tied to the earth, paying homage to old Spanish imaginings that conceptualized the many cultures of the archipelago homogenously while simultaneously reformulating the identity of a landless agricultural underclass to complement the order being imposed by the urban centers. The state’s execution of visions of scientific and technological progress, economic opportunities redistributed through democracy, and social cohesion first imagined in the domestic spaces of cities like Manila was eventually implemented on the periphery, thus creating a set of cultural activities that are deferential to the economic interests of the hegemony.
Despite having been relegated as an enterprise subordinate to the commercial behavior that was heavily protected politically, agriculture became the most potent narrative in the nationalist imaginary. Politics did little to modify the image of the farmer, and contributed significantly to its detriment and abuse. The idea of a unified mass of agricultural laborers became useful in pacifying the escalating conflicts in the countryside, turning into a set of formulaic pronouncements that politicians addressed to gain popular support. Ramon Magsaysay, serving as President from 1953 to 1957, was the most astute in propagating a rhetoric that intimated the inclusion of the underrepresented and landless lower classes. Prior to his presidential campaign, Magsaysay was the country’s Defense Secretary and garnered the attention of the public after aligning himself with Moises Padilla, a former guerilla leader during the Japanese occupation who bravely announced his mayoral candidacy in the town of Magallon (now named Moises Padilla) that was controlled by rich and powerful sugar magnates. Governor Rafael Lacson, a political ally of Padilla’s opponent and who enjoyed the support of the province’s sugar lords, threatened Padilla and demanded him to withdraw his candidacy. Padilla held his ground and even though he lost the election, was still abducted by Lacson’s men, eventually torturing and killing him. Although Magsaysay came to Padilla’s assistance too late, media spread news of him carrying Padilla’s body. This turned the Defense Secretary into a heroic figure for the overworked farmer and the masses, fuelling his ascent to the highest seat of power. As president, Magsaysay achieved a lot of firsts that centered mainly on coaxing favor from the underprivileged. He is the first to open Malacañang Palace’s doors to the public. He is also the first elected president to wear a Barong Tagalog, a formal attire that traces its roots to the Spanish occupation and has since become a symbol of nationalism, instead of a suit. And in many ways, his inaugural speech set the tone for the steadfast condemnation of structural inequality rooted in the disparate distribution of land that many politicians succeeding him tried to emulate:
“Land for the landless” shall be more than just a catch-phrase. We will translate it into actuality. We will clear and open for settlement our vast and fertile public lands which, under the coaxing of willing hearts and industrious hands, are waiting to yield substance to millions of our countrymen (Magsaysay, 1953).

Magsaysay’s sincerity warranted contentious discussion among historians and political analysts. Citing his connections to CIA officer Edward Lansdale, some viewed him as a purveyor of U.S. neocolonial control (see Constantino and Constantino, 1984, p. 262, Pomeroy, 1974, p. 18). Although his short term in office did offer a considerable number of agrarian reform legislation, many of these have been criticized to create instant solutions evasive of the more seething problems that could only be solved by confronting the question of land reform.

Ferdinand Marcos invested heavily in agricultural expenditures during his three terms as president from 1965 to 1986 and made sure to avoid the land reform question. Exaggerating Muslim rebellion in the south and countrywide Communist insurgency, Marcos’s declaration of Martial Law in 1972 was complemented by a series of agricultural programs in an attempt to appease growing rural unrest. Following the success of Mexico’s Green Revolution in the 1960s, Marcos’s earlier mandates took on a more scientific character, paving the way for the creation of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). The early initiatives of IRRI transformed the Philippines from a net importer to a net exporter by the 1970s through the distribution of a high-yield variety dubbed as ‘miracle rice’. Despite this success, however, ‘a conference in 1985 attended by 45 farmer organizations, progressive scientists from the University of the Philippines and development NGOs demanded the immediate dismantling of IRRI and the launch of a national programme on rice to respond to their needs, and to work within their capacities and limitations’ (Paul and Steinbrecher, 2003, p. 119). Marcos’s forays into rice engineering was burdened with conceit as he bulldozed his way into making miracle rice another reason to justify his extended presidency. Coupled with massive infrastructure projects that tripled irrigated farmlands from 500 thousand hectares in
the mid 1960s to 1.5 million hectares in 1988, miracle rice became the main ingredient in an ambitious Marcos project dubbed Masagana 99. The name is a combination of a Filipino adjective that means bountiful and the number 99 was the ideal amount of cavans of rice (approximately 5.4 tons) that the government wanted to harvest from every hectare of land. In the 1980s, the effects of miracle rice were in full effect, when 81% of the country’s rice output came from this particular variety. And even though its use resulted to increased productivity from 1.16 tons per hectare in the 1960s to 2.3 tons in 1983, it was far from the ideal 5.4 tons or 99 cavans that the project hoped for. Marcos directed efforts towards improvements in technology, opening liberal credit lines for farmers and maintaining generous provisions to keep the costs of fertilizer and farming implements at a minimum, bolstering the image of the state in rural areas (Koppel, 1990, p. 590). Productivity became an important indicator of progress. The pressure to produce more did not only complicate the rice problem, but also merited issues for the agro-industrial sector. The expansion of traditional export products that, by this time, included bananas and pineapples, resulted to more widespread dispossession of peasant farmers and indigenous minorities.

The escalating problems brought about by the lack of conviction in responding to the land reform question are not isolated to Magsaysay and Marcos (Hayami et al., 1990, Wurfel, 1991, Riedinger, 1995). Even the highly revered Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, who took reign after dismantling the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, and her son Benigno III, the incumbent president since 2010, spent considerable amounts of energy fending off criticisms against their family's ownership of the Hacienda Luisita in the province of Tarlac in Central Luzon. Their ownership of this property has been a source of controversy for the family ever since they acquired it in 1957 (Bello et al., 2004, pp. 42-45). Beset by the insurgent activities of the Huks against the Japanese since the Second World War, the Spanish-owned Compañía General de Tabacos de Filipinas (Philippine General Tobacco Company) decided to sell the estate along with the Central Azucarera de Tarlac
(Tarlac Sugar Central). Not wanting these to be purchased by the Lopez family that, by then, had accumulated significant land holdings in the Visayas and ownership of key corporations in the country, President Magsaysay engineered control over these two properties in favor of the Cojuangcos. The Cojuangcos acquired both properties with the condition that the Hacienda Luisita was to be purchased 'with a view to distributing this hacienda to small farmers in line with the Administration’s social justice program' (Central Bank Monetary Board Resolution No. 1240 [27 August 1957] cited in Dychiu, 2010). Almost three decades after their acquisition of these properties in Tarlac and running against Marcos for president in 1986, the older Aquino delivered a campaign speech in Davao promising that:

For long-time settlers and share tenants, land-to-the-tiller must become a reality, instead of an empty slogan.
For the growing number of landless workers, resettlement schemes and cooperative forms of farming can be introduced.
And for the island of Mindanao as a whole, the conservation of our forests and other natural resources against illegal loggers and other exploiters must start now.
My friends, this is the land policy I propose to pursue. And while I announce it here in Mindanao, I also intend to apply the same general policy to other parts of our nation. You will probably ask me: Will I also apply it to my family’s Hacienda Luisita? My answer is yes; although sugar land is not covered by the land reform law, I shall sit down with my family to explore how the twin goals of maximum productivity and dispersal of ownership and benefits can be exemplified for the rest of the nation in Hacienda Luisita (quoted in Schirmer and Shalom, 1987, p. 339).

Aquino's promise remained unfulfilled during her lifetime with the family retaining private jurisdiction of the land that they obtained through government assistance. Instead, it has spawned even greater controversy culminating in the 2004 Hacienda Luisita Massacre where 14 people including two children were killed, 200 were injured and 133 arrests were made (Tuazon, 2004). Even though a Supreme Court ruling enforced the distribution of the hacienda to its 6000 tenants in 2011, the Aquinos’ evasive stance towards the problem of Hacienda Luisita mirrors the
state's long-standing and continuing reluctance to implement a genuine agrarian reform program. Despite this, the grounding of collective identity on agricultural work has become a salient project in Philippine politics and has even escalated in the reproduction of symbols and cultural products that utilizes the farmer as the poster child for nationalist sentiments.

If the American period erased rural bodies out of advertisements in order to align products with images of a progressive urban life, the post-American Philippine government refashioned rural bodies in an attempt to re-animate the existing hegemonic structures as effective and desirable by appropriating the clothes, implements and activities of farmers to generate a sense of solidarity. Numerous politicians use farming and food to prop up their image in the public eye. Beyond political tactics aimed at garnering popular support, the state has found its way into distorting more specific forms of cultural expression to perpetuate the farmer’s subordination. Textbooks distributed in both public and private schools, for example, transform into stately apparatuses filled with images and pronouncements glorifying life out in the fields. Even though they venerate the countryside, these books succumb to old strategies of erasure that indemnify the government's culpability in mismanaging transformations of the rural landscape. In many of these books, farmlands are still imagined to be part of the natural domain, often romanticizing their function and purpose as an inherent part of an evolution that emanates from innate and even religious origins. Irrigation systems diffuse into rivers and lakes, farm paddies blend into hills and mountains, and the difficulty and strife that marks the reality of the work involved is understood to emanate from a kind of life that has been going on since the very beginning. This steered attention away from pertinent issues affecting the materiality of agricultural work and food production, and diffusing them in an intangible web of virtue and sentiment. The Catholic sensibility of the Filipino acquired during Spanish rule becomes the foundation for teaching Filipinos to see themselves as figures unified by and contributing to a common cause. This time, however, the end goal has changed. If
Catholic pedagogy during the Spanish regime taught Filipinos to believe hardship culminated in their salvation in the afterlife, the aftermath of American intervention has affiliated the Filipino image to the project of collective progress and participation, and civic pride.

Transcending the classroom, the state continues to exploit the image of the rural Filipino in more refined ways. In 1972, under then President Marcos’s directive, the government started conferring titles of National Artist of the Philippines to individuals whose collective work ‘embodies the nation’s highest ideals in humanism and aesthetic expression’ as a way to validate the country’s ‘own cultural heritage, whose enrichment these achievements have significantly effected, enhanced, and given direction’ (NCCA 2007). True to its directive of distinguishing itself through artists that it influenced, its first honoree for visual art, Fernando Amorsolo who was conferred in 1972, romanticized the countryside through his paintings, often creating celebratory images out of the vestiges of Spanish colonial design. Amorsolo’s ‘Antipolo Fiesta’ (1947), for example, named after a town in Central Luzon, features a dancing couple in the midst of a harvest celebration. Surrounding the dancers are onlookers and signs of a bountiful yield: an assortment of fruits, vegetables, and even a roasted pig that diffuse in the lush greenery. The material blessings that abound are, however, seemingly fleeting and insignificant if the other structures in the painting are taken in. Looming above the crowd and further in the background are a large stately house and the Antipolo Church. The distance of these stone-erected structures from the crowd, their lightness and their roofs that point up all seem to make them hover above the festivities and blend into the airy sky. Whether intentional or not, Amorsolo’s idyllic depictions of local scenery fits the demands of a state in dire need of expressions signaling the naturalness and dignity of prioritizing communal over personal activities. As country life is glorified, its innocence and purity represented by the revelry is subtly infused with significations of civic and religious responsibilities that can easily be linked to the ascendancy hoped for by the state, the upper class and the church.
That an individual’s responsibility and accountability starts from beyond an individual is best confirmed by the most recent manner in which the state exalted its migrant workers. Calling them *bagong bayani*, or new heroes, the government’s attempts to mobilize its overseas workers relied heavily on the intricate maneuvers to fasten national sentiments to an economy that became increasingly dependent on foreign remittances from overseas. Female migration from an Ifugao community situated in Northern Luzon, for example, illustrates how foreign ‘remittances are modifying a pre-existing set of factors producing land usage’ (McKay, 2005, p. 98). Noting how indigenous identities from the country’s peripheries succumbed to the pressures of migration as ‘the best solution to the problem of securing a subsistence livelihood’ (McKay, 2005, p. 98), the assertion of modern femininity is no longer harbored on the kinds of performances instituted in cities like Manila, but on the insistence to find work overseas as a way to feed the family. The virtue of sacrifice and the inhibiting of one’s own concerns for the sake of the family and the country becomes the new focus of bureaucratic attention, which, unfortunately, seems to be following the same fate that agricultural workers endured before. While the state enjoyed some form of success in recalibrating the national identity to accommodate its new cash cow, it has yet to offer more concrete policies ensuring their safe transit and deployment abroad. Not including unreported and/or illegal migration, the country’s Department of Labor and Employment reported that an average of 2400 Filipinos leave the country daily to work overseas (Manila Bulletin, , 2004). Ironically, the gravest threats to Filipino security overseas are marshaled by purveying American policies on the Philippines that remain as racist and hostile as when they first assumed control over the colony more than a century ago. The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, for instance, saw the infliction of the Absconder Apprehension Program that identified over a hundred thousand illegal Filipino immigrants classified as possible terrorists.
CONSUMING INDUSTRIAL WASTE

The reliance on foreign remittances underscores a significant shift marking the culture of consumption-dependency of Philippine society. Despite statewide efforts to prop up the image of the farmer, the structural inequalities brought about by the lack of comprehensive land reform programs rendered many agricultural workers with the inability to be self-sufficient. The problem, initiated by land grabbing and monopolization during the Spanish period, was exacerbated further by industrialization and commercialization efforts by the U.S. colonial government. By the end of American occupation in 1946, Philippine cuisine evolved into a congregation of activities that effectively coerced public life into molding itself to the desire of powerful private entities. Armed with well-stocked and fully fitted kitchens, domesticity translated hegemonic ideals from the state into the home, thus reinforcing the privilege of identities that prescribed to white consumerist American modernities living in partitioned houses and gated communities, and made the buying of food more attractive than producing it themselves. Their influence extended beyond their own food choices, and the rationality that accompanied these decisions often expressed the need to maintain, if not improve, their standing in society.

On the other hand, the same idea reduced the physical and imagined spaces for the public significantly. The clamor for land reform remains a persistent problem in allocating space for enacting any intervention oriented towards feeding the public. Just as they were during the Spanish period, many Filipino laborers are left to fend for themselves, often forced to thrive on what I consider as industrial waste. The manner in which the lower classes subsist is perplexingly inventive. They have made so much out of processed goods since the United States started to throw canned food in the Philippines’ direction to make more profits out of products that would have been scrapped anyway. Even the most expensive of restaurants in Manila now would find it acceptable to charge more than a day’s worth of the official minimum wage for a dish whose main ingredients came out of a can. The same can be said of
the disposable parts of animals and plants of products that were once deemed unfit for supermarket shelves. They always end up being peddled as street food or cooked as *pulutan*, intensifying the pathological stigma associated with them. And yet, when money can be made out of these supposedly unsanitary fares, they are readily stocked in supermarkets and kitchen pantries to be absorbed into the diets of the upper class.

The transformation of *galunggong* (mackerel scad, a popular fish for consumption) from a poor man’s fish into an item of luxury best exemplifies how the Filipino masses are running out of food to eat. Waging an uphill battle against incumbent President Marcos, Corazon Aquino in 1986 used the ever-increasing prices of *galunggong* to demonstrate how inflation and price increases constantly upset the masses’ purchasing ability. Agencies like the National Statistical Coordination Board used this fish to gauge the value of the peso and as an indicator of difficult times ahead. From 2003 to 2006, they reported that ‘prices of rice and *galunggong* rose faster than per capita income, and poverty worsened’ (Virola, 2009). In one of the debates leading to the 2010 presidential elections, incumbent senator and presidential candidate Jamby Madrigal—who also comes from a family of politicians—was put on the spot after being asked the current price for a kilo of *galunggong* as well as other important commodities in the market. She absolved herself saying ‘I don’t know, I’m a vegetarian’ (cited in Contreras and Esplanada, 2010).

Likewise, the increasing marginalization of public kitchens is not just a cultural problem, but it is also an economic issue reflective of the state’s disconnection to the daily lives of the majority of the population. The Asian Development Bank pegs the underground economy to account for 44 percent of the country’s gross national product from 1999 to 2000 (cited in Ordinario, 2011). These numbers could go higher if one also considers untaxed and therefore unmonitored agricultural laborers. The biggest portion to those percentages come from the invisible and unreported transactions of street food vendors who have,
time and again, helped fend off unemployment and have fed the population during stringent times. On another level, the presence and persistence of public kitchens present grave antinomies to the nature of peasant work and the lack of political integrity needed to support an overworked labor force. Their exclusion from the confines of domestic spaces and of the nation’s economic, political and cultural hubs inflates the ideas of privilege and divisiveness further. Attempts to repurpose the image and identity of Filipinos in the periphery, and integrate them as part of the collective only aggravated their isolation from the nation’s affairs. Despite the positive contributions of public kitchens and the people behind them, there haven’t been any real interventions that define their place in society and distinguish them from other players involved in illicit activities in the underground economy. The informality surrounding food production and the lack of any clear information in regulating systems that increase the masses’ participation in the movement towards national sovereignty only led to a self-perpetuating dynamic that confined many laborers into subscale, low-productivity and inefficient work.

U.S. colonialism in the Philippines repurposed old hierarchies of control established by the Spaniards. While Spain was forthright about its political influence over the Philippines, the United States was at odds over exposing its own imperial ambitions. In a widely known press statement, McKinley described the United States’ delicate position:

When next I realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess that I did not know what to do with them. I sought counsel from all sides—Democrats as well as Republicans—but got little help. I thought first that we would take only Manila; then Luzon; then other islands perhaps also. I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight, and I am not ashamed to tell you gentlemen that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way—I don’t know how it was but it came; (1) that we could not give them back to Spain? That would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad
business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self government and would soon have anarchy and misrule worse than Spain's was; and (4) there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the best we could for them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died (McKinley, cited in McHale, 1962, pp. 34-35).

Trying to appease different groups in the U.S. mainland that had differing viewpoints regarding their role in world affairs, American colonial presence in the Philippines became a confused collection of policies that contemplated Philippine independence while maintaining the interests of private American enterprises at the center of the Philippine economy. The entire colony directed its collective efforts towards supplying the United States with raw materials in the guise of developmental efforts demonstrating American ‘benevolence’ to the Philippines. The results of such benevolence, however, relegated food production as a secondary concern reliant on wages to purchase American surplus goods and the promise that improving technology was enough to offset increasing demands. This arrangement allowed old hierarchies to reposition themselves under the authority of a new colonial administration. Aligning with different U.S. capitalists who invested heavily on Philippine industries, the old elites established their position anew and used food to reinforce their privilege and control.

The next chapter discusses the history of Philippine cookbooks as a process demonstrating the symbolic capital of elite classes who monopolized collective food and identity-formation processes. The beginnings of Philippine cookbooks coincided with the U.S. period in Philippine history, thus reflecting the numerous tensions between directives emanating from the colonial administration and the struggle for Philippine independence.
Benedict Anderson regarded print capitalism as ‘the original mother of nationalism’ (2001, p. 42), before being antiquated by the proliferation of electronic media like film, television and the malleable forms that have made the internet fluid. The former relied heavily on the induction of ideas through a common language, the latter on images, sounds and other symbols that overcame linguistic barriers, thus expanding its scope to audiences beyond its borders. While it is tempting to look at electronic media and how it diversified notions of Philippine cuisine particularly in the last four decades, any undertaking would remain incomplete without first examining the inexorable connections between Philippine cuisine and print. Print connected colony to empire, enforcing ideology and its corresponding regulations giving commonality to what otherwise is a disparate set of cultures and localities. Under Spain, the language of the bureaucracy effectively instilled itself on the numerous religious documents that proliferated their reign over the Philippines. While the Spanish colonial administration deliberately inhibited the development of a common language, it did instill a common religion that became pervasive in structuring everyday life. As literacy constituted a vital condition in securing a position in top tiers of the numerous hierarchies organizing Philippine society, print became the de facto emblem of bureaucratic power. This could not be any more evident in the manner print connected the Filipino diaspora to the homeland. In *Imagined Communities* (2006), the narratives of many diasporic Filipinos—the so-called *ilustrados* or educated elite—was fundamental in the developing discourse of
what the nation was and is supposed to be. Armed with the intellectual artillery that was not available in Manila, the Philippines they conjured struggled to negotiate between varying notions of governance and reform:

Known in Philippine historiography as the Propaganda Movement, their political efforts varied widely in scope. Among other things, they organized among Filipino expatriates and Europeans sympathetic to Philippine problems; wrote novels as well as philological, ethnological, and historical studies of the colony; and publicized nationalist causes in the liberal Spanish press and, from 1889-95, in their own propaganda newspaper, *La Solidaridad*. Such causes initially had an assimilationist nature: the granting of Spanish citizenship to Filipino colonial subjects by way of equal application of the Spanish civil law to the colony and Filipino representation to the Spanish parliament. But as assimilationist hopes dimmed by the mid-1890s the more prominent leaders of the Propaganda Movement began to favor Philippine independence from Spain (Rafael, 1990, p. 594).

The sudden shift from Spanish to American rule punctuated the debate between assimilation and independence. As the United States made it clear that their intention was to protect ‘civil rights, personal liberty and public order’ (McKinley cited in Devins, 1905, p. 381), religious idealism’s pervasiveness dissipated in this political transition. Although the American period decentralized religion from the affairs of the state, it failed to initiate any dramatic transformation of the hierarchies developed after more than three centuries of Spanish rule. Instead, it created a culture that allowed the existing social organization to latch on to the political transformations enforced by the American colonial government. With the United States administration accentuating an English-language education (Bernardo, 2004, pp. 18-19), the Philippines’ publications in this period did not only embody a new colonial language but also the skewed notions of reason effectively enforcing American ideals on local shores. Food absorbed the impact of many of these ideas. It imbibed the racialized stance of a number of nutrition and sanitation policies, and
used these to create distinctions between—among other things—those with and without power and capital, urban and rural identities, empire and colony.

To this end, I examine two fields of print instrumental in reconfiguring the experience of food: cookbooks and literature. This and the succeeding chapter focuses on the impact of distinction-determining activities insofar as food is concerned. While there have been significant valuations on the print capital of the elite and the bureaucracy in relation to the historic and political circumstances affecting how the Philippines has evolved as a nation, its incursion into the private realms of everyday life needs to be examined and articulated. This chapter traces consumption as an essential activity underpinning the determination of identities relegated under the auspices of the nation. It historicizes the development of Philippine recipe books from the 1830s to the 1960s, a period marked by significant movement in terms of political upheavals that saw the Philippines under two colonial authorities, two world wars and the unrelenting problem of Philippine independence. Although there have been significantly more cookbooks produced in the four decades from after this period and into the present, there is a lot that needs to be articulated about the materials between the 19th and mid-20th Centuries in order to gain substantial historic connections useful in assessing more recent production including that of electronic media. In many ways, the more contemporary cookbooks cannot avoid the concerns and issues confronting their predecessors. The most obvious is the struggle for national sovereignty and the establishment of a collective national identity. Prescriptions of food symbols from this period only offer fragmented visions of the homeland and their corresponding practices. In particular, there remains an inconsistent valuation of local food particularly in determining its merits alongside foreign influences that caused Philippine food to undergo numerous cycles of slaughter and revival.

This chapter’s structure follows the progression of cookbooks from the earliest prototypes used in the country during the Spanish and American periods before proceeding to examine their implications on the kinds of production seen
after the country’s liberation from the United States. Although it has been tempting to look closely at the generic characteristics of the cookbook in each period, I temporarily abandoned that project because of the dearth of available materials from archives and sources in the Philippines. The lack of organized records amplify in many ways the lack of scholarship regarding Philippine food studies in general, which has suffered from the traditional stigma associated with domestic work. That Philippine cuisine is patriarchal is reflected in its capitalist character and how local food-related practices only find legitimacy in their conversion into commodities. I will instead direct the following discussions on identifying key trends using available materials that contribute to the discourse of the national cuisine. Following Bourdieu’s (1986) installation of the concept of cultural capital to explain how certain practices evade the logic of economic inequalities, the chapter pays particular attention to questions revolving around collective identity and their signification in the food practices they prescribe. In this regard, I analyze cookbooks as part of a system of production that instill both a cuisine and a hierarchy of roles and functions across different cross-sections of Philippine society.

Such a valuation positions the centrality of the upper and middle classes and how they transformed cuisine into an utterance reproducing their control not just economically but also symbolically. How they managed to curb the discourse of national cuisine in their favor is shaped by a series of historic and social transformations emanating from the colonial struggle against Spain and the United States. While the country gained political independence, the culture erected out of its liberation is still haunted by its colonial past. Much of the practices edified in these cookbooks project a sense of sovereignty through the consolidation of food habits. At the same time, however, many of these practices implicate dependence on the structure and image of the Western meal and the lifestyles they favor, and an ignorance and suppression of local and customary conventions. Despite addressing seemingly different audiences in different contexts and periods—from middle class Filipinos to an international audience, these cookbooks emanate from a distinctively
singular consciousness that constantly tries to please its colonial fathers, replicating their control by forcing Philippine cuisine to assume the structure and logic of eating habits that once relegated the inferiority of the majority under foreign rule. I problematize the upper class’ participation in determining the literal and figurative recipes that comprise the national cuisine, which has become the strand unifying the valuation of Filipino cookbooks in the succeeding sections. Doing so magnifies the definition we laid out on an earlier chapter on ‘Rethinking Cuisine’: if national cuisines aid in increasing the state’s regulatory control over private domains, its cookbooks serve as vehicles transporting state-propagated ideology within the home, particularly in regimenting day-to-day meals as part of the rituals that pay tribute to the nation. Before these can be discussed, let me first draw attention towards some important antecedents from other ‘national’ cuisines in order to highlight a couple of important insights affecting the determination of culinary tradition and its connections to nationalist struggles.

**COOKBOOK NATIONALISM(S)**

Although different nations followed different trajectories in establishing their cuisines through cookbooks, several ideas are consistent in their propagation. First, cookbooks presuppose the installation of cooking as a specialized skill that immediately entreats privilege. Taking root from the need to satisfy aristocratic families in agrarian Europe, China and the Middle East demanding an exclusive set of dishes helpful in distinguishing their food from the lower class, the more contemporary versions of national cuisines demands a sophisticated readership. The earliest of cookbooks often addressed an educated audience that not only comprehended instructions and measurements, but also had the ability to travel, partake of something new, and to recreate a wider set of food systems embodying a vast array of cultures. The manner in which a supposedly more attuned audience mediated differences between these cultures left startling representations of how
national cuisines are imagined. Mehmet Kâmil Efendi’s *The Refuge for Cooks*, one of the earliest cookbooks out of the Ottoman Empire released in 1844 wrote for the ‘need to adopt a new cuisine from the West that would go better with our new conditions’ (quoted in Kasaba, 1997, p. 25). Efendi, a medical professor by trade, catered to an audience optimistic over Western science and the potentials it presented to Turkey. Not only did he summoned the virtues of nutrition but also appealed to a sense of ease and efficiency that saw more chicken dishes instead of the traditional sheep and lamb. *The Refuge for Cooks* became immensely popular and was reprinted nine times until 1888, and turned into one of the more significant collections defining ‘Turkish cuisine’.

Likewise, it was also a new audience that reconstituted notions of privilege in France. The crystallization of French cuisine became possible through the constant debates participated in by both the old aristocracy and an emergent middle class who used food to demarcate differences in taste:

> In culinary affairs as in so many others, the 17th century is the turning point. Although France earlier lagged behind other European countries in the production of cookbooks, beginning in the mid-17th century a spate of cookbooks thrust cuisine into the public arena and set off the first episode in the debate replayed by every generation since over the merits of “old” (in this instance, largely medieval culinary practices) versus the “new” and “modern” (Ferguson, 1998, p. 611).

The divide between the old and the new actualized a breed of new distinctions critical in appraising different periods as sources of privilege in France. ‘Old’ medieval cuisine ingrains itself as harbinger of the past, invoking classic cooking skills in the maintenance of power. It often assumed privilege through the authority bestowed by centuries of repeated practice and ritualization. On the other hand, the ‘modern’ gathers its privilege from an entirely different set of practices brought about by advancements signifying the stagnation of the past’s culture. It looks towards technological shifts brought about by enlightenment and the scientific
revolution in constructing new ways of cooking and eating. Together, their opposition created new spaces that constantly reworked and renegotiated collective practices that have solidified into French cuisine today.

Second, consistent with the notions of the ‘modern’ discussed above, cookbooks convey the critical role of the state over the economic affairs of the regions they govern. Cookbooks and recipes are quite deceptive in this regard. Despite addressing a decidedly feminine audience occupying domestic spaces, they implicitly commemorate state institutions and the corresponding systems they administer. Cwiertka (2006, pp. 56-86) provides a compelling example through the Japanese military who owes its successful installation through the large-scale manipulation of foodways. Comprised of soldiers recruited from different regions, the Japanese military at the turn of the 20th Century needed a menu that unified a wide array of food choices that was acceptable to all. After early attempts with rice and pickled plum failed due to increased incidences of beri-beri stemming from this diet, the government turned to a number of dishes from China utilizing soy sauce. The popularity of Chinese noodles and dumplings first enjoyed by the military became the prototype for **ramen** and **gyoza**, now revered as national dishes of Japan.

Third, cookbooks also articulated differences and commonalities between disparate cultures, regions and religions. They were crucial in determining the position of various groups within the nation, asserting their function and purpose in support of or deference to the centrality of the nation. Pilcher’s *Que Vivan Los Tamales* (1998) looks at Mexican cookbooks and how they aided in decentralizing cooking practices dominated by those coming from the northern region. Being closer to the US border, the cookery of the north figured heavily in representations of US media and tourist networks. The United States valorized the common practice of wrapping tamales in cornhusks in northern Mexico, for example, as the resonating stereotype of Mexican nationalism. Through cookbooks that looked closely at regional practices in the different and other parts of Mexico, it became easy to contest the centrality of the cornhusk-wrapped tamales, and presented new
sources of Mexican cookery that slowly recognized contributions made by the Maya in the Yucatan and the Zapoteca and the Mixteca of nearby Oaxaca in the south, which utilized banana leaves for wrapping tamales. By doing so, cookbooks re-imagined Mexican collective identity anew, repositioning not just the foodways of other locales but also other economic and geographic narratives which figured significantly in recalibrating the national cuisine.

The integration of different cooking practices within the so-called national cuisine is not without its share of problems. A final thought that must be noted affecting the relationship of cookbooks to nationalism is the manner in which it magnifies the awkward position of localities and cultures within the nation itself. Transitioning local practices into the national cuisine often raises questions about the authenticity of both. As solidarity is reinforced through the accumulation of disparate practices, the predicament of Othering becomes a necessary attribute in positioning both the nation and the many cultures it subsumes. Cuisine stabilizes through the careful scrutiny of indigenous cookery using an imagined standard best articulated through the nation, and by its key holders whom Hannah Arendt describes to have ‘private interests [that] assume public significance’ (1958, p. 35).

Appadurai (1988) illustrates this idea in how Indian cuisine was determined by an educated middle class whose notions of unification became the driving force in repurposing regional food to accommodate the reproduction of the national image. He writes:

What we see in the many ethnic and regional cookbooks is the growth of an anthology of naturally generated images of the ethnic Other, a kind of “ethnoethnicity,” rooted in the details of regional recipes, but creating a set of generalized gastroethnic images of Bengalis, Tamils, and so forth. Such representations, produced by both insiders and outsiders, constitute reflections as well as continuing refinements of the culinary conception of the Other in contemporary India. (Appadurai, 1988, p. 16)
In many national cuisines, nationalism is established in contempt of the Other whose identity is overcome at least a second time in deference to both the old colonial rule and the state’s supremacy. The nation imagined in many of these cookbooks replicates old forms of colonial design that once extracted wealth from the peoples it occupied, making a colony’s economy and, subsequently its culture and ideology reliant and inextricably linked to its colonizer. The nation, at least in the Philippines’ case, was indicative of the experimentation by both Spanish and U.S. administrations as they come to terms with their own power. Spain tried to hang on to its old glory, the United States laid the groundwork needed to set apart its imperial aspirations from that of Europe while salvaging the remains of Spain’s old empire. Spain harbored no pretenses towards the development of its colonies into independent entities, but the United States embarked on a contradictory venture that sought to let go of control over the Philippines—as evidenced in its installation of a Commonwealth government—but was also simultaneously colonial. McCoy, Scarano and Johnson (2010, p. 3) note that America had ‘post-imperial denial’ whereby its governance of the Philippines effectively ‘migrated homeward to influence U.S. state formation in the early decades of the twentieth century’.

Under the United States, the Philippines’ independence meant an implicit compromise carried out only after establishing the reorganization of the colonial economy in the image of America. The implications are twofold. First, it instantaneously prepared Philippine nationalism to be aligned within the broader confines of a global system of modern nation-states existing within a nation-state system. The intricacies of Philippine society is no longer anchored to what Giddens (1985, p. 1-2) describes as ‘class-divided societies’ but instead reflect ‘distinctive forms of social integration associated with the nation-state’. And second, despite political independence and integration to a larger social structure, the nation’s inauguration only transfers the colonizer’s control to the state, further concealing the former colonial master’s culpability in manipulating the postcolony’s affairs. Repurposing anew the different cultural practices that was once derided and made
inferior under colonial rule, the incorporation of old symbols of exclusion into the national arena is a ploy to reinforce the legitimacy of the postcolonial state and its appointed executors.

The cuisine documented in Philippine cookbooks narrates these implicit processes of Othering at a moment when the Philippines grapples with its own identity in relation to other nation-states adopting the logic of developmentalism. Because the growth of cookbooks in the Philippines coincides with the quest for national sovereignty, their development presents a grave antinomy hailing the ascendancy of the nation. These cookbooks implicitly narrate how the clamor for sovereignty and the eventual installation of independence affected food-related choices and policies. The project of archiving the national cuisine continues the long tradition of relegating the interests of the Filipino as ‘the helpless victims of the changing power position and the changing interests of the ruling groups in the U.S.’ (Pomeroy, 1992, p. 12), and their agents in the Philippines who benefitted from such economic and cultural transformations.

COOKBOOKS UNDER SPANISH RULE

The formalization of cookbooks in the Philippines was a slow process and only gained momentum between the latter part of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century when Spain ceded control over the Philippines to the United States and currents of nationalist sentiment fueled the struggle against both colonial powers. Despite the flourishing of print technology over Spain’s three-century long presence, the publications of this period focused mainly on evangelization. Recipes for popular dishes were transmitted orally, and the few known documented recipes did not come from actual cookbooks but manuals produced in Spain. They brought not only the dishes of the Iberian world into the Philippines, but also carried with them the different social mores and symbols that bestowed distinction and privilege to the select audience they addressed. These manuals were to become important
prototypes of Philippine cookbooks. The manner they envisioned their readers as privileged and belonging to a certain pedigree continues to structure and organize Filipino food today.

As with most cookbooks appearing in Europe during this period, the manuals appearing in the Philippines had no formalized measuring system, and left a great deal to the experience and skill of the cook to ascertain the imprecision of the ingredients needed in these recipes. As if the lack of standardized systems did not pose enough challenges, many of the dishes in these Spanish manuals were made even more difficult to replicate given that the ingredients they utilized were not readily available in the Philippines. These published recipes found an audience in wealthy households that not only had access to the unusual ingredients required but also employed food as a means to enforce their rank. These manuals constantly reiterated the use of food to reinforce one’s social standing, and projected specific cooking and dining activities as important signifiers of social class. For example, the manual El Libro de las Familias: Novísimo Manual Práctico de Cocina Española, Francesa y Americana, Higiene y Economía Doméstica (The Family Book: New Practical Manual for Spanish, French and American Cookery, Domestic Hygiene and Economy, , 1885) discussed the carving of meat that has given more attention to the observation of rank in serving the meat rather than the actual process of carving itself:

It is important to place the meat for carving in the most strategic location based on the number of invited guests. If there are many guests, you can carve for one to six at a time, in order to avoid confusion and to prevent the meat from getting cold.

A thick fork or three-pronged pitchfork and a large wide sharp knife are necessary in carving meat properly and neatly. Carve out the pieces firmly so as not to drain the juice in the meat. This can be done sitting or standing, as long as the carver proceeds with skill, speed and cleanliness.

The order of serving food and beverages must first be carried out to the ladies, beginning with the hostess, then equally between the knights according to their rank and the elders according to the greatest age.
In *The History of Manners*, the first volume of *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias (1994, pp. vi-256) suggests that the ritualization of such etiquette and behaviors constitute what he called the ‘civilizing process’ or the practice of learning and becoming who we are as individuals and as a society is aided by the consistent inculcation of ideals from the simplest level of organization (such as the family) to the most complex (the nation). Eating with a fork, using a napkin to blow one’s nose and other codes of conduct conditioned by some form of socialization paved the way for the transmission of values and the determination of social structures governing divisions in society. In the excerpt about serving food quoted above, the division is made clear across several distinct categories. First, it implores the importance of women in regulating domestic functions as a performance where all other forms of social divisions emanate. Table manners regulated ideas about who should be served first, which, in turn, communicated a hierarchy according to prevalent notions of strength and/or weakness. Aside from providing instruction on cooking, the *El Libro de las Familias* also incorporated varied forms of information on other domestic issues. It often discussed laundry preparations, food presentation, medical remedies and food preservation as important facets of femininity. Needing to be served first, the woman of the house does not necessarily carry out these responsibilities and functions, but is expected to have a fair number of servants to do it for her. Consequently, different kinds of femininity are also implicit in the assertion of manners. The women who manage the kitchen, dining room, table and food service are initiated into a position of power as opposed to women who are instructed on what to do. The period’s assumption of literacy and its impact in determining class and privilege become critical in determining a woman’s social standing, and many of these manuals spoke to literate women whose role is to read and comprehend the customs written, and impart its information to an illiterate class of domestic workers under her tutelage.

The smooth enactment of these rules and customs by her staff during important functions where guests are present not only warranted her position in
society but also projected through her the power and control of the empire over the colony. Just like the abovementioned prescriptions on serving food, many of these manuals contained medieval notions of society, politics and culture, thus illustrating the severity of the ‘civilizing process’ and what it tried to enforce in Philippine society. Although these manuals were rare even among elite Filipino classes, their impact could not be diminished as they provided the only models for the genre emulated by the early Filipino-written cookbooks. More importantly, even though the social organization that these manuals engendered present a perplexing set of social hierarchies, groups, family structures and gender dynamics that were not present in the Philippines, they reinforced the task of adapting European social norms to the Philippine context that was being carried out through other print forms. Philippine metrical romances like the *Ibong Adarna* (Magical Adarna Bird) and *Florante at Laura* (Florante and Laura), and their theatrical counterparts like the *komedya* (from the Spanish *comedia*) reworked medieval ballads into local languages and spread stories about European nobility and their social mores. Similarly, the didacticism and formulaic characterization of religious literature such as the *pasyon* provided the rationale for sustaining belief in things like birthright, chivalry and fate. Together, the adaptation of secular medieval ballads and religious texts demonstrated Frye’s contention in *The Secular Scripture* (1976) of how the fantasy projected onto the past is recycled into an ideology legitimizing the emergence of the upper class. If in Frye the novel reworked myth into romantic narratives with characters and settings in order to legitimize the culture of a rising middle class, the literature of the Spanish period in the Philippines utilized both the medieval culture of Europe and the fantasy of Christ to enhance the privileging of an elite class. Ownership of land was equated with princely and aristocratic characters whose authority was promulgated through their characterization as obedient sons and charismatic leaders who were just and incorruptible; Christianity was the right religion, and Islam the wrong one; whiteness was purity, and any other skin color were characterized as crude and uncivilized; and ‘Filipino women in the
Hispanicized parts of the archipelago could imagine themselves as Florentina or Cricelda [damsels-in-distress in metrical romances], or as any of the many beloved martyrs and saints who suffered and died to preserve their sexual purity’ (Meñez, 1996, p. 109).

The colonization of the Philippines, however, does not follow a trajectory that would completely imbibe Europe or even Spain’s social structures. If in Europe, the gendered division of labor within families stimulated the development of a bourgeoisie whose relocation into the suburbs resulted to a division between work and home (Davidoff and Hall, 1987, pp. 149-192, Popiel, 2008, pp. 1-25), their growth in the Philippines progressed quite slowly—if not at all. The social history of the Philippines has been what McCoy (2001, p. 5) describes as ‘germane to a wider debate over “underdevelopment” and “world trade systems”’. The late entry of the Philippines to world trade towards the end of the 18th Century resulted to a ‘slow, uneven, protracted and largely non-cumulative’ participation (McCoy, 2001, p. 6). Despite the inability to mobilize a middle class partaking of the economic activities on a global scale, the presence of these cooking manuals contributed to the creation of a ‘middle class’ based on geographic proximity. Expanding on the implicit readership of these manuals, one’s nearness to the city affected the development of Philippine cookbooks, enforcing the preferential treatment of an emerging urban class. Remetría’s Manual del Cocinero, Cocinera, Repostero, Pastelero, Confitero y Botillero (Manual of Savory Food, Pastries, Confections and Bottling, Remetería, 1851), for example, is not timid about affording distinction towards the urban identity:

The author lists all the usual methods: the mothers will find more economical recipes, the sweet tooth’s other tastes will be stimulated, the domesticated ladies residing in the countryside will improve their skills, and finally, fans will be imparted with an appreciation of good wine.

Hopefully, the manual would be helpful to the cook who wants to understand carefully the various objects that are subjected to his art as it is meant to guide the young who, upon leaving their village, is stimulated by the noble ambition to compete with more
famous cooks and, like all true learners of art, knows that cooking has its difficulties but never falls out of the hands of those seeking the truth unlike those who are simply content to just season what they eat and fill their stomachs with anything as they undergo colic or indigestion, and are often in need of doctors and medicine! (translated from Spanish, Remetería, 1851, pp. 2-3)

Many of these manuals acclaim the city as the central space where more progressive forms of cultural achievement are imagined to have developed. Cooking is regarded as an art form and its mastery distinguishes the simple villager who eats for survival from that of the sophisticated city dweller capable of rationalizing different forms of pleasure. Ironically, despite these manuals’ tendency to construct and necessitate different forms of pleasure, they also inflict conflicting standards about excess. As it imparts a positive attribute towards the pleasure of gratifying sweet cravings and indulging in the satisfaction of drinking wine, it also denounces excessive eating and imparts upon it notions of gluttony. The double standard emanates from the distinctions imagined between villagers and city dwellers and the assumed meanings they assign towards eating. The former’s eating habits are indicted as part of the arena of low culture, and the idea of gluttony is easily transfixed on the manner they enjoy food. Obtaining food from what appears to have a more direct and symbiotic relationship with the environment, the idea of cultural practice of people coming from an agricultural setting is seen as a more inferior form of pleasure that only satisfies basic needs. On the other hand, the urban civilian elevates his or her eating habits, which is detached from active forms of agricultural production, into the arena of high art. The high premium is derived from the ability to manipulate food and refashion it in numerous ways: from being able to prolong it from spoiling and to transpose dishes from a distant environment to the next. The relationship between the villager and city dweller is thus depicted in a very pathological manner. The disease inflicted upon ‘those who are simply content to just season what they eat and fill their stomachs with anything’ is cured by ‘doctors and medicine’, hailing the supremacy of urban identities and their
culture in alleviating the perceived backwardness and maladaptive behavior of rural life.

With hardly any economic participation in a growing network of trade activities, traditional gender distinctions became embedded in the development of urban and rural identities. Instead of splitting gender roles that delineated work and public space as part of masculine domain and the home and domestic activities as feminine domain as has been argued in the case of England (Davidoff and Hall, 1987), the urban and rural divide in the Philippines resulted to a partisan concept of gender burdening women with the dual task of performing both domestic chores and contributing to the family’s income. This has been evident in the number of female migrants flocking to Manila. Doeppers (2000) argues against the conventional norm that has looked at migration to Manila in the 19th Century as a mostly masculine undertaking. For Doeppers, official census documents and other public records are misleading since many of them don’t take into account the informal nature of work that women have taken on during that period. This ranged from ‘regular cash wage work for thousands of Filipino women in the big cigar manufactories that were operated in and near the city by the government tobacco monopoly until 1882’ to ‘small-scale commerce and artisanal production’, and even prostitution (Doeppers, 2000, p. 149).

Finally, the indictment of rural life and the food accompanying it is further impaired by the kinds of dishes and recipes these manuals tried to popularize. As mentioned earlier, because they were intended for a Spanish audience, these recipes called for ingredients that were not readily available locally. The Manual del Cocinero (Remetería, 1851), for instance, lists down prescriptions for an unusual array of proteins such as rabbit and turtle. Affixing then novel notions of health and propriety towards the dishes contained in these recipe books indirectly conditioned attitudes that saw local food preparations to be symptomatic of contempt and ignorance. The foreign recipes found ways of rationalizing the dishes they presented at the expense of indirectly Othering local cookery. Although it would seem futile
to argue the intentions of these manuals as they were intended for a different readership entirely, their insistence on addressing a privileged and well-read audience would have drastic consequences for the production of Philippine cookbooks during and beyond the American occupation.

COOKBOOKS UNDER AMERICAN RULE

On the outset, the American presence in the Philippines offered a much welcome reprieve to the restricted and prescriptive lifestyle conditioned by Spain’s colonizing efforts. The democratic ideals championed by US politics posed a potentially liberating current that permitted the plurality of local cultures to penetrate the homogenizing tendencies of constructing the national cuisine. However, the project came about late under the Americans as many of the publications they initially disseminated in the Philippines took on a stance that was not different from what Spain imparted. With titles such as *Household Science and Art for the Philippine Islands* (Morris, 1917), *Housekeeping and Household Arts: A Manual for Work with the Girls in the Elementary Schools of the Philippine Islands* (Fuller, 1911), and *Principles of Cooking: A Textbook in Domestic Science* (Conley, 1914), it was clear that the elevation of any dish into the realm of collective food practice must first satisfy the conditions demanded for by the rigid standards of a new nutritional science. Classifying cooking as a significant subject matter of home economics, these textbooks built upon the socially sanctioned definition of women as wives and mothers informed by educated domestic work. It broke down cooking into more concise formulas and prescriptions, emphasizing how the mastery of the field contributed not only towards creating healthy and affordable meals for the family but also imparted how such knowledge aided in the progress of the community and of the nation.

If Spain circulated recipes through manuals that provided instruction to heiresses and socialites in order to reinforce their position on top of a social
hierarchy, the Americans passed theirs out through textbooks meant for students imparted with civic obligation. Maintaining a stance that brought Spain’s pathological compulsion over keeping dirt and disease out of the house to a new extreme, the United States refashioned the subjectivity of the Filipina domestic by maintaining the ascendancy of the old elite and modifying it to accommodate the intricacies of home economics, which US education in the Philippines turned to its own academic specialty. Domestic science became an expression that recast women’s roles. If Spain’s ideal Filipina was a house manager who imparted knowledge to her servants, the United States encouraged women to take on the tasks of domestic chores more actively and independently. This kind of reformulation of women’s roles are, however, more indicative of the confidence that was given to technology rather than to women themselves as technology was understood to be a tool that made the work easier for mothers and wives, allowing them to take more work on their own. At the same time, the knowledge and application of science in the household became a critical ideal connecting wife and mother to relationships beyond the family as the food she serves avoided archaic notions of pleasure dominant in Spanish cookbooks. This refurbished vision of American domesticity appeared to be more purposeful, accessible and attractive to the lower classes. By the time of U.S. occupation, the reproduction of American domesticity became the centerpiece of an education, emphasizing the importance of nutrition and diet in the upbringing of healthy Filipinos. Women, who were twice relegated to the periphery by doing domestic chores and informal employment, found consolation in their newly articulated social roles. Eventually, these functions became normative for Filipino women during the American occupation and beyond it, reinforcing limitations to their employment on domestic professions and even legitimizing lower wages for women despite holding responsibilities in both home and work (Trager, 1984, Tsuda, 2003, McKay, 2005).

Although the utilization of science in these early American publications helped in elevating the once hidden domain of women’s work in the public sphere, the
collective identity they envisioned shows an amorphous adherence towards a yet-to-be defined and, therefore, non-existent nation-state. Women’s roles and family dynamics are bonded to the state, making more pronounced the idea of food’s transformative power to penetrate and reorganize numerous facets of social life. It reproduced the subservience of femininity and looked at its performance as conditioned by the need of women to address collective concerns first before offering them any semblance of autonomy. By tying the purpose of food production firmly in the operations and ideals of society, these textbooks only highlighted the patriarchal nature of domestic work, tying the wife and mother’s identity to that of her husband and children.

This is evident in how nationalism was to find expression in an implicit mandate that made the family and an Americanized view of society more valued entities than the individual. Home economics effectively institutionalized domesticity, and created the links necessary to align household consumption with the economic activities favored by the state:

Integral to the construction of colonial modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, colonial domesticity in the tropics heralded the conjugation of whiteness with femininity as a sign of public entitlement as well as a source of private ambivalence. Colonial sociality in this period reflected and refracted the globalization of Western bourgeois notions regarding the gendered and racialized embodiments of both rulers and ruled. In the notion of the domestic, U.S. imperialism in the Philippines, like its European counterparts in Asia and Africa, furnished a public idiom for representing as well as containing the private lives of its most privileged agents. Domesticity as an idiom of colonial modernity assumes that the structures of public and private are mobile and indefinitely reproducible, capable of translation and across cultural and bodily spaces (Rafael, 2000, pp. 52-53).

Local cultures did little in determining the nation. Instead, cookbooks imagined the nation and performed it through domesticity using ideals reclaimed from American life that is presumed to be universal and therefore replicable. The nation that made domestic ideology reasonable was the American belief in their
‘manifest destiny’ to impose moral reform in the archipelago. Like the manuals introduced during the Spanish period, a significant number of these textbooks were written predominantly either by American housewives stationed in the Philippines or by Americans whose writing were solely intended for an American audience. In both cases, the enhancement of American culture was well on its way, alienating local habits as incomparably substandard compared to American practices. Conley’s widely disseminated *Principles of Cooking* (1914), for instance, included unheard of recipes and menu suggestions. A grouping of meals for lunch consisted of, among other things, macaroni and cheese, potato chips and berries. Other suggestions were baked apples and cream, croutons and stewed apricots. For a Filipino audience, the recipes are daft and impractical. These cookbooks heralded the preeminence of unfamiliar products, documented their nutritional importance and emphasized their use in lending flavor and structure to everyday meals. Their printing and dissemination also solidified the impression of their contributions towards the efficiency and stability in the domestic kitchen.

Filipino food culture was to see dramatic changes oriented towards home economics’ streamlined and output-intensive agenda. As the Philippines struggled to demonstrate to the American colonial government that they were worthy of independence, they also effectively aligned the country’s production and culture towards the world system. This is evident in the construction of the Insular Ice Plant and Cold Storage in 1902, also ‘considered the first building of a permanent nature to be erected by the Americans’ (Lico, 2008, p. 232). Although the facility was used primarily to store supplies for American soldiers, it induced the large-scale stockpiling and preservation of food commodities.

Another unprecedented alteration in the archipelago’s diet is that of food enrichment. As early as 1910, the American biochemist Robert Williams stationed in the Bureau of Science in Manila started experiments on isolating and identifying the chemical composition of thiamine, a substance found useful in the treatment of beriberi. It was only in 1936 that thiamine was produced synthetically and in large
amounts eventually making rice enrichment possible (Dunn, 2000, pp. 918-919). The discovery of thiamine and its utilization in commercial rice production inaugurated one of the few success stories of American experimentation in the tropics.

On the production and manufacturing front, the United States attempted to expand their operations into Philippine territory. For instance, the California Packing Corporation (Calpak) looked at the possibility of establishing pineapple canning operations in the Philippines as early as 1912, just a year after inaugurating its operations in Hawaii. Its initial foray in Luzon was unsuccessful but the transfer of its operations first in Cotabato and second in Bukidnon in the southern island of Mindanao became instrumental in making the Philippines one of the largest planters and canners of pineapple in the world today (Hawkins, 2011, pp. 167-170).

The combined influence of industrial operations like that of Calpak, large-scale alteration of crop quality like the addition of synthetic thiamine in fortifying rice, and technological innovations like that of refrigeration made American food influences ideal. The policies on a structural level anchored the country’s would-be independence on mimicking and complementing the U.S. economy, and food preparations and commodities altered the Filipinos’ daily life considerably. As American recipes and their notions of health and convenience spread, an influx of products such as bacon, cheese and tomato catsup flooded Filipino pantries, creating a new market for American commodities. If in 1898, at the start of American occupation, U.S. products comprised 11% of total Philippine imports, it ballooned to 74% by 1940 (Statistical Bulletin and Bureau of Customs, cited in Nagano, 1997). The employment of bottled, tinned and processed ingredients made dishes experienced only usually during feasts and fiestas and that once demarcated the high culture of the Spanish elite more available for public consumption. Catsup, for instance, became a significant staple as it was utilized in a number of Filipino dishes, both traditional and novel. Filipinos used catsup as the coating for marinades used in grilling, the base for Filipino-style spaghetti sauce, and as a convenient substitute for
fresh tomatoes in a number of stews that symbolized refinement during the Spanish period. Catsup’s popularity solidifies in the invention of banana catsup during World War Two when tomato catsup was difficult to source. Nutritionist and food technologist Maria Y. Orosa came out with the first banana catsup recipe that was meant to make the most of surplus bananas (NHI). Making use of red food coloring to approximate tomato catsup and flavored with local spices, Orosa’s concoction was sweeter, tangier and spicier than its predecessor and proved to be more popular. Besides taking over the tasks accomplished by tomato catsup for the dishes mentioned above, it became a common condiment for dishes induced by the American occupation such as fried chicken, hotdogs and other processed foods.

Industrialization became a significant motif underscoring many of these recipes. With the delivery of mass-produced goods to the country, food that once distinguished the elite slowly became everyday staples. The efficiency and calculability of the factory became the model for the transformation of the subservient Catholic socialite housewife’s servant-driven Spanish kitchen into a space that projected American middle class femininity. Aside from mandating new dishes with new ingredients discussed in the previous chapter, both textbooks and cookbooks of this period often brought up the convenience of using modern equipment in cooking. The Philippines’ modernity was not only experienced through infrastructure and frenzied activities on the streets of Manila, it was also made apparent through the kind of domesticity that sheltered the urban elite. Electricity and household appliances—electric stoves, refrigerators, even can openers—promised to save time while ensuring the same, if not better, taste. Leading the charge were American women themselves who—despite coming from different backgrounds in the United States—‘all had a sense of acting as representatives of white middle-class femininity in the colony’ (Rafael, 2000, p. 56). Consistent with U.S. incursions into the so-called ‘Cult of True Womanhood’, women took it upon themselves to instill moral virtue consisting of ‘piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity’ (Welter, 1966). Domestic space was portrayed as
the culminating point in a long series of concealed assembly lines that gathered and processed ingredients from all over, simplifying and compartmentalizing kitchen work into procedures that allowed the housewife and mother to carry on tasks vital in making the home a site for leisure and recreation.

However, unlike 19th Century American domesticity that found itself ingrained within the relatively economically secure confines of middle class homes that made it possible to assign gender-specific roles to public and private spheres, domesticity in the Philippines had to come to terms with the denial of everyday life and culture in favor of the rituals that ensured that the nation is hailed, and that efforts towards self-governance are performed. Consistent with racialized attitudes towards development, this effectively pathologized traditional cooking processes and eating habits. The freshness of ingredients were not to be a concern as long as one knew how to read labels that calculated nutritional information and expiration dates. Extricating the slaughtering of meat, the pickling of vegetables, the stewing of fruits and other laborious and unpleasant cooking from the kitchen established the authority of American cookery in the colony, signifying how the U.S. has been successful in its goal to educate and prepare the Philippines for self-government.

The appropriation of the American household in Philippine middle class domestic architecture best represents this pathological orientation. Filipinos traditionally carried out tasks such as preparing food, eating and sleeping in one-room houses whose functions shifted according to the time of day. American domesticity erected walls within this space, compartmentalizing different domestic tasks into different rooms. As a result of this compartmentalization, ‘the typical Philippine kitchen was usually hidden from the public view’ (Alejandro, 1999, p. 23), and developed what many Filipinos refer to as ‘dirty’ kitchens popular and necessary in middle class urban households (Guillermo, 1986, p. 64). The dirty kitchen absorbs all the actual food preparation and is one of the hardest working spaces in the house. Elite and middle class Filipinos maintain a dirty kitchen in order to keep appearances in the ‘clean’ kitchen, whose spotlessness or lack thereof
becomes a critical reflection of the mother and housewife’s abilities. Ironically, despite doing most of the food preparation, the dirty kitchen is also the most isolated. They are situated in the back of the house, hidden from the view of guests and visitors, concealing domestic chores in an attempt to preserve the private confines of the house as the first refuge for the working city dweller.

Attractive and logical as they were made to appear, Filipinos did not immediately embrace the cultural changes initiated by American cookbooks. For many locals, the customs were strange especially when they modified local dishes and practices. For instance, Alice Fuller’s *Housekeeping and Household Arts* (1911) made unusual recommendations such as using flour as a thickening agent for the traditional *monggo* (mung bean) soup and serving it with, among other things, croutons and eggs. Although traditional *monggo* soup was thickened by the starchy quality of the beans, the addition of water made it somewhat runny. Moreover, Fuller’s suggestion of serving it with croutons duplicated rice’s role, and proved not quite as economical as rice proved to be more filling.

Reacting to the seemingly contrived performance of domesticity and civility in constructing the nation, nationalism and the national cuisine found other forms of expression. For one, language became a critical contention in many cookbooks. The rise of English as the bureaucratic medium was met with antagonism, and a number of cookbooks published in Spanish revisited conventional dishes and cooking methods that were overlooked in English cookbooks. Spanish became a nostalgic symbol of the old order, and was used to make English—along with its unfamiliar dishes—appear more distant and unattainable. *La Cocina Filipina: Coleccion de Formulas Practicas y Posibles en Filipinas Para Comer Bien* (The Philippine Kitchen: Practical Recipe Collection and the Promise of Eating Well in the Philippines, Cocina Filipina 1913) featured local dishes alongside foreign ones. For the first time, local dishes appeared as equals to their foreign counterparts, dismantling the long-standing practice of highlighting foreign recipes as marks of distinction and the good life. Even though the prescriptions it made were ineffective and difficult to
comprehend, *La Cocina Filipina* inspired the creation of cookbooks that made use of local recipes. Popular among them was *Condimentos Indigenas* (Indigenous Spices, 1918) authored by Pura V. Kalaw, the wife of Teodoro M. Kalaw who was the editor of the Spanish-language but Philippine nationalist newspaper *El Renacimiento* (The Renaissance). *Condimentos Indigenas* assembled together dishes from different regions throughout the country. Compared to its predecessor *La Cocina Filipina*, Kalaw’s cookbook was more useful as it utilized a structure that listed down ingredients and procedures in a more concise manner, thus presenting local practice as systematic and rational. More importantly, Kalaw’s acknowledgement of regional differences was a significant step. She presented Philippine cuisine as a pluralistic undertaking, highlighting different cultures whose voices remain unheard in the homogenously monolithic construction of the nation.

This attempt at culling recipes from different regions, however, was more an exception rather than the general rule. For other cookbooks, European traditions provided the rhetoric for distinguishing Philippine cuisine from that of the Americans. Although Spanish cuisine was utilized as a foundation for imagining what Philippine cuisine should be, many cookbooks also turned their attention towards France as the global standard for good food. While there is no direct contempt for American influences, these cookbooks addressed the need to discover other cuisines as a means to elaborate identity. Language was one site of struggle, with the elite classes persevering to produce cookbooks in Spanish, and where class became the most decisive factor contesting the national identity. Despite the propagation of a number of cookbooks written in Tagalog and other local languages, many of them venerated European cookery over American customs, often citing the experiences of well-traveled Filipinos who attest to the supremacy of European food, particularly that of French cuisine. Fernandez (1994) writes that two of the earliest cookbooks written in Tagalog, *Kusinang Tagalog ng Aklatan at Limbagan ni P. Sayo balo ni Soriano* (Ang Aklat na Ito ay Naglalaman ng mga Sarisari at Maraming Kiyas ng Lutuin sa Lalong Madaling Paraan at Napakatipid na Paggugugol) (Tagalog Cooking from...
the Bookstore and Publishing House of P. Sayo’s widow Soriano [This Book Contains Different Recipes and Rapid and Economical Ways of Cooking], Sayo, 1916), and Aklat ng Pagluluto, Hinango sa Lalong Bantog at Dakilang Aklat ng Pagluluto sa Gawing Europa at sa Filipinas (Book of Cookery, Adapted from Famous and Great Cookbooks from Europe and the Philippines, Ignacio, 1919) were obvious translations of one and the same French cookbook. Fernandez also describes a dessert cookbook translated by Crispulo Trinidad entitled Pasteleria at Reposteria Francesa at Espanola, Aclat na Ganap Naglalaman ng Maraming Palacad sa Pag-gaua ng Lahat ng mga Bagay-Bagay na Matamis at mga Pasteles ni P. R. Macosta (French and Spanish Pastries and Confectioneries, A Book Containing Many Ways of Cooking All Sweet Things and Pastries, Macosta, 1919) whose display of French food became indicative of opulence:

The cover features a tall mounted French piece like those in traditional classic French cookbooks, captioned: Croquemboucheng caranuian. The word croquembouche (croque-en-bouche) designates “all kinds of patisserie which crunches and crumbles in the mouth,” like chestnuts, oranges or cream puffs glazed with sugar cooked to the crack stage. The recipe illustrated instructs one in the assembling of croquignoles (egg whites and icing sugar baked in various shapes, similar to meringues), and is called “caranuian” or ordinary, in contrast to Croquembouche a la Reina, which includes “sweet almonds ground very fine” (Fernandez, 1994, p. 214).

Consistent with the young ilustrado class that Europeanized nationalism towards the end of Spanish rule, these cookbooks used the preeminence of French cuisine through specialties like truffles, hollandaise sauce and pheasants. These recipe books were anything but Filipino. Ignoring the rationale of nutritional science introduced by Americans, many of these recipe books harkened back to old Spanish customs of using food as a means to reify upper class sensibility. Although it was obvious that many of these recipes would not materialize in Filipino kitchens, they did whet the appetite of upper class Filipinos whose position needed to be reinstated.
against an emerging middle class that favored the consumption of American processed foods. Despite addressing a broader audience through the use of local language, the production of these cookbooks in a language so familiar only alienated local cookery even more. These cookbooks only brandished the networks imagined by the upper class, stressed their ability to travel and move uncommon novelties from far away into their private confines, implicitly denouncing the immobility of majority of the population who only ate local food.

By the 1930s, Philippine cookbooks were more a mishmash of different influences from Spain, the United States, France and regional dishes popular in the Philippines. A pluralistic, multi-cultural and diverse modern cuisine appears to be emerging. Written by food professionals such as nutritionists, home economics teachers and members of food-related government institutions, the cookbooks that started to materialize in this decade attempted to unify the different strands of recipe writing that divided the collective identity. Majority of these cookbooks used English, and a number of them paid homage to French cuisine. Heavily influenced by American discourses on food and health, its most striking characteristic was taking the idea of public nutrition more seriously, and struggled to connect this with notions of cooking procedures, ingredients, budget planning, waste management and even social inclusion. Filipino cookbooks reappraised local food practices, assigned their respective nutritional values for the first time in order to gain credence in both feeding the population and institutionalizing a set of symbols for the assimilation of a number of cultural groups. By this time, too, it was common to see local and foreign dishes appearing beside each other. With recipes written in English and Spanish, Sofia Reyes de Veyra and Maria Paz Zamora Mascuñana’s *Everyday Cookery for the Home* (1934) featured filet de veau Vienoise (Viennese veal fillet) beside fish with green mangoes, a local dish popular in many regions of the country. Appearing that same year was Pura V. Kalaw’s *Mga Paglulutong Filipino at Pagcoconserva* (Filipino Cooking and Food Conservation, 1934). It was also an amalgamation of local and foreign cooking techniques, and like her 1918 *Condimentos*
Indigenas, Kalaw’s new cookbook was more radical in positioning the centrality of local cooking. But unlike Condimentos Indigenas that was written in Spanish, her 1934 recipe book was written in Tagalog. Language, however, did not guarantee clarity as to the audience these cookbooks were trying to address. Although a few of these cookbooks were written in an accessible language, it proved no different from both its predecessors and the English cookbooks appearing in the 1930s. They continued to speak to an elite audience and presupposed the importance of education and wealth in partaking of the dishes they prescribed.

Before the Second World War erupted, three important characteristics emerged in the production of cookbooks. First is the movement of foreign dishes and ingredients to local shores consistent with the kinds of recipes first seen in Spanish period manuals. The documented recipes of the period remained translations of foreign cookbooks, featured dishes that were by no means accessible to majority of the population, and necessitated a reliance on foreign imports and processed commodities that were too expensive for majority of the population to procure. Second, textbooks used for instruction in public schools became the model for the genre of recipe writing, which became imparted with traditions of culinary science. Formalizing weights and measures, demanding increased efficiency and speed, emphasizing the importance of health in food choices, and enhancing the functional use of food in nation-building became important concepts in the determination of the genre. As it was often impossible to completely replicate foreign recipes, the growing importance of collective health allowed for the closer examination of indigenous practices and the role it played in feeding individuals, families, communities and the nation. For the first time, local eating and cooking habits gained value. Third, and in contrast to the previous point, is the renewal of the entitlement of the upper class. Although these cookbooks addressed public nutrition, most of the recipe books provided a new apparatus for educating an emerging urban middle class, further isolating local food practice. Even if locally written cookbooks surfaced and the number of local recipes increased towards the
end of American occupation, many of them only addressed a select audience who believed that such recipes and prescriptions played into their sense of privilege. If ideas of rank and class were the most pronounced feature of Spanish period cooking manuals, a cunning nationalist rhetoric transformed and concealed this hierarchical nature throughout the American period. Being Filipino meant participating in subtly projected visions for a progressive nation founded upon, among other things, the consumption of healthy meals. As a result, cookbooks continually spoke to and reinforced the importance of readers that understood what it means to eat properly, and have professions that allowed them to engage with the market and participate in activities deemed important enough for the state.

COOKBOOKS AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

After liberation from the hands of the Japanese in 1944 and finally gaining its independence from the United States in 1946, the idea of the Philippines as its own nation reinvigorated a number of cultural and economic practices that, on the surface, negated the demoralizing effects of the war and the food shortages and widespread inflation accompanying it. Philippine food became a clear concept and adopted a collective identity. A number of cookbooks surfaced and lent structure and coherence to incongruent practices understood to be the national cuisine. The project was an isolated affair. In terms of politics, two fronts contributed opposing ideals to the discourse on Philippine nationalism. Middle and upper class identities situated primarily in city centers represented one end. These elites ‘together with their US allies, formed the institutional bones of a liberal democracy’ (Weekley, 2006, p. 6), and found liberation efforts generally satisfactory. They were keen on erecting the national identity through a series of cultural choices that rationalized collective integration. To this end, lifestyle was a critical tool in signifying belonging, and the city dweller constantly invoked ideas of tradition and innovation to congeal their vision of the nation. Food was significant in this regard.
The growth of restaurants, the explosion of products never before seen in markets and stores, and the production of all forms of recipes finessed the tension between having to preserve traditional ways of cooking and seeking out new tastes. The middle class urban dweller’s identity was built upon the ability to assert preferences given the variety of choices available, thus turning it into symbols of identity, leisure and progress. On the flip side, the countryside found nationalism problematic. Here, remnants of centuries-old struggles witnessed new forms of revival in combating not only the land reform problem plaguing the countryside but also the indifference of urban elites whose clamor for nationalism heeded only their class interests (Kerkvliet, 1977, pp. 1-25). Guerrillas who were last active in fighting against the Japanese during the war resurfaced in 1950 after their pleas for political participation, amnesty, and reduced American control failed. While the elites based in cities continued to lavish themselves in a variety of food choices, movements in the countryside continued to expand, clamoring for the peasant cause that was—and, to this day, continues to be—in dire need of radical land reform.

It is in this stark contrast between polarizing urban and rural lifestyles that documentations about Philippine food flourished. Immediately, it presents a radical divide between producers and consumers, with the latter assuming control over the symbolic and monetary value of food. Industrialization in urban localities saw an unprecedented shift in social relations. Where rural families once worked as a unit whose main objective was to produce food, work in urban areas became highly specialized. Following Fordist practices, work in the Philippines after World War Two adopted what Peck and Tickle (1994, p. 287) classified as ‘Primitive Taylorization’, characterized by ‘bloody exploitation’ and ‘huge extraction of surplus value’ out of an ‘almost endless supply of labor’. With the end goal of work shifting from subsistence to capital accumulation, food turned into a commodity, and its production categorized as part of effeminized labor. Labor associated with food became secondary to white-collar professions, deemed to be more important in an imagined hierarchy of professions. The national cuisine was to assimilate the
rubric of urban life, often attaching eating habits to a rhetoric that spoke of Western progress most palpable in urban areas. Cities like Manila, where many cookbooks were published, embraced the possibility of adapting life from European industrial cities echoed in the many policies that the United States regimented and which Manileños quickly adhered to. In this regard, the elite became crucial in mounting nationhood while conveniently suppressing the concerns of the marginalized. After a long history brimming with Spanish religiosity, the market-oriented principles of American life proved lucrative for many of them. This not only instigated statewide domination of civil and private enterprise, but also the symbolic capital that propped up the vitality of nationalist sentiment.

After the war, what was apparent in many of the cookbooks is how the construct of the Philippines as a nation became instantaneously uncontested and naturalized. Enriqueta David-Perez, author of *Recipes of the Philippines* that has been reprinted numerous times in more than five decades after its original release in 1953, writes:

Filipino cookery, though betraying foreign marks, is still highly characteristic and national. To the Filipino there is no substitute in the world for it. But it now seems that native delicacies that take time are now out of place as traditional methods have been gradually discarded. To those who, like me, look to traditions and native cooking as some treasured, surviving emblem of something dear in a speedily changing world, I dedicate this collection of recipes. This is not a complete collection of Philippine dishes, these are the recipes with a more or less general appeal that give a good glimpse of the Filipino heart (David-Perez, 1953, p. iii).

Many of the cookbooks that preceded it often looked to the future and used projected visions of health, economy, practicality and development as goals that can be forged in standardizing cookery. Although David-Perez’s work seems to betray that tradition, it is equally forward-looking as it succumbs to the convenience and speed of more novel cooking techniques. This is expressed, however, with much reservation in light of her attempts to elicit nostalgia towards the past, a feature
absent in most cookbooks preceding it. She infuses cooking in a mass of personal remembrances (i.e. ‘the Filipino heart’), effectively romanticizing fictional affinities towards an imagined past. Food becomes a double signifier, compelling a sense of integration and attribute of being Filipino while softening the dislocation from the mundane conventions that have no place in the culture of a nation governed by an elite class adamant to realize their aspirations of development-oriented progress.

The alienation of local lives is most evident in *Recipes of the Philippines*, which, according to the estimation of Doreen Fernandez (1996, p. 122), “translated ‘yesterday’s guesswork into definite amounts measurable by cups and spoons,” and compiled recipes “reconstructed from now illegible handwritten notes from another age… from careful instructions of grandmothers and friends’ contributions’. At the onset, David-Perez’s cookbook provided the much-needed organization of Philippine food practices, but it has also subsumed their wisdom and practice into a new streamlined and scientific order.

Another recipe collection, Arthur C. Avery’s *Cosmopolitan Fish Cookery for the Philippines* (1950) published by the US Department of the Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service, sums up the ordeal of having to mediate between nostalgic musings that simultaneously refracts the past and suppresses it to accommodate the emergence of, as the title suggests, ‘cosmopolitanism’:

> The Philippine Fishery Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries has prepared this book on World fish preparation methods to show new ways of cooking some of the cheaper varieties of fish and tell how the rest of the world cooks fish. No effort has been made to turn Filipinos from the methods of their forefathers but only to increase their interest in new methods (Avery, 1950, p. 1).

The placing of Filipino traditions within a more stringent set of cooking styles adapted from foreign influences amplifies the divisiveness of the national cuisine. It immediately situates those with access to foreign ingredients at an advantageous position. More importantly, it also imparts the need to rethink local practice and
how they can be streamlined to fit both foreign and modern conventions. The increase in government-initiated publications and recipes appearing in local periodicals fueled the ascent of the urban middle class whose exploration of new tastes warranted a diversification of consumption choices in a number of areas from food to fashion. Mothers and housewives experimented with recipes such as *rueda de pargo* or snapper steak and Creolized American favorites like shrimp gumbo. They bought new kitchen appliances and walked through the streets of a gentrified Manila brimming with shops, restaurants and entertainment venues. At the same time, however, these new preoccupations also sheltered the middle class from the realities of the countryside, which produced much of the ingredients and raw materials consumed in the cities. Most of these cookbooks spoke of the end-goal of feeding the constituency, and often reverted to idyllic and equally generic descriptions of the land whenever attempting to confront the issue of where food is sourced:

> The land of the tropics abound with wonderful possibilities for gardening, fruit-raising, and agriculture in general. Mother Nature is very liberal to her industrious, studious sons and daughters, and will cause the wealth of the soil to come forth to those who till it aright (*Tasty Tropical Treats* 1952, p. 6).

Anonymously written, *Tasty Tropical Treats* is one of the earliest known recipe books that advocated vegetarian cooking. As opposed to present-day vegetarian cookbooks that speak to a limited audience, *Tasty Tropical Treats* (1952, p. 5) pitched the idea to the entire populace stating that vegetable sources ‘are more economical and more easily digested than animal fats’. Despite pushing for what was then an unconventional set of eating practices, the logic remains structured by a similar sensibility to other cookbooks that attempted to rekindle connections to the countryside. The inclusion of local and customary food is only warranted by the need to consign practical recipes appealing to a wider readership, and that consolidates the same readership under the watchful gaze of an emerging culinary cosmopolitanism. This cosmopolitanism, in turn, scrutinized the expanse of both
local and foreign frontiers. Local cookery earmarked the national identity and held it in place against other identities implicated by other national cuisines. Similarly, foreign cookery signified progression and the emergence of new identities from a mass of unarticulated local conventions.

This delicate dichotomy between localizing and universalizing cosmopolitan Filipino tastes is best illustrated by the manner in which these cookbooks have distinguished local from foreign food. Despite indigenizing foreign food using vegetarian ingredients, *Tasty Tropical Treats* lists down an assortment of main dishes in a chapter labeled ‘Protein Dishes’. Under this heading are dishes that mostly retained their foreign name with the exception of adding nouns of local ingredients to indicate the source of the protein: *Tokua* (tofu) Croquettes, Gluten Steaks, Glutenburger Patties, Meatless Meat Balls, Oatmeal Hamburgers. A chapter aptly called ‘Other Main Dishes’ immediately follows it where local and foreign dishes stand alongside each other. One peculiar characteristic of using ‘Other’ in this category is the replacement of nouns for ingredients by non-English and non-French words. Dishes in this chapter include the likes of tropical casserole, Filipino vegetable stew and *chow mein* (fried noodles, or *pancit* in Filipino). Similarly, Enriqueta David-Perez’s *Recipes of the Philippines* (1953) illustrates the same logic but with more impregnable conviction as to the division between foreign and local cookery. Its first chapter entitled ‘Fiesta Fare’ is filled with mostly foreign dishes, majority of which is Spanish in origin: *arroz a la Valenciana* (rice paella), *caldereta* (beef stew), *embutido* (meatloaf). In contrast, the next chapter about ‘Everyday Dishes’ is populated with local staples such as *adobo* (vinegar-stewed meat), *bulanglang* (boiled vegetables with pork), *labong guisado* (sautéed bamboo shoots) and *upo dinengdeng* (gourd stew).

The structuring of food in this manner exposes a number of beguiling traits in the production of the collective identity. Fundamental here is the reinvigoration of the projected ideal of antiquated Spanish visions that once concealed the harshness of everyday life. The Spanish and foreign dishes utilized to commemorate religious
fiestas continue to be the token aspiration symbolizing the culmination of hard work. If the feasts that accompanied harvests in traditional fiestas were critical in demonstrating deliverance, salvation and how subservience and sacrifice was to find redemption, the ‘fiesta dishes’ in Philippine cookbooks redefined salvation as upward social mobility. As Manila necessitated a throng of teachers, engineers, doctors, accountants and other professions in developing industries, the idea of consuming fiesta food everyday played to emerging middle class desires. It represented the passage from peasant affliction to a new position in society that promised inordinate pleasure and leisure. As these cookbooks encouraged the use of processed ingredients, new kitchen equipment and knowledge of convenient techniques and ways of preparing food, the once exclusive dishes experienced mostly in special occasions became commonplace, and symbolized the presence of a new social structure that manifested the privilege of the middle class.

PHILIPPINE FOOD IN THE MASS MEDIA

By the 1960s, the distinctions between foreign and local food became unrecognizable, and strong sentiments about the Philippines as a nation congealed, thus providing a foundation for categorizing and organizing recipes. Since the American period, the uncontested principle structuring the logic of many cookbooks in the 1960s and beyond looked at cooking as a normative process contributing to both leisure and social functions. Discussed either in the introduction to these books, as the opening chapter or, in a few instances, as an appendix, the edicts of home economics provided an invaluable rationale that aided the blurring of cultural and national boundaries between different cooking practices. Whether dishes prescribed were local or foreign did not seem to matter, and attention shifted towards the ability to maintain equilibrium between a number of dilemmas: eating for health as opposed to eating for pleasure, maintaining traditional fare and pushing for novel food experiences, and maximizing the experience of eating without
necessarily having to strain the pockets. But unlike American-period recipe books many of which were conceived by government agencies, private food companies took on the charge of dissecting these issues for the public. Companies started to invest in and utilize test kitchens to come up with recipes that promoted and marketed their products. The recipes they handed out reinvented local and foreign dishes by incorporating processed ingredients, promising the simplification and shortening of time for cooking preparations with flavorful and healthier results.

Aiding the commodification of food in this regard is the increasing reliance of companies to utilize mass media to promote their products. The 1960s saw the exponential growth of advertising and marketing expenditures that paved the way for the significant expansion of media empires in the Philippines (Hedman, 2005, p. 150). Companies did not only spend money buying advertising space, they also sponsored different programs and segments on television and radio, and columns and sections in newspapers and magazines to ensure the visibility of their merchandise. For example, local television craftily played out the rivalry between competing milk brands. The brand Darigold aggressively positioned itself in the 1969 noontime TV and radio show Darigold Jamboree that starred a veritable who’s who of local celebrities and helped catapult its evaporated milk into Philippine pantries. The show featured a singing contest where a young girl named Nora Villamayor joined and won in her age group. She eventually joined another singing competition in a rival program The Liberty Big Show backed by Liberty Milk, Darigold’s competitor where she got her big break. Adopting the stage name Nora Aunor, she grew to be the country’s most revered actress appearing in classics like Himala (Miracle, 1980) and The Flor Contemplacion Story (1995).

Food advertising in media did not only create showbiz celebrities, it also created culinary personalities. For the first time, interest on what to eat was overshadowed by personalities whose recommendations moved products and revitalized interest towards cooking. Liberty Milk launched the career of another Nora—Nora Villanueva, more known to Filipinos today by her married name Nora
Daza. After having received a Bachelor’s Degree in Home Economics from the University of the Philippines in 1952 and a Master’s Degree in Restaurant and Institutional Management in Cornell University in 1956, she started her career in the test kitchens of the General Milk Company, owner of the Liberty Milk brand, where she helped pen the *Liberty Milk Cookbook*. She proceeded to work in media, appearing on TV for the first time in 1957 with the show *At Home with Nora*. This was the first in a long list of accomplishments that included programs on both TV and on the radio, newspaper and magazine columns, and a handful of restaurants that reached as far as Paris, all distributed in a career that spanned more than half a century.

A second and almost forgotten food celebrity is Rosario J. Fabian. Although her ascent and presence is not as stellar as that of Daza’s, her contributions to the development of food writing in the 1960s through mass media cannot be undermined. With no formal training and background in cooking, her participation in Philippine cuisine came as an accident when she was handed over the reigns of the Women’s section of *Liwayway* in the 1960s, the oldest and most widely circulated Tagalog weekly magazine. Here, she wrote a column using the nom de plume Aling Charing (*Aling* being a title of respect for a woman, and ‘Charing’ a popular nickname for Rosario). Recounting her experience here, she writes in one of her cookbooks:

> At first, I collected recipes from relatives and friends. When I ran out of ideas, I thought of requesting readers to send in their own special dishes. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to test submitted recipes in the kitchen of the company's canteen. It was then I became really interested in cooking. I found out it was a lot of fun experimenting on my own recipes. Finding most foreign dishes very hard to follow with their ingredients rarely found in our local groceries. I tried substituting local ingredients similar in taste to those indicated in the foreign dishes, and cooking them in the simpler ways. Little by little I gained confidence at cooking and if people are to be believed... I became quite good at it. (Fabian, 1986)
Compared to the highly revered Daza, there are only a few reports or writings about Fabian. Nonetheless, her informal testing of recipes and her column in the weekly magazine served vital functions in enriching Philippine culinary practice. By opening her column to the audience’s recipes, she has made the exclusive world of culinary art a little more approachable by giving the public the opportunity to participate in its assembly. Whereas Daza approached cooking from a position of imparting her own expertise to an audience, Fabian relied heavily on her audience’s responses and participation in a public forum. Women and other readers from all walks of life entrusted her with recipes brimming with techniques, secret ingredients and even stories typically hidden from the antiseptic manner of writing recipe books, effectively continuing Enriqueta David-Perez’s project of codifying local cooking techniques. Although she made modifications to many of these recipes, her column served as an important archive that indirectly gave voice to specific individuals and the cultures they represented.

In 1969, both Daza and Fabian published their first cookbooks. Both adhered to the principles of home economics and presented categories that were more organized than that of their predecessors. Both also utilized systematic measuring systems and concise and comprehensible instructions. As a result, both cookbooks are still popular today, having enjoyed numerous editions since their first release and distribution by National Bookstore, the largest supplier of books and educational materials in the country. Despite these similarities, their cookbooks differed from each other considerably. Daza’s *Let’s Cook With Nora* (1969) gathered together recipes from her experience in test kitchens, cooking shows and articles published. Written in English, she organized her recipes according to the structure of the Western meal, opening with a section on hors d’oeuvres and canapés and concluding with sections on desserts, punches and cocktails. Fabian’s *Lutuing Pilipino ni Aling Charing* (Aling Charing’s Filipino Food, 1969), on the other hand, assembled recipes from her work in *Liwayway* magazine. Although several sections in the cookbook discussed foreign influences, she organized her prescriptions around
more customary Filipino meals and wrote in Tagalog. Hors d’oeuvres and desserts were skipped in place of *ensalada*, an adaptation of the Mexican word to describe Filipino relishes, and *minandal* (*meryenda* or snacks).

A remarkable difference can also be gleaned from their attitudes and the symbols they attached to food. Daza’s dedication to her father in the beginning of her cookbook presented a genteel and poignant cook, opening the collection with personal narratives of her family history:

I feel that Papa in his quiet way has given much to many people. To me, perhaps, my appreciation for good food came from the walks at dawn I took with him as a child when Papa and I went to a Chinese vegetable garden and gathered bunches of lettuce and green onions and made salads with them. Or, the times we would walk to a favorite bakery, always early in the morning, still dark, and wait until the bread was brown, while inhaling the delicious aroma of baking bread. Or perhaps, it was the fresh milk I used to sip from his cup in the morning or the roast lamb he used to prepare with such ceremony (Daza, 1969, p. vii).

Daza is perhaps the first Filipino food writer to delve into the realm of the personal. Daza’s resuscitation of memory, of the past and of family roots became a crucial characteristic of her culinary journey and, not to mention, her immense popularity. Although Daza’s first cookbook did present recipes written in a way that was rigid and constrictive at times, her cookbooks brimmed with a certain élan and flair that made other cookbooks seem stiff and tedious. Her cookbook tried its best to present cooking as an artform. Despite the obvious budgetary constraints plaguing the production of many Philippine publications, Daza utilized stylized black and white sketches of dishes and ingredients with a yellow wash. These sketches were more representational and decorative than realistic, and provided an interesting counterpoint to the almost mechanical way that procedures and instructions have been written. More than two decades after the release of *Let’s Cook With Nora*, her cookbook entitled *A Culinary Life* (1992) proves her proclivity towards remembrances. A more mature Daza makes use of personal reflections and
narratives to accompany the most cherished recipes of her career, softening the calculating and methodical explanations of written recipes. Aside from rekindling memories of her childhood, she recounted her numerous travels, work assignments and anecdotes that encompassed recollections of old restaurants, the origins of dishes, prices of certain ingredients and musings that looked back with nostalgia to how things were. A sense of self was fashioned out of the certainty of the past, often inciting that, in her recollection, the Filipino palate was already systemic and coherent enough to absorb influences and modernizing tastes ‘that may have originated somewhere else but have settled here to become an integral part of Filipino fare’ (Daza, 1992, from the Preface).

Meanwhile, Rosario Fabian exuded a persona that completely opposed Nora Daza’s. If Daza looked to the past with much sentimentality and nostalgia, Fabian looked to the future with decisiveness and authority. Even though her title and use of the name Aling Charing incited a sense of familiarity and approachability to her readers, the collection’s voice is consistently authoritative. Her writings maintained the clinical objectivity of recipe books written by nutritionists in the past and maintained a clear goal to bring healthy food to the table as a way to assert women’s roles in society. Despite an obvious affinity towards American leanings on selling health and establishing the centrality of the nuclear family and women as individuals that contributed to society, her stance is eerily archaic and revitalizes the didactic and religious character affirming American nutritional science and old Spanish notions of patriarchy:

There’s a saying that “the best way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” […] But that isn’t the only reason why women need to know how to cook. One of her most important roles as a mother is to prepare her family’s food in order to take care of their health. Learning to cook should not only rest on wives or women. Even young girls need to learn how to cook so that they may help their mothers and to prepare themselves for the responsibilities that they will have in the future (translated from Filipino, Fabian, 1969, from the Introduction).
If Daza looked at cooking as art and used memory to justify her selections, Fabian looked to the enactment of customs in order to meet desired collective goals. She organized recipes with the intentions of propagating the idea of family and society, and made it clear that her incursions into the science of food preparations is itself justified by the manner domestic choices affect society. Writing like a stern and strict schoolteacher, she steered attention away from the pleasurable associations of food. Her instructions and procedures conveyed the right or the best way of doing things, often doling out commands of what must be done and the order they needed to be carried out. Even the cookbook’s presentation brimmed with a thorough hand utilizing carefully detailed illustrations visualizing the prescriptions she made that, to begin with, were already direct and concise. There is an anxiety in reading Fabian’s work. It stems from a seeming lack of pleasure in dissecting the syntax of food, focusing instead on the need to find and justify an individual’s place. Precision was important for her, and the exacting manner in which she laid out her recipes demonstrate an insistent need to realign the cooking and eating habits in domestic spaces with the rational and scientific processes that are supposedly possessed by institutions governing society.

Although Nora Daza and Rosario Fabian represented two seemingly opposing traditions in Philippine cuisine, the manner in which they envisioned food implicates the fragmentation of the nation in time and space. Daza’s nostalgia for the past recalcifies colonial design as yet another aspiration. The desire and longing for an old order points not to the nation’s establishment but to the utopian desires of an empire aborted during the emancipation of the colony. In many ways, Daza’s remembrances of that time of purity—when one entered vegetable gardens freely, walked before dusk in order to smell freshly baked bread and marked the roasting of lamb as a ceremony—rekindles both her childhood and her privilege. The present, where the nation and society must be located, poses a threat to that very power. Daza utilizes food to validate a place and time whose existence is essentialized in
order to maintain the continuity of her advantage. Fabian, on the other hand, looks to the future with a sense of disavowal for the here and now. Her prescriptions suggest that much work needs to be done in order to overcome the disorder or lack of systemic organization of the moment. She regards the future as a space that improves upon the moment, and establishes cooking as a set of prescribed rules that is only meant to bring the future closer to the present. Because individuals are expected to contribute to society, Fabian redirects the virtues of eating to illustrate the stinging need to assert agency over collective affairs. By doing so, it denies the present and instead conjures an ideal that rests in a yet-to-be realized society where everything is in order, everyone is guided by and functions accordingly to a common purpose, and control is redistributed among them.

Consumption structures Daza and Fabian’s disparate sources of the nation’s food. Both past and future cast an insurmountable shadow on the present, concealing the subtle manner in which the self-interests of a handful have mutated into the agenda of a greater majority. The simultaneous nostalgia for the past and the anticipation of the future equally underscore the need to embody citizenship by participating in the currents of economic enterprise. By insisting on recipes they deemed ‘the tastiest, most practical, nutritious, most reasonably priced and popular in the Philippines’ (Daza, 1969, p. x), both necessitated the reproduction of culture through the commodities that have been positioned and made available in the market. Whether they sell these commodities as a means to recreate what is lost or to fashion something new, both cookbooks effectively mounted a system of symbols that coerce readers to think that dishes like adobo, pancit and fried chicken are the stuff that enshrines a common identity. In reality, the nationalism signified in their respective list of dishes enforce a commitment to invest in both product and practice.
CONTEMPORARY PHILIPPINE RECIPE BOOKS

Since the 1960s, many Philippine cookbooks feature the hegemonic insistence to partake of the national cuisine. Many of them still oscillate between Daza and Fabian’s models of imagining food’s supposed connection to nationalist ideals that come from either the past or the future, but never in the moment. However, their enactment of commercial interests and brandishing of class is no longer as subtle. For one, a number of recipe books and recipe collections were produced through corporate sponsorship. Big conglomerates took to heart the militant and exacting vision of a well-fed nation and cited this ideal in seeking continued public patronage. Corporate test kitchens became immensely useful in spearheading the search for new recipes and/or finding ways to rejuvenate old ones. American owned company Del Monte, which has been in operation in the Philippines since the 1920s, has one of the most successful test kitchens. Starting in 1984 with what they called the Del Monte Kitchenomics Club, they successfully marketed each of their products by incorporating them into both familiar and novel dishes. The promotion centered on a series of recipes developed by the company’s test kitchen that consumers were supposed to collect. Many of the recipes reworked old Filipino favorites, emphasizing the simplicity of preparation through the use of Del Monte’s products. Given away free, Del Monte’s recipes flooded groceries and homes. They were printed at the back of product labels and, if that wasn’t enough, on pamphlets distributed in supermarkets to entice shoppers to grab their products from the shelves. The Kitchenomics Club attracted a significant following of housewives and food aficionados alike. Members periodically received mail containing recipes printed in full color using thicker and sturdier paper. It also produced three cookbooks out of its most popular recipes and countless promotional items ranging from menu planners to paid culinary courses. Eventually, the Kitchenomics brand infiltrated cooking segments on TV and on print. Sales of Del Monte soared, and Del Monte was recognized in 1992 by the World Executive Digest as one of the strongest marketing companies in Asia. By 1996, the Kitchenomics Club was
reported to have at least 120,000 members and a mailing list of over 300,000 consumers (Chen, 1996, p. 8).

Del Monte’s strategy to market their food represents a culmination of US-induced conventions enforced since their occupation of the Philippines in 1898. The name Kitchenomics alone revitalizes the significance of nutritional science and home economics teachings promising time saving, affordable, healthy and tasty food. Along with that is the revitalization of the image of the educated housewife and mother. The new domesticated woman did not only solidify her position through her ability to mediate between the family’s needs and the resources available to them as she has imagined to have done in the past, she is now a token figure of society’s desire for mobility. Unfazed by foreign recipes, she has the confidence to tackle them using processed ingredients in order to bring tastes of different cultures into her household. Employing numerous celebrities in their cooking segments and advertisements, companies like Del Monte projected their food as fashionable and as polished as the clothes their celebrity endorsers wore while cooking. Most of all, women’s domesticity was no longer grounded on a strict regimen of rules and conventions. The employment of the company’s product afforded them the ability to experiment and challenge worn-out cooking procedures. Depending on one’s taste, the experiments could be seen either as innovative or ludicrous. For example, Del Monte pushed for the use of their canned pineapples to every dish they could: traditional dishes that utilized a souring agent such as adobo and sinigang was to be given a dose of pineapples; and even predominantly salty dishes such as pancit (fried noodles) was renamed ‘pine-sit’ after the addition of canned pineapples.

Needless to say, many companies followed the footsteps of Del Monte’s marketing campaigns, coming up with cookbooks filled with recipes that utilize their respective products. Recently, the more upscale cookbooks relied in part to some form of corporate patronage. Del Monte, this time in tandem with local giant San Miguel Corporation, produced Kulinarya (Culinary) penned by the most influential Filipino chefs and food writers. Both companies offer introductory messages that
defend their attempts to ‘weave its products more deeply into the fabric of everyday Filipino life’ (Barretto et al., 2008, p. 9). The implications are multifarious. As far as defining the national cuisine goes, dependence on corporate money only reinforced the national cuisine’s reliance on the efforts of business to supply the ingredients for dishes symbolizing collective identity. The gesture is inscriptive: it upholds the vitality of capitalism in reorganizing daily life and repurposes the ideals of nationalism in this regard. But it is also equally corrosive. Companies prop up their efforts in coming up with new alternatives for food, shifting consumer attention towards the numerous choices made available in the market. By making it possible to reconstruct traditional local fares minus the painstaking ordeal of traditional local procedures, they also contributed to the erasure of specificities that were once attached to the regional and cultural traditions they attempt to replace.

The question of regionalism, cultural variations and multiplicity are systemic problems in Philippine cookbooks. Questions of ownership and public participation remain to be sensitive issues that are seldom confronted. As intellectualization spurred the rights and privilege of the educated elite, it also effectively erased the contributions of a multitude of unnamed workers under their jurisdiction. Although there have been many cookbooks since the 1960s that attempted to classify cookery according to various ethnic, linguistic, regional and cultural origins, the inclusion of such concerns remain only secondary to satiating class interests. This can be seen in well-heeled families, religious and civic organizations and, more recently, Filipino expatriates who are the second most noticeable sources of cookbooks after corporate institutions. A series entitled Assumption High School Class of ’79 Cookbook, for instance, featured a collection of recipes of an exclusive all-girls Catholic school in Manila. Its second volume dubbed the Pearl Edition promised recipes for ‘everyday meals as well as crowd-pleasing dishes for entertaining’ (Puyat-Limcaoco and Kawpeng, 2009). It featured an assortment of recipes from different cultures all conveniently homogenized under the refined tastes of the Assumption alumni who allegedly contributed their recipes to the book. Recipes such as Chili Crab described
as ‘a favorite from the former cook of my Dad’ (p. 130) and Orange Spare Ribs discovered in a magazine ‘in the United States, miles away from my beloved ever-faithful kusinera [cook]’ (p. 180) appear beside personal narratives and photographs venerating the lives and accomplishments of an educated elite, leaving the sources of the original recipes unnamed.

Authors Elmer D. Cruz and Emerson R. Rosales conceived and developed the cookbook entitled *Pulutan: From the Soldiers' Kitchen* (2007) during their incarceration after participating in a failed rebellion by Magdalo officers to oust then President Arroyo in the Oakwood Mutiny of 2003. Although the cookbook took the task of documenting the best *pulutan* (a local term for bar chow or food accompaniments to beer) they have come across in their military careers, it also included light-hearted takes on life in the military as well as reflections during their confinement. With a cover resembling the label of the popular San Miguel beer, the cookbook featured recipes that ranged from common fare such as Beef *Salpicao* (stir fried beef and garlic) and *Kilawing Puso ng Saging* (banana bud ceviche) to the more unusual dishes such as *K,nilaw na Tamilok* (woodworm ceviche). Although its intentions were pluralistic to some degree, the cookbook’s efforts at gathering recipes from specific regional and cultural localities were overpowered by both the political struggle they were embroiled in and attempts at humor. A recipe for *calamares* (calamari) for example, fairly popular in many bars and restaurants throughout the country, was called *Calamares a la Trillanes*, after former lieutenant and now senator elect Antonio Trillanes, leader of the Magdalo group.

Another important development in contemporary Philippine cookbooks is how a rising number of Filipino expatriate authors whose dislocation resulted to the conjuring of overtly idealized images of the Philippines aided in variegating issues of belonging further. Dishes that were once nationalized in older cookbooks became trite, fueling the need to discover the strange and the exotic:

Filipino food is also an expression of cultural passion and pride. During my research for this book, I became used to the sumptuous
spreads of festive food served in grand, opulent homes in the Visayas and Luzon. But nothing prepared me for the deep love for our culture that I found in the most humble barrios of the provinces. We trudged through muddy lanes too narrow for cars and knocked on the doors of strangers famous for a particular delicacy sold in the market or in roadside carinderias (restaurants selling prepared food). We were interrupting their work, yet they invariably seemed more delighted than inconvenienced by our desire to know about their cooking (Besa and Dorotan, 2006, p. 14).

Taken from New York-based restaurateurs Amy Besa and Romy Dorotan’s cookbook Memories of Philippine Kitchens, the excerpt above is redolent of old relations between empire and colony, the same kind that Antonio Pigafetta, Magellan’s biographer, wrote about on their initial contact with a people they would eventually christen as Filipinos:

After dinner the priest and some of the others went ashore to baptize the queen, who came with forty women. We conducted her to the platform, and she was made to sit down upon a cushion, and the other women near her, until the priest should be ready. She was shown an image of our Lady, a very beautiful wooden child Jesus, and a cross. Thereupon she was overcome with contrition, and asked for baptism amid her tears. We named her Johanna, after the emperor’s mother; her daughter the wife of the prince, Catherina; the queen of Mazaua (Limasawa), Lisabeta; and the others each their [distinctive] name. Counting men, women and children, we baptized eight hundred souls (Pigafetta, 1962, p. 160).

Instead of the image of the Virgin Mary and Santo Niño, the contemporary Filipinos are shown live figures whose return from overseas solidified age-old myths about the foreign as a place of opportunity. Regardless of whether or not such documented gestures only implicate the hospitality Filipinos take pride from, the amorous narratives of homecoming and remembering in the cookbook underscores the precarious position of experiencing and brandishing transnational movement. On one hand, there is that need to utilize the country of origin as a source of identity, and imagined connections to it are fueled by the constant reproduction of
symbols and long-distance participation. That participation is warranted in many ways: from remittances of Filipinos working overseas that remain much sought after sources of income; to government mandates that, for instance, provides Filipinos overseas to vote (Republic Act 9189 or the Overseas Absentee Voting Act). But there is also that conflicting sentiment towards their position upon their return. The experience overseas also granted them dispensation. Their autonomy from the nation is immediately established and becomes license to assume the role of the colonist whose interest and presence injects some form of legitimacy to the different objects of the homeland they convert into a fetish themselves.

The result reverts back to Daza and Fabian’s conundrum. First, nostalgia is transformed into exoticism and fetish. These cookbooks—whether authored by Filipinos who have gone abroad or who amassed power locally—trudge through different localities in search of the extraordinary that they repurpose into a symbol of identity. Second, the act of claiming is eventually processed through modernizing. As if the discovery of exotic stuff is not enough, the process of modernization continues in the attempts to find a rational and acceptable syntax recognized by the West in order to gain some form of authenticity:

*Kulinarya*’s mission is to inspire world-class preparation and presentation of Filipino food. It promotes the application of best practices and the basic understanding of cooking methods that apply to Filipino food. This section emphasizes practices that should develop into cooking habits. (Barretto et al., 2008, p. 19)

As a result, Philippine cookbooks often elicit what Filipino food lacks in relation to more globally dominant cuisines. Doing so, they still function as tools for the cultural and social reproduction of class whose mobility and access become the enviable measure of upholding common sense:

‘If we could come up with a universally accepted adobo recipe then we can entice other cuisines to try it and by that, look us up in the atlas. “Ah, so there’s the Philippines…isn’t that where adobo is
cooked?” Tell me if you agree—don’t you think this is better sounding than if foreigners would say: “Ah, so there’s the Philippines…isn’t that where they serve duck embryo and blood soup and dog stew?” (Alejandro and Reyes-Lumen, 2004, p. 3).

Filipino cookbooks maintain the ascendancy and continuity of food experiences coming from a specific group whose access to foreign dishes and the cultures they embody become the very currency in preserving and even enhancing advantage. This has resulted to an anxiety over how Philippine food is perceived. Instead of articulating the rationale of local practices for themselves, many of these recipe books often pine for the approval of an unsolicited and often Western-oriented gaze. The reproduction of recipe books in this manner not only complies with the implicit standards of systems beyond the scope of specific localities. More than that, it also surrenders the autonomy of local food practices and flattens regional differences to satisfy the desire and the subjectivity of an elite class holding on to old forms of control and subjugation.

Shaping the development of cookbooks in the Philippines is the need to assert the coalescence of different cultures and identities in order to make food contribute to the idea that the Philippines is its own nation. While other ‘national cuisines’ tried to incorporate the contributions of different regions, classes and identities in nation-building and identity-forming efforts (Appadurai, 1988, Capatti and Montanari, 2003, Ferguson, 2004, Wilk, 1999, Cwiertka, 2006, Sengupta, 2010), the archival and documentation of Philippine cuisine continues to ignore the plurality of local cultures in order to project the successful organization and management of domestic life under the hegemony. Coming from the elite classes whose control of social and cultural knowledge manifests in their print production, many of these cookbooks became tools defending their privilege and illustrating their achievements in contributing to the nation-state. These achievements are projected outwardly in order to satisfy, first, a foreign audience—who may not really exist; and second, themselves—so that they may justify their continued monopoly of collective resources.
If cookbooks champion the nation-building efforts of the Filipino elite, then what concerns of the marginalized have they suppressed? The next chapter answers this question by examining literary production in the Philippines and the collective representations it has made in framing the experience of food and eating. Philippine literature, for most part, has associated food with the deplorable, confronting the anxieties caused by hunger and deprivation.
Next time Your Holiness slums through our lives,
We will try to make our poverty exemplary.
– Emmanuel Torres, ‘Second Invitation to the Pope to Visit Tondo’

Can hunger reconfigure the form and syntax of collective culinary tradition? The previous chapters explored the development of Philippine food cultures fraught by the dislocated role cuisine plays in establishing the centrality of the nation. The Philippine elite maintains a proprietary hold over notions of good food, proper eating and their collective practice. The Spanish presence in the archipelago integrated a diverse group of cultures into one society, organizing hierarchies around the capability to abide by desired forms of citizenship implemented by the colonial government. Systems that overestimated the value of land, devalued labor and conditioned the majority to accept hunger as normative in the performance of everyday life monitored access to food. Similarly, the coming of the Americans not only perpetuated these structures, it also pathologized and racialized local customs in an attempt to prop up modern food practices in the Philippines. The ability to purchase modern kitchen equipment, processed food and comprehend recipes and their nutritional merits encouraged a more complex social organization, one that expanded the divisions between the rich and poor into embracing the dichotomies between the local and foreign, the city and country, the urban and rural poor, the old and new rich, the English speaker and the non-English speaker, etc. despite the promise of liberal policy-making by the U.S. administration. Widespread public
nutrition and health programs disseminated through numerous print materials that were meant to educate the public about modern ways heavily influenced food in this period. While such directives appeared commendable they were hindered mostly by weak economic and political policies that did very little to redistribute resources equitably across Philippine society. Land reform was—and remains to be—a persistent problem illustrating the boorish manner in which the enactment of collective public culture was maintained and implemented from a central position. The national cuisine and its elaborations continued to be staged despite the worsening hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.

This chapter locates the experience of hunger as a foil towards the imposing stature of the national culinary project in the Philippines. Instead of discussing hunger through the seemingly pragmatic tools imparted by fields such as economics, statistics and history, I draw attention to the cultural construction of the Filipino body in Philippine literature and how its experiences of ingestion and digestion become emblematic of colonial disciplinary power embedding itself in the affairs of the state. I deliberately refer to the state in this chapter as a mass of politically aligned institutions and agents whose participation—whether warranted by the public or not—affect the collective affairs of the nation. The previous chapters name some of these institutions and agents: different Presidents occupying the highest seat in power in Philippine politics, and who enacts policies swayed by pressures from an international consortium; local governments that invest in fiestas and other activities of a religious nature; educational institutions and their role as ideological state apparatuses disseminating health and nutrition mandates; government bureaus that institutionalize non-commitment towards the problem of land reform; and private enterprises and even individuals benefiting from the existing hegemonic order. I engage their collective machinations as the unified reproduction of existing means of production, and where specific cultural expressions do not only manifest prevalent practice but also means of extending control in different aspects of day-to-day living. By engaging the state in its totality, it becomes possible to see the collective political
actions of its agents that hunger is not just a problem affecting the enactment of collective practice but also a culture. As such, I also turn to literature deliberately as a means of identifying state-induced cultures of violence. Any attempt to rationalize hunger through the parameters offered by traditional fields and disciplines such as the social sciences often exonerates the hegemony and the state from any culpability in inflicting violence towards its constituents. Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1977) draws attention to the possibility of reading bodies as a consequence of historic and social subjugation. For Foucault, the prison symbolized the state’s technological power, wherein architecture and design subject the body to constant surveillance, infringing upon it in order to construct and embody new forms of citizenship complementing the state’s desired order. This function of the prison is a leitmotif observed in many modern institutions, automating individuals to exercise the ‘power of mind over mind’ (Foucault 1977, p. 206), and become self-regulating and self-disciplining entities that make the state’s intrusion appear to be minimal and even invisible.

Issues revolving around hunger illustrate the indiscernible intrusion of the colonial past, the current hegemonic order and state-disseminated policies within the body. Despite all claims by the state to work on resolving food-related anxieties, the insecurity brought about by having nothing to eat challenges the sincerity of the state and how its operations have focused more closely on maintaining class hierarchies rather than resolving food-related anxieties. In order for these hierarchies to persist, anxieties need to be induced. The culpability of the state and the upper classes that have a monopoly on its institutions draw interesting insight towards the perpetuation of hunger as a means of instilling specific mechanisms installing specific individuals and groups in place. In *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*, Howes (2003) provides a framework for rethinking how sensory experience affects the cultural distinctions between self and society. Revisiting some of the sites of anthropology from the Melanesian Kula to the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, Howes argues that social meanings are
altered by affording structure and cultural dimension to the senses. The experience of hunger in the Philippines, therefore, can also be understood to be the result of not just the state’s modernizing tendencies but also its ability to galvanize age-old anxieties into legitimate expressions of being.

*The Soul Book* (Demetrio et al. 1991), for example, documents a myth by the Bagobos, a predominantly migratory tribal group residing in Mindanao, who believed that the horizon dividing the earth from the heavens is a giant mouth that masticated unworthy mortals who attempted to claim divinity on the other side. For more than centuries now, the Bagobos tell the opposing fates of brothers Lumabat and Wari have to cast the distinctions that beset the righteous from the contemptible, insinuating how power is afforded not because of birthright or other similar symbols of dispensation but through the willingness to forego the explicit tokens of being human. While both brothers were nimble enough to pass through the colossal mandibles that safeguarded the gods’ domain, it was Lumabat’s unwavering compliance to do away with his intestines that secured his bid for immortality. Wari’s reluctance, on the other hand, impaired him. He saw his village from the heavens and yearned for the taste of sugar cane, bananas, coconuts and other fruits that filled his village, prompting the god to send him back home accompanied by the god’s dogs and food to eat on his journey. Tied to a rope made of grass, he was told not to touch the food until he was completely lowered down to earth for it will distract the dogs and cause them to fight. Not even halfway through his journey back to earth, Wari is overwhelmed by hunger and ate some of the food. Angered after hearing the scuffle amongst the dogs, the god severed the rope. Wari fell from the heavens and landed on a tree down on earth where he was trapped all night. It was until the next day that he was able to descend from the tree, when he was transformed into a *kulago* bird whose plumes became a shameful reminder of everything worldly as it was tainted by the colors of the feathers of other birds, the fur of different animals and even human hair.
Inasmuch as the legend pushes to inscribe the origins of a bird, I also read it as a way to stage the validity of existing customs in a context beset by limitations and uncertainty. By making hunger desirable, it effectively pacifies the very urges from where dissatisfaction emanates. To be truly worthy of becoming god, the myth symbolically transforms collective anxieties about hunger into an enduring measure of an individual’s ability to disarm one’s self from the pragmatic and material concerns of eating and survival in order to attain the more dreadful yet possibly gratifying fulfillment of death and immortality. Outside the context of Bagobo society, the same dispensation reconstructs collective anxiety over hunger and survival. Despite coming to the archipelago with a religious stance antagonistic to indigenous beliefs, Spanish colonization glorified hunger and suffering in the same manner, thus consolidating the many cultures under their control through religious edicts that actively sanctified poverty. The anxiety over food implicates a long tradition of culturally disseminated activities illuminating how existing social structures aid in formulating their strategies for survival. The exaltation of poverty continued under U.S. occupation, particularly in the romanticization of the countryside where the farmer became an important symbol of collective Filipino identity. In urban areas where modernization efforts were concentrated, however, rural life was associated with crudeness and lack of sophistication.

Multiple colonial experiences endowed the Philippines with a wealth of materials affecting processes of adapting foreign influences and indigenizing the ecology and resources to assemble what many cookbooks and food writings claim to be a diverse cuisine (Cordero-Fernando 1976; Fernandez 1988). Such diversity in the cultural materials propagated in the colony, however, only concealed the divisiveness that accompany the embellishments adorning different food practices and the anxieties that complement it. Underneath the Philippines’ seemingly complex culinary tapestry is a seething history of manipulation perpetuating upper class privilege and embellished it with a number of rituals and customs that make the steep inequality justified and desirable. Spanish influences imparted the country not
just with a common religion but also in harboring an institution for formalizing enslavement and collective affliction. And although American intervention introduced a set of practices grounded on science and home economics that antagonized religious authority, it only bolstered the stronghold of the upper class, giving them the means to expand their power beyond the farm and into the more novel spaces of the city where stratification between classes became more exacerbated. The project of realizing Philippine independence and nationalism became an urgent concern, and cuisine provided an opportunity to reproduce upper class control whose interests in running the country remain suspect.

Inasmuch as the grand narratives of Filipino nationalism and its national cuisine converted the demise of the lower classes into a noble undertaking, there remains a culture of distaste documented in the country’s literary texts. From Rizal’s grand feast in the novel Noli Me Tangere published at the eve of the Philippine revolt against Spain, to the romantic poems of the early American period and the protest writings that pestered the Marcos dictatorship in the 70s and 80s, the anxiety towards hunger is a persistent and under-appraised subject matter in Philippine literary scholarship. This chapter examines these representations as a means to illuminate popular anxiety over matters involving the determination of collective food practice. Although San Juan (San Juan 1973, p. 415) characterizes Philippine literature as part of a mass of cultural practices that ‘deceive the people with false representations of reality under the guise of “high art”’, there are a number of authors and writings that take a counter-hegemonic stance, providing insights to a number of sociological questions concerned with articulating the position of the lower classes outside their binary relationship with the elite. Looking at literary production from the beginning of the American occupation up to the present, this chapter aims to construct an identity and history for the masses that is cognizant of the trappings brought about by intellectually scrutinizing what the upper class is not, thus granting the former authenticity under the shadows of the ‘traditional knowledge’ and ‘real history’ that the latter monopolized.
Looking at a number of texts from the different regions, I narrow down the representations and imaginations of hunger in Philippine literature to a few salient themes. Most prominent among these is reinterpreting hunger as the inability of majority of Filipinos to be recognized in the formal professions of the economy. Work framed Filipino identity, and personal ties to ‘the business class, the Catholic church hierarchy, and the U.S. government’ (Hedman & Sidel 2000, p. 13) determined not only one’s economic and political potential, it also configured the exclusion of other cultures and lifestyles from claiming ownership of the collective identity. This exclusion is best seen through the growing effeminization of Filipino labor, also a prominent theme in literary reflections on food. Socially, Parreñas (2001, p. 65) notes how ‘the sex segmentation in the Philippine labor market further aggravates the already limited opportunities of women’ understood to only ‘subsidize the primary income of men’. The constant othering of non-hegemonic forms of labor not only relegated a wide number of Filipinos to the margins, it has also induced a sense of insecurity towards the contributions and position of many Filipinos in their own country.

PHILIPPINE REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE

Representations of hunger in Philippine literature bear a striking historic trajectory with the development of revolutionary writing in the Philippines. Described under different names such as protest literature, literature of engagement, nationalist literature and literature of resistance—revolutionary literature cultivated a rich archive of works rooted in more than four centuries of colonization. It generally refers to a collection of writings whose defining characteristics are drawn from the revolutionary contexts surrounding them rather than the generic qualities that ideally distinguished form. This connection is best illustrated through the literary output of the period covering the latter part of Spanish rule until the end of the American occupation:
The intimate relationship between revolution and the proliferation of art is historically proven by the 1898 Philippine revolution against Spain and later against US imperialism. That tumultuous decade produced the flowering of Philippine literature, particularly Spanish and Tagalog, for the first time in its history (Bagulaya 2008, p. 190).

Revolutionary literature, then, refers to a body of works expressive of political and social protest during periods of significant upheaval in the Philippines. Milieu took precedence over form, and the participation in the shaping of nationalist discourse became an important concern. In Necessary Fictions, for instance, Carolyn S. Hau (2000) notes that:

Anticolonial nationalist literature yoke(d) together two powerful imperatives—the imperative to truth, and the imperative to action. These twin imperatives informing nationalist literature also circumscribe nationalist understanding of history. Not only is history a matter of representation, of how to write and construct the country’s past; history is also a matter of action, of making that history and constructing the country’s future (Hau 2000, p. 8).

Revolutionary literature connects different contexts and periods together by constantly reexamining the aims and significance of the nationalist project in the many activities initiated by the state, and whether the same activities connect to the concerns of the people they were meant to serve. Drawing inspiration from a wide variety of artistic movements and styles—from folk and indigenous modes of expression to more modern and experimental forms—revolutionary literature relegated the problem of aesthetics underneath politics. Its involvement, however, is far from spewing out commentary on current events, it also ensured the continuity of nationalist discussion in the protracted struggle for reform. Three periods are often cited in this regard, and the revolutionary writings appearing alongside these developments map out the shifting ideology of the Philippines as a nation. First is the period between the 1880s—the latter stages of Spanish
occupation, and 1900s—the early years of American rule where anti-colonial sentiments were strong. Second is the establishment of the American Commonwealth government from 1935 to the years immediately following the Philippine Declaration of Independence in 1946, a period when socialist ideology infused with peasant uprisings. And finally, from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, which saw strong contempt against the Marcos dictatorship.

The tail end of Spanish rule saw the ascent of a number of ilustrados, or educated elite. Expressions of their patriotism expanded beyond the civic and political arenas and into literary propaganda that they themselves circulated. The most celebrated heroes of the period are also its most venerated writers. Jose Rizal, author of a vast number of works, penned the *Noli Me Tangere* (translated as Touch Me Not and The Social Cancer, 1990) and *El Filibusterismo* (translated as The Filibuster and The Revolution, 1992), two novels that caused uproar among Spanish religious and political officials for depicting their involvement in widespread abuse and corruption in the colony. Accused of inciting rebellion for these writings, Rizal was detained in Dapitan and later executed in Manila in 1896, fanning the fury of the revolutions against Spain. The other hero of the period was Andres Bonifacio who, unlike the well-heeled Rizal, was a self-taught storage facility worker before turning into the revolutionary that spearheaded the military operations of the uprising. Most famous of his published revolutionary poems is ‘*Pag-Ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa*’ (Love for the Homeland), one of the most recited poems in Filipino classrooms and, after being set to a somber melody, transformed into the theme song for many political protests until today.

A resounding subject matter characterizing many of the writings emanating from this period is the question of independence. Rizal’s stance in his two novels reflected conflicting views on the nationalist project. Through the debates of main protagonists Crisostomo Ibarra and Elias, the *Noli* flirted with the idea of Philippine independence. The richer, educated and well-traveled Ibarra advocated for the development and installation of peaceful reforms that envisioned the Philippines
maintaining subservience under Spain’s tutelage. Education was at the top of Ibarra’s list, believing that independence can only be achieved if the different individuals running society’s institutions understood their responsibilities. For Ibarra, progress was a moral and ethical process that constituted of eliminating corruption through the installation of institutions serving a better informed and educated populace. Elias, on the other hand, pushed for more subversive reforms. Having suffered condemnation for being an illegitimate child and not receiving the same opportunities that Ibarra enjoyed, Elias’s idea for progress was a violent revolution that would put an end to Spanish oppression. In the second novel, the El Filibusterismo, a resentful Ibarra disguises himself as the jeweler Simoun who is now convinced of staging a revolution to avenge all the false accusations dealt to him before. His plans, however, do not materialize and Simoun dies with the realization that the failure of the revolt rested on the fact that it was spurred by his own personal motives rather than authentic change benefiting the majority.

If Rizal’s stance on independence was tempered by the careful assessment of purpose, Bonifacio’s was much more determined. Early on, Bonifacio was convinced of independence. In his essay ‘Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog’ (What the Tagalogs Should Know) appearing in the first issue of the Katipunan newspaper Kalayaan (Independence), Bonifacio was resolute that the Nation—Bayan in Tagalog, which he spelled with a capital letter—has long been forged and was only muddled by Spain’s colonial presence. He spoke of a prosperous Tagalog nation with working institutions and a cohesive population that ‘could read and write in their own alphabet’ (cited in and translated by Ilento 1979, p. 83). For Bonifacio, the reforms Rizal sought before achieving independence would have been futile given how fraudulent and dishonest many colonial officials were. ‘Reason’, Bonifacio argues, ‘shows that we cannot expect anything but more and more hardships, more and more treachery, more and more contempt, more and more enslavement. Reason tells us not to waste our time waiting for the promised prosperity that will never arrive’ (cited in and translated by Ilento 1979, p. 86).
If emancipation governed the consciousness of the first group of revolutionary writings, the installation of a Commonwealth government in 1935 channeled patriotic sentiment towards the arrogance of U.S. institutions and their encroachment in Philippine society. ‘Nearly a century of U.S. hegemony,’ wrote critic E. San Juan, Jr. (1992, p. 24), ‘over sixty million souls and bodies has not completely eradicated the will to popular self-determination’. The delay of independence elicited a number of questions regarding the self-righteous imposition of American education, economy and democracy as anchors for independence. Fortified by strong socialist thoughts beginning to take root in the country, the writings of this period became attuned towards the redistribution of power. Because liberation efforts were centralized in the city, the countryside was left perplexed as to how to appropriate these changes in light of the commercialization of agriculture that has left them landless and without opportunity to engage in any sustainable form of livelihood. Drawing impetus from Bonifacio’s revolutionary ideology, erratic uprisings in the countryside marked the Philippines’ transition into the Commonwealth. These uprisings saw the emergence of writings by the likes of Faustino Aguilar, Julian Cruz Balmaceda and Amado V. Hernandez. Although many of these writers were found employment in both public and private enterprises, they were also involved in many revolutionary activities from the Spanish uprising until the Second World War. Collectively, they utilized their socio-realist writings as a means to examine the country’s conditions, and challenged the romantic and didactic conventions popular during the period, and which also idealized the existing socio-political order that disenfranchised the lower class.

Amado V. Hernandez’s novel *Mga Ibong Mandaragit* (Birds of Prey, 1969) is illustrative of the period’s revolutionary thrust. Continuing the saga of Rizal’s *El Filibusterismo*, it follows the protagonist Mando, a servant of the rich and powerful Montero family. He was able to turn his life around after his successful search for the lost riches of Simoun that was thrown out to sea. He uses the money to establish a newspaper and a school in order to create a haven where young intellectuals could
entertain thoughts about more equitable forms of reform, exploring the possible benefits of socialist structures in reforming the country’s institutions. Veering away from traditional nationalist discourse that looked at the colonial experience under Spain, the United States and Japan as the primary source of peasant problems, Hernandez points to the Filipino politician and land-owning nobility themselves as the ‘birds of prey’ imposing neocolonial control over the country’s downtrodden and disenfranchised masses.

By the late 60s and early 70s, student activism escalated and many student and mass organizations focused on the contradictions of politics and the deteriorating conditions of the countryside. This culminated in a string of demonstrations in Manila known as the First Quarter Storm, marked by violent confrontations between students and the police, with the student activists making brazen moves to seize the presidential palace, providing another cause to Marcos’s declaration of Martial Law in 1972. A number of literary organizations and college newspapers that published essays and other literary works that reflected the impassioned concerns of the times and consciously reiterated the proposals that called for radical reform especially on issues affecting peasant and workers’ rights backed these student movements. If the revolutionary writings of the Commonwealth propelled Bonifacio’s vision of nationalism, the works reacting to the Marcos dictatorship drew inspiration from Amado V. Hernandez’s denunciation of neocolonial control. But unlike Hernandez’s apposition that pitted peasant and master against each other, the works of the period also reflected upon the culpability of the agents of reformation themselves in hindering social change. In the poem ‘Open Letters to Filipino Artists’, for instance, Emmanuel Lacaba writes:

But patient guides and teachers are the masses:
Of forty mountains and a hundred rivers;
Of plowing, planting, weeding, and the harvest;
And of a dozen dialects that dwarf
This foreign tongue we write each other in
Who must transcend our bourgeois origins.
(Lacaba 1993, p. 255)

Here, the question of language becomes a focal point in the determination of middle class purpose. It exposes the mastery of English as the Janus-faced operant responsible for indoctrinating intellectuals into the realm of economic, political and social opportunity while simultaneously betraying the cause of the uneducated who are left out of and alienated by the ‘foreign tongue’ and other symbols of progress and reform that were meant to alleviate their condition and social standing. The language of the writer as activist becomes a critical purveyor of his or her own authenticity as the vocabulary of social transformation seem only to be expressed to and understood by themselves.

The most important poet and underground activist against the Marcos administration was Jose Ma. Sison, known today as the founder and longstanding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing of the New People’s Army (NPA). His ten-year detention since his arrest in 1977 for charges of subversion and conspiracy to commit rebellion witnessed the agglomeration and publication of his anthology *Prison and Beyond* (1984). In the poem quoted below, Sison offers an alternative view that reapplies traditional notions of faith as a means to elucidate the poet/writer/artist’s precarious position in speaking on behalf of the masses. If religious faith once commanded the commitment of the masses to implore the impossible, he argues that poetry—and art in general—is equally, if not more, influential:

**Poems and Rest**

Since a long, long time ago
Incantations and prayers
Have been a comfort
To those who suffer.
Lying down at night,
I recite my poems
Until my throat runs dry
And I fall asleep in comfort.

But my poems are different.
They appeal to the people.
I put my trust in them
And in their firm struggle.

While at rest I am sure
That the struggle goes on.
And when my rest is over
I will do what I can.

Solitary confinement
Is torture so vicious.
But the poems I compose
Are my ardent companions.

But unlike prayer, the potency of poetry rests on how the poet sees himself in relation to his audience. Instead of the public placing faith towards the vision that the poet may offer, the reverse is professed and the poet assumes a compliant position to the will of the masses. Breaking the mold of traditional class relations that situated the landed and educated above the commoner, the poem envisions an order that continues to thrive despite the incarceration of the educated persona who has elected to lend his voice to their cause. Needless to say, this cause—imagined by Marx to culminate in a revolution that inverts the structure to favor the masses—portends to the need for the intellectual to rise above class origins. Lacaba’s intellectual English-speaking elite resonates in Sison’s poet who not only overcame ‘bourgeois origins’ but also comes to terms with the idea that his position and role in society is only secondary to the struggle of the masses.

Although these three periods were by no means similar—much less their respective authors and literary works that offered varied visions of Philippine nationalism—they are one in expressing the disenfranchisement of the lower classes.
in substantiating the form and function of the nation. The writings from all three periods made significant commentaries on the veracity of shifting nationalist ideology, often questioning the hegemonic tactics that isolated interests of the lower classes from state-determined policies. In more than a century that witnessed the concurrent experiences of disavowal and nostalgia, hope and frustration, and not to mention the mobilization of a new middle class that has led to widespread inequity, Philippine revolutionary literature thrived with interrogations of the nationalist agenda and models that pushed the understanding of social difference into more polemical discussions that highlight the material realities across different segments of Filipino life. In this backdrop, I organize an archive detailing the mass expressions of anxieties over food and hunger. Many of the Filipino writings about the experience of food emulate the approaches of revolutionary literature even though the writers themselves do not necessarily identify with the cause. In many of these, eating is depicted to be a much more abject than celebratory experience. How the personal and mundane experience of eating relates to collective ideals present significant insight on a cultural logic that condemns the silencing of counter-hegemonic bodies that do not necessarily lend itself to the vision and purpose of the nation-state.

**CREATING A CRAVING FOR THE NATION**

One issue arising in this regard focuses on questions that implicate the many forms of mechanization altering the meaning and value of both work and identity. The Filipino peasant or rural class was never a formation that existed on its own if not for the consciousness imparted by the need to define the value of their work against the conversion of land into properties at the height of Spanish colonization, which subsequently paved the way for the development of large-scale capitalist agriculture. Since intensive commercialization significantly altered agricultural work in the Philippines that had made ‘most Filipinos relate to rice as consumers rather
than as producers of rice’ (Aguilar 2005), the procurement of food—or the inability to do so—also magnifies the inconsequence of labor.

Ponciano B.P. Pineda’s short story ‘Ang Mangingisda’ (The Fisherman, 1974) illustrates this futility through the struggles of an unnamed fisherman who dreams of nothing more than to upgrade his oar-paddled boat into a larger motorboat. The desire for better technology in order to participate in the exchange of commodities and the accretion of capital present a grave antinomy to the fisherman’s efforts. It encapsulates how the reigns of conquest continue to infringe upon peasant work, altering its meaning and monetary value according to determinants situated beyond the fisherman’s reach. Technology becomes the means that clarifies the extent that the protagonist can participate in fishing. Comparing his vessel to that of the richer Don Cesar, he traces the source of his woes to the inefficiency of his tools. His boat required more effort to move out to sea that by the time he arrives at a suitable location for fishing, he wastes effort at rowing instead of casting his nets. In contrast, the bigger launch owned by Don Cesar could not only venture out further and cover more ground, it could also hold more catch. His problems are compounded further by an increasing debt amassed to augment the little income he manages to secure out of his work. Delicately managing to pay small portions of his debt so as not to lose favor from his creditors, he gambles on more loans to collect his tools slowly. First, he was able to afford a small motor that he attached to his small boat, before eventually purchasing a slightly bigger one befitting of the stature of his previously acquired motor.

Just when he thought that he had the tools he needed in order to rival Don Cesar’s operations and generate a profit, the fisherman discovers new competitors and their implements:

His ambition turned into a frenzied grasping when he observed two boats in the pier.

He often asked himself why there were already two boats in the opposite shore: while he himself, until now, didn’t even own one. This realization seized his whole being whenever he would think
of it. And the more he could not explain his state when he would encompass with his gaze the northern part of the river: there one found the pier, factories, gigantic boats, precious merchandise, launches, ships; but toward the south—around their hovel—were nipa makeshift constructions protruding across the river bank, small wretched canoes, laborers, fisherman who took in only a measly percentage of their daily catch.

His self-questionings were answered by an illustrious dream as dazzling as the fishing vessels of Don Cesar and the luminous port of Fides!

Soon Don Cesar had three launches (Pineda 1974, p. 155).

Dealt with stiffer competition and left with hardly any options to expand the tools of his trade, the fisherman contemplates the even more radical practice of dynamite fishing. Fearful at first, he finally succumbs to it, and the story ends with him out on sea cloaked by night, when he first used the illicit contraption:

He struck a match. The sparks of the size of sand grains leaped and scattered. The matchstick would not light up. He squeezed the match in his armpit. It got warm. He struck it again. The wind snuffed the flame. He concealed the match behind the deck of the boat: fire bit the matchstick. He brought it nearer the dynamites, touched it firmly to the end of the short fuse which he tightly, steadily, grasped with his right hand; it sizzled for a twinkling of an eye, for a swift instant, rapidly, rapidly sizzled—like lightning that tore the sky, and the simultaneous flash that wounded the dark night appeared together with a deafening boom that cracked the wholeness of that immeasurable expanse of the sea (Pineda 1974, pp. 157-158).

As a surrogate to the larger and more advanced boats that the fisherman could only gawk at from a distance, the dynamite’s vilification as a tool for war, destruction and terror becomes the culminating vision that reiterates either the desperation and moral inferiority of the fisherman, or his genius in altering and subverting one symbol of control to garner some space in the boat and motor-driven world of industrial fishing. Either way, both views situate the fisherman outside the functioning world of capital control. His desperate attempt to utilize dynamites for a seemingly simple trade instills a sense of frustration towards the available legal
measures to assimilate himself into society. Likewise, it is also indicative of his protest against the unyielding and rigid processes that utilize technology in order to isolate him further from the networks of interactions that afford him a secure place in society. For despite his submissiveness, the system does not heed his concerns, and his bid to alter his position by appropriating any form of technology only intensified his condemnation.

The subversion and appropriation of various technological implements in the procurement of food draws parallel insights to its consumption. Food stopped becoming a necessity afforded to each individual. It transforms into a substance that can be appropriated, subverted and re-invented accordingly. Its transformation into such an object adheres to the same anxiety projected on technology’s impact on production. If the twentieth century reified Philippine cuisine into a middle class preoccupation that derives pleasure from the self-conscious manipulation of technique and innovation, and of the latest gadgets and information, it also ushered in the same spirit of inventiveness towards the abject experience of eating. Literature repurposes eating if only to revive a sense of self-worth after invalidating and erasing the masses’ participation in the nation’s collective work. In the following poem, written by Jose F. Lacaba, older brother of Emmanuel Lacaba and former student activist against the Marcos dictatorship, the process of eating a familiar dish paksiw na ayungin—paksiw as the process of stewing in vinegar, and ayungin as the common name for a kind of fish—is transformed into a more complex undertaking.

**Paksiw na Ayungin**  
**(Fish Cooked in Vinegar)**

This is the way to eat fish cooked in vinegar: pull out the fins (the cat can have those along with the fishbones), and bring the fishhead
to your lips, and suck out
its wide-open eyes;
then suck on
the fishhead itself
until you have drained it
of its juice.
Now you can
start on the fishmeat.

Eat slowly, little by
little, and pick the fish
clean—we don't have enough
food, it's difficult
to scrounge for food.
Make do with a lot of rice
swimming in the vinegar.
And stop complaining.
Though the fish is thin,
it's better than nothing.
(Lacaba 1996)

From a simple gesture that signals the start of digestion, eating transforms
into a mechanized ritual. But unlike most food-related rituals that elevate the
significance of a meal, the precise and exacting prescription implored here evades
the commemorative and gustatory associations of food that are usually immersed in
excess. Instead, the partaking of the fish in this meal plays with the irony of
transforming the severity of prudence into a more gratifying experience. The
Filipino verb *simutin*, used in the original Filipino text and translated here as ‘pick
(the fish) clean’, best expresses the exigency of the act. Its closest English
approximation is to scrape up the last bit or drop of food. Sucking the vinegar-
infused juice of the fish for flavor and steeping rice in its broth to absorb every last
drop of it conceals the pitiful through the fruitless exercise of extracting more out of
so little. Even in the slightest chance that such economy results to some form of
pleasure or satisfaction, the narrator is quick to point out that they ‘don’t have
enough / food, it’s difficult / to scrounge for food … it’s better than nothing’.
More striking than the problem of scarcity, the necessity for the detailed and
meticulous prescription also enforces the need to overcome the passivity conditioned by the helplessness surrounding the characters in the poem. The stipulated steps undermine the fact that *paksiw na ayungin* is a relatively common and accessible dish that no longer needs belabored instructions to pick apart and to eat. And yet the instructions are handed out with military exactness in order to stretch the scarce resources and, more than that, to accommodate the need to reassert the characters’ lost selves by engaging their physical and mental faculties from being idle. Despite the futility, the pretense of doing something afforded both characters some semblance of purpose.

Seeking purpose in the midst of hunger becomes a strong undercurrent marking the Filipino’s relationship with food. In another poem ‘Halu-Halo’, literally mixed together and that has also become the Filipino name for a dessert popular across South East Asia consisting primarily of assorted fruits, shaved ice and milk, Fatima Cahilig demonstrates the same seemingly pointless engagement of transforming food into something more. Confronting the problem of immobility and lack of things to do brought about by a very limited budget, the poem’s persona spends his last ten pesos on *halu-halo* sold on the corner of his street. The simple transaction is expounded into a more intricate process of rationalizing the decision on choosing a dessert for one’s last meal, and that eventually culminates in an assemblage of fantastic proportions. Looking at the order in which the different ingredients are arranged in the glass, Cahilig likens the display to some mythical genesis:

> Slowly, the glass will be filled with an expanse of color:
> melon  purple yam  coconut  jackfruit  tapioca  sweet potato  coconut jelly  beans  gelatin.
> It will have sugar for rain, ice for snow and milk will flow like a river.
> (Cahilig 2005, p. 254)
But unlike other creation narratives that utilize a god that is mindful of maintaining the order and balance of the world and universe that they hold in their hands, the persona wields a much more destructive affinity towards the delicate creation:

In my hand is a spoon!
By shoving it in, the harmony is shattered.

And in the glass I will make out what is beyond the world:
Tapioca Planets crashing against rice crispy Stars; sugar palm Comet with Tail of grated coconut; melon and jackfruit swirling like a boomerang;
The banana Moon colliding with the sweet potato Sun; gelatin melting into the purple yam Shooting Stars

Consistent with the manner of eating halu-halo, the mixing together of ingredients is imagined to be a transgression that creates havoc within the pristine layering of ingredients in the glass. The persona convinces her/himself that s/he is reclaiming power even though, realistically, s/he has none. The futility of conceiving such a scenario in eating is rationalized in the end with the same conviction of the persona in ‘Paksiw na Ayungin’ who extends the sustenance provided by the limited amount of fish available as necessary in satisfying the appetite. The meanderings of Cahilig’s ‘Halu-Halo’, however, do not focus on physical sustenance alone but draws direct attention towards the capacity of the hungry and seemingly hollow persona to penetrate the world with more vitality and agency despite having only been relegated to the periphery. Even though s/he is only able to afford very little, the persona is determined to overcome disenfranchisement announcing that:

After everything dissolves into a milky Galaxy,
My mouth will make itself known.
With my ten pesos, I have gone beyond my street
The poem does not give away anything in the beginning to locate the character’s remorse for having limited options, but the trauma of spending the last of his money exposes his physical and social immobility. The circumstances leading to his deprivation could have been addressed (i.e. the lack of work and capital) but instead of faulting his conditions, the persona directs attention towards his entitlement instead. Like the sky in the Bagobo myth that gnawed unworthy mortals seeking a place in the heavens, the poem deifies the impoverished by leaving this particular character with the choice to develop either a taste or distaste for how the world is organized and arranged. In his musings, his relationship with society is inverted. The persona glides into an individuated sense of self, envisioning the surrounding environment and social relations through judgments and reasons that are so personal that it becomes difficult to ascertain as to how extensive his distortions of and departures from verisimilitude are, and how effective these can be in altering the same structures that have contributed to his subjugation.

The alterations to the concept of self made by Pineda’s fisherman, and the personas in Lacaba’s and Cahilig’s respective poems implicate shifts not only to the way eating indicates economic and social disenfranchisement, but also how the experience of eating itself represents a more seething sense of depravity transcending the realm of the material. Aimless as it may seem, the inconsequence that these musings add up to all indemnify the sense of value, purpose and self lost by each of these characters. Their respective contexts force these characters to accommodate the inherent shifts in global and economic patterns. The changes in and dispersals of technology resulted to significant social transformations the impact of which is only measured through the calculated contributions they make or the projected profits they add to society in general. Unable to participate in and articulate their concerns within these activities, all three are also antagonistic towards the manner they have been made obsolete. With hardly any place in the formal institutions of society, their worth has become secondary to other individuals.
and even pieces of equipment and processes deemed more suitable for society’s machinations.

THE BREADWINNER AS A FILIPINA

Some literary works approach the lack of and the limited prospects to procure food with an aggression directed specifically towards the brutality of state and class regimentation, which have done nothing to alleviate the emotional and psychic conditions of the general populace. The mechanization of subjects under the state and its respective institutions underscore the patriarchal manner in which issues of hunger have been approached. Their treatment as movable, replaceable and discardable attachments to various components of the social machinery is testament to the state’s proclivity towards rationalizing and streamlining processes that mimic American colonial installations emphasizing modernization and development as central precursors to the country’s progress. U.S. attempts at altering cultural attitudes towards health and nutrition since their occupation of the Philippines in 1898 targeted local hygiene and the tropical environment as critical obstructions to their colonizing mission (see Anderson 2007; McCoy et al. 2010). Comprised mainly of white male soldiers who were assigned to work on the fringes of the new frontier, tropical conditions were very threatening to the colonial service. Equating ‘real’ development to American life and using it as an important antecedent to the colony’s liberation, American doctors and scientists fixated on pathological deficiencies that emasculated America’s civilizing agents to the Philippines who became apprehensive of infection and contamination by diseases like malaria and leprosy. The response saw the infliction of a hypermasculine set of scientific, medical and nutritional programs that aimed to recast the supremacy of white masculinity against what was perceived to be a disease-stricken colony. The positioning of medical, educational and scientific facilities throughout the country as well as the retooling of the domestic confines of the elite and emerging middle class
effectively dismissed existing cultural practices grounded in the colony’s past in favor of developmental efforts that looked at the calculated rewards of progress.

In many ways, the state’s indifference towards hunger reproduces the same patriarchal overtones that relegated agricultural work and other forms of physically taxing labor as a cause for subjugation. Trager (1983) explains how this subjugation is experienced through the activation of lower class mobility where ‘rural households often seek out diverse sources of income [that include] wage labor in the rural area (including working on the farms of others) as well as migration to seek employment elsewhere’. While such movements provide additional income to help bolster household incomes, they also made informal work widespread and difficult to monitor, thus making rural labor even more susceptible to exploitation. This dynamic where the rural working classes are forced to uproot themselves constantly and move from place to place in search of more often than not temporary employment opportunities is also indicative of widening social and economic divide between city and countryside. Lope K. Santos, one of the most eminent Tagalog writers during the American period, recognized the relegation of rural life early on and this concern reflected in his most influential work *Banaag at Sikat* (1906). The first Tagalog novel published in the country, *Banaag at Sikat* set the love story of a working class man and the daughter of a landlord in a context contemplating the merits of installing socialism in the country in order to remedy the rising inequity he observed during his time. The same flavor for renouncing increasing social imbalances is distilled strongly in a poem published a few decades later. Entitled ‘*Ako’y si Bukid*’ (I am Country), the poem assigns an anthropomorphemic voice to the rural landscape to remind us that the alleged backwardness of the countryside was also the consequence of human elaboration. The first stanza states:

I am no uncharted space that has been tucked hidden from the world,  
but land that has been honed by tamed beasts and willful hands;  
what was once a forest has been whittled and cleared,  
at first into a rough field, before being flattened and subdivided;  
tract by tract, plowed and harrowed into thick, thin,
clearly marked furrows that lay across a mountain slope, 
between and around them are ditches that caress the lines 
to guide the water through as it flows in and out; 
extending as far as the mounds would allow, 
prepared to catch rain or to stretch out wide under the sun; 
a mine of wealth for the rich, and sorrow for the poor, 
and the source of contention for many an evil landowner. 
(Santos 2005, p. 13)

Santos’s careful enumeration directs attention towards a two-pronged process that clarifies the historical participation of rural identities in the past to the current state of social and economic relations. First, the selection of metaphor—the landscape as a body transformed—invokes a sense of hesitation on how to deal with the countryside. That naiveté is soon jolted by the transformation of virgin expanse into arable land, dramatized as a technological marvel on its own, one that would not have been achieved if not for the concerted effort of different generations to reclaim and transform it. Accounting for the numerous stages of modifications—from forest, to rough field, to irrigated land, and to feudal structure, Santos articulates the value of work done in the countryside in the same way that urban and modern professions are rationalized. It is not only hard work, but it also a systemic progression of experiments and experiences that have been consolidated to make the farm operational. In this light, the farm can be understood as its own archive or collection of rural innovations: the domestication of animals, plowing, the intricate physics of containing water and letting it trickle down for irrigation, and so forth. Second, and even more revealing, is how these technological transformations became currencies for social oppression. The abrupt transition in the last two lines of the excerpt above do not only allocate drudgery as the exclusive consequence of procuring food, but it has also transformed it into a byproduct of feudal control wherein the consequence of such efforts are no longer oriented towards the struggle for food, survival and life but towards ascertaining one’s position in a hierarchy beset with misery and death. If in the past working in the fields came to be understood as a means to ensure continuity and sustenance, the context the poem
alludes to refashions agricultural labor to mean the perpetuation of one’s subjugation, thus making rural life less purposeful and desirable. The relegation of rural work as a substandard routine is dealt with seething dissatisfaction as Santos reasserts the romantic vision of the countryside by ending the poem with a profusely didactic admonition:

So Man: just because your brethren is from the countryside doesn’t mean he should be belittled and scorned; the country cultivates everything pure and chaste, the city produces everything unsightly and foul (Santos 2005, p. 13).

Pitting city against country, the poem succumbs to prevalent views that subject rural life into a form of sexist indeterminacy. By alluding to its landscape as a bodily form, it casts the countryside into the role of the Other, enforcing a stringent notion of difference that denigrates the space of peasant activity to prop up and overestimate the value of non-rural work. This tension culminates in the ambivalent manner in which rural life is perceived. Despite offering a romantic predilection in eroticizing constructs of birth, life, youth, innocence and even spring at the beginning of the poem, it also looks at the space using the binary opposite implied in imagining the virgin frontier. What was initially eroticized and fetishized as ‘pure and chaste’ also imbibes horrifying and decaying concepts connoting corruption, severity and death. In contrast to the novelty and apparent coherence of the city, the poem demonizes rural space as the city’s primitive foil, and whose operations run counterintuitive to reason and technology.

Lina Sagral Reyes’s poem ‘Storya’ (Story, 1990b) mounts an arresting compendium that reassesses the significance of myth in providing a logic for the countryside through a group of mothers’ conversations about breastfeeding. The attempt to educate younger mothers on the matter is straightforward and presents practical ideas that cultivates modern science by repurposing folk remedies and traditional food sources:
When you teach breastfeeding
To young mothers, I was told,
The obvious rudiments—
Cleaning the nipples, knowing
When the milk goes sour or stale;
The clam soup with lemon grass
And horse radish to keep
The nourishing surge coming—so,
Expect these villagers
To bare and barter other lessons.
(Reyes 1990b, p. 70)

Innocent as they may seem, these ‘other lessons’ diffuse the urgent concerns of medical knowledge and engage the amusement of women who readily abandon the instruction. Instead, they engage a sequence of mythical stories about the kinds of babies that they could or would like to nurture, some culled from hearsay and others they themselves imagine:

Today Laureana asks if I’ve heard
Of the news on the radio

How in Paniqui, Bulacan a woman—
Clouds inside her belly swirled,
The eddy of flesh there
Moltened into her first
Child of a mudfish.
(Reyes 1990b, p. 70)

Although aware of the absurdity of giving birth to fish and sea creatures, the stories in the poem reveal a different approach to solving the seemingly mundane concerns these village women have. If the initial topic of breastfeeding was tackled by maximizing local resources and knowledge to fit in the rational mindset of contemporary medicine, the ‘other lessons’ reveal the need to satisfy both personal and collective concerns through ways of thinking that run in opposition to the cogent and exacting principles of scientific thinking. One of the younger women in
the group, who is anxious over the potential pain of breastfeeding, tries to imagine a
solution that unifies necessity sans the painful consequence, and even turning it into
something pleasurable:

Fifteen-year-old Maria dreams
Out loud, I wonder
The ecstasy, fishmouth the shape
Of a little star sucking
The lukewarm yellow of colostrum.
(Reyes 1990b, p. 72)

Another character that peddles seafood on the streets, dreams of a baby who
does not have to cry as she takes her around town to earn a living:

Valeria, hawker of crabs
And fish entrails, would like hers
An angelfish, fins silent
White wings underwater,
Its eyes so full
Of nothing, no clawing screams
To rival her hoarse voice
Braying past the village huts
And by the blacksmith shops.
(Reyes 1990b, p. 72)

Valeria’s fanciful vision is less a projection of desire and more a plea for a
practical concern that medicine and other state devices have overlooked. Unlike
Maria’s yearning to yield ecstasy from the mundane, Valeria wants a solution to
pacify a child whose crying competes with a job that requires a fair amount of yelling
in order to catch the attention of potential patrons. Inasmuch as her concern reflects
her incapacity to uphold the boundaries separating work from family life, it also
magnifies the failure of the designated institutions to carve out specific responses
that caters to her specific needs. Breastfeeding here demonstrates a radical divide
between the dominant knowledge being dispersed in relation to how actual bodies
operate. The manner in which it has been conceptualized for the characters in the
poem speaks more about the state’s attempts to redirect the populace’s efforts towards its aspirations for progress and development without necessarily paying attention to the specific obstacles hindering the realization of such goals. The rural body, represented in the poem by the women exchanging both knowledge about breastfeeding and fantastic tales, is expunged to give more space to the lofty and arrogant rationalizations resulting to an imagined order.

Resistant at first and seeking only ‘something / of possible use to [her]’, Reyes’s persona caves in and allows herself to indulge in fantasy:

My own thoughts ripplerush  
Like the waters I carry in the pufferfish  
Swell of the womb, my oddhearted  
Eelchild eager, swimming  
In the slow  
Ooze of red mud  
Towards the rivermouth  
Of the vagina.

I will name you  
Milk.  
Or Faith. Or Consuelo,  
That tender conquerors’ word meaning, comfort.  
Or Mistral, after the wind and her  
Who wished a fisher’s daughter a dreamful  
Of fish, leaping and aglow.  
(Reyes 1990b, pp. 72-74)

Not as amorous as the story projected by Maria nor as sensible as that of Valeria’s, the persona’s fantasy anticipates her child’s impending birth. The process of naming the child channels this anticipation from the simple passage out of the womb into an anxiety towards the self described to ‘ooze of red mud’. Consistent with the vilification of rural space in Santos’s *Ako’y si Bukid*, the poem fiddles with the prevalent supposition that women’s bodies and women themselves are constructed as inadequate. Aside from devaluing the embodied knowledge that the villagers have or may have about breastfeeding, the nourishment of the young is
placed under the control of state-ratified experts. Thus, the birthing process becomes a sign of progress itself, as it is imagined to save the child from the myth-making and milk-and-blood-dispensing chaos of his/her mother and into the capable hands of an institutionally determined order.

Rather than surrender to the prevailing view that instills the contamination of the female body, Reyes grabs hold of the opportunity to dispute it. For one, the persona’s choices for a name oscillate between the colonial and mythical imaginations. To name the child Faith or Consuelo, which are relatively common in the country, reinforces the norm of projecting and/or imbibing Christian (and therefore superior) virtue to the child. On the other hand, Milk and Mistral echo the fabled musings of the townswomen. To name a child Milk is absurd, but it does push one of the fluids that supposedly mark the contamination of the mother into the child’s being. Likewise, Mistral would have been a rare and unheard of name, but it emanates from the same mythological desire to bring in clear weather and a bountiful catch.

In the end, the poem comes to the defense of myth by reconstituting its implausibility as an important tool:

You see, it is not difficult for us
To believe
In makebelieve—
Though, of course,
We do not call them makebelieve.

We know they are stories
Villagers dive
Into, far below the reach of the purse seines
Of reason or reality. We keep them simple
And true, these stories
Our lives stir, alive.
(Reyes 1990b, p. 74)

By doing so, it amplifies the distance separating the markers of progress being championed by the state from the everyday lives of the periphery. These
promises have yet to find realization in the concerns and experiences of the populace who would rather course their desire through their unbelievable stories and 'makebelieve' rather than the cold and antiseptic detachment of institutions consented by the state. Failing to sustain the enchantment of the public towards the potential life it offers, the consternation against the mythical imagination is redirected back to modern life, whose visions of order and progress appear equally incredible and unbelievable to those who do not experience it.

This kind of engenderment is not just directed towards matters involving production represented by the geographic alienation of the countryside, it also extends to the collective strategy in addressing widespread hunger. Because hunger is understood as an emotional problem affecting mostly the lower class, the patriarchal state and the institutions under its jurisdiction relegated the matter back to women themselves. In 2009, 64.1% of the total unemployed Filipinos were men and only 35.9% were women. As men wrestle to find employment, women are forced to find opportunities where they can. In the decade prior, the Institute of Labor Studies reported an alarming rise in women absorbed by the informal economy from 39% in 1996 to 49% in 2006 (cited in Lazo 2008, p. 12). While these jobs provided instantaneous solutions augmenting dwindling family incomes, they also exposed women to a number of risks that the state has not fully addressed. Moreover, the nature of informal female work has extended beyond their respective localities and into the international arena where government protection is even far more immobilized. The Philippine Commission on Women reported that in 2009 the largest group of Filipinas deployed overseas (56%) were unskilled workers while the largest group of men (51%) worked as tradesmen (PCW, 2011).

That women bear the brunt of work needed to administer the nation bears striking parallelism with ‘Doing Cooking’, Luce Giard’s contributions to The Practice of Everyday Life (1998). Observing the performance of cooking chores at home, Giard argues that women face pronounced pressures in the enactment of day-to-day activities. Although domestic activities become the primary expression of female
subjugation, Giard commemorates the agency practiced by women in the kitchen, from generating knowledge involved in cooking to creating connections across different generations through such knowledge. The informal expressions of feminine labor underscore women’s contributions, whereby gestures of cooking and community-building provide a different set of tools that provide a radical—if not more potent—alternative defiant towards communal expressions of nostalgia towards the nation or through the hyper-masculine forms of modernization associated with the development of technology.

In 1990, Ruth Elynia S. Mabanglo published an anthology of poems that encapsulated the predicament of migrant Filipina workers entitled *Mga Liham ni Pinay* (citation: The Letters of Pinay). *Pinay*, a colloquial term for Filipina, rewrites the archetype of the *Inang Bayan* (motherland) that was heavily utilized in seditious and revolutionary writings since the Spanish period. The collection poses as a series of letters to local Filipinos about life overseas and offers a severely politicized glimpse of different Filipinas in different countries, who take on different forms of work and face a tapestry of difficulties. The differences are unified by several characteristics but two stand out: first is the utilization of Pinay, who becomes the overarching persona that authors these letters; and second, a common title throughout the collection that is modified only by the location from where these letters supposedly come from. Both these elements underscore the precarious position of the Filipina as breadwinner. As Tadiar (2004, p. 355) points out, the use of the name Pinay encapsulates ‘the creative living power of individual Filipinas into a collective force’, effectively implicating the weight of their informal work as a legitimate contributor to the country’s formal economy:

It’s the same man that sits at the head of the dinner table,  
He reads the newspaper every morning.  
He waits for coffee to be served  
And smokes  
While I am shackled by a crib and books.  
I apply lipstick and turn the faucet on.
He is not stirred
Even if the pot burns and the child cries.
(Mabanglo 1998a)

Writing ‘from Brunei’, Pinay introduces herself as ‘teacher, wife and mother’ whose being worn by her ‘affairs with the basin, pot and bed’ became the impetus to work overseas. Parreñas (2005, p. 99) points out that ‘Filipina migration is often assumed to be a middle class professional stream (e.g., of nurses), two thirds of female labor migrants from the Philippines are, in fact, domestic workers’. The uncertainties of and subjugation as domestic worker and/or wife, caregiver and entertainer in another land becomes a tolerable option in light of the fact that the same domestic chores she carried out at home has not really amounted to anything. Away from husband and family, however, a sense of self could potentially be reclaimed:

I dreamt of wearing pants,
send dollars and buy gifts to take back home.
I can breathe freely,
Open my mouth without restrain, let my thoughts be.
(Mabanglo 1998a)

In ‘Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong’, Law (2001) demonstrates the significance of food in helping reclaim the Filipina domestic’s identity. Their weekend assemblies in spaces such as Central in Hong Kong ‘articulate the cultural politics of difference and inequality, making new spatial connections between home/away and between dominant/subordinate and power/resistance. While Little Manila is always about the politics of labour migration and domestic work, it is also inhabited by unique signs and symbols that
allow Filipino women to define their own social worlds and their own, situated resistances. In so doing, they transgress their circumscribed role as “maid” (Law 2001, p. 280). Despite this transformative power, however, the reclamation of the self driven by the thought of becoming one’s own man also has its emotional setbacks, a matter that remains unquantified in thecrudeness and rigidity of compensation:

I confess that I am lonely
Now that I only make coffee for myself.
I wait for letters to come,
And my heart is sustained by the telephone.
I cried in the beginning,
It appears that everything can be cured by reading.
(Mabanglo 1998a)

On the other hand, the synchronicity of the titles suggest that their work is carried out in numerous locations that are no longer bound by traditional national territories on top of the emotional detachment they are made to endure. Their involvement, therefore, could not only be measured in terms of the money they remit that feeds their respective families, but must also be quantified or rationalized in terms of their contributions to the countries where they can be found and recompense them for what they themselves have lost. Contributions are not only measured through remittances sent back to the Philippines, but also through the performance of domestic and marginalized tasks in another country (Faier 2009; Parreñas 2001; Rodriguez 2010). But how does one incorporate the vagrancies of informal exchanges by peripheral identities plucked from their roots and are forced to cope within the concise and exacting structure of ‘legitimate’ economies?

In another letter ‘from Japan’, Mabanglo reiterates this predicament through the most extreme set of informal relations that condemn feminine work underneath the charges of a masculine global economy:
My dear sister, I pray you won’t be angry,
Take it out on the mountain and the sky.
Your baby sister neither sings nor dances
At the nightclub of the bowlegged chink.
The truth, the truth, let me confess,
I am like a geisha here,
If only I could claim to be one,
I could take flight like a sparrow.
But I am just a lowly pigeon that scavenges the city,
Sitting on bottles naked.
My sister, I swallow tears and ejaculations,
I can’t protest for they’ve imprisoned us like criminals.
(Mabanglo 1998b)

The state conceals its failure in actualizing its projected masculinity that mimics the stern yet calculated stance of American enthused systems promising development through the increasing sexualization of Philippine labor both locally and overseas. Although the female image—impregnated as an abjection into everything from the countryside to laborers, sex workers, maids, wives, mothers—remains an important symbol in reinstalling progressivist discourse, it has also given license to the patriarchal state to disengage itself from the emotional questions raised by hunger and the other concerns that magnify social inequality. By deferring hunger into a private affair that must be tackled by individuals on their own, the state is afforded the luxury to thrust its paternal ambitions forward, rationalizing its institutions and practices as the most critical component of its nation-building aspirations.

SUPPRESSING THE NATION’S APPETITE

The engenderment of hunger—and the problems of food production, distribution and consumption that are inextricably tied to it—revivifies the dualistic nature of differences that installed the authority of western control and its implicit license to disperse its power by dominating the priorities and interests of its
subjects. Hilsdon, who examines the impact of militarism on gender inequality in the Philippines, argues that ‘male violence is perceived as relying on the suppression of the feminine’ and that such a dichotomy relegated ‘scientific thought for masculinity; and the natural domain in which science operates, for femininity’ (Hilsdon 1995, p. 21). Neocolonialism continues to impress the need to transform the countryside into something of reasonable use to science and its allied systems. Labor, technology, subjectivity and food effectively turned into multi-layered sets of signs adopting differences so that regulated forms of power can be accommodated. In the previous sections, we looked at specific fractures where such forms of authority can be cracked open in order to formulate imbalances in the structures wherein food is used to speak of a collective identity.

Despite numerous forms of resistance against the supremacy of patriarchal control, there also exists a body of work that concedes to the same inequity, thereby contributing to the naturalization of oppression and isolation as legitimate harbingers of social cohesion and organization. Although these works offer a sense of acceptance, they are nonetheless enthused with an innate resentment for the conditions they enforce. The trepidation over hunger does not only hover around the uncertainties surrounding the incorporation of nutrients for the body, but also becomes indicative of other anxieties, many of which can be refracted back towards the problematic inculcation of cultural elaboration that favors the breeding of nationalist sentiment. In this light, the nationalism encouraged collectively can be interpreted to have inducted hysteria as well. Food, or the lack of it, provides another opportunity to enforce the stubborn vision of state-initiated order and coherence while simultaneously suppressing the discomfort of its subjects’ bodies. Consider, for example, German Gervacio’s meditative poem on the ‘foodcourt’:

**Foodcourt**

Here,
food is on trial
The stomach and eyes
serve as Interrogators  
the nose is Witness  
to the crime  
of seething hunger  
and the Pocket is the Judge  
But I, myself, am just a simple bystander  
because before I could pass through  
the court of Hunger killers  
I have been sentenced  
to a lifetime  
of gulps  
and cravings.  
(Gervacio 1999, p. 46)

The foodcourt, which in the Philippines is synonymous to communal self-serve eating areas in malls enclosed by multiple food stalls, becomes a fitting metaphor for the dislocation of human subjectivity. Inscribing pun on the manifold meanings of ‘court’, Gervacio maintains the instability of human consciousness within a space where, ideally, one is given a seemingly boundless array of supposedly affordable choices for eating. The act of deciding or judging what to eat in the consumer-friendly abode of a mall and its foodcourt is equated to another ‘court’—where legal proceedings take place. Although ‘food is on trial’, the persona’s inability to purchase anything not only dislocated him from the entire process of exercising judgment regarding what food to eat but also criminalized him ‘to a lifetime / of gulps / and cravings’. Here, the metaphor of having one’s subjectivity sentenced by ‘the Pocket’ mounts awareness towards the manic and/or schizophrenic movement of capitalist activity penetrating both the mall and individual as new forms of communion and feasting. The conversion of the self into yet another space of consumption confirms the insecurity towards the growing instability of the self that becomes seemingly momentary and illusory beside the permanence and pervasiveness of consumerism represented here by the ability to buy food.

While it is tempting to read into the conditions posited by globalization with regards to the context implicated in the poem, it would be important to note that
the apprehension towards the self has a longer and more persistent history. An earlier and more traditional poem by Manuel Príncipe Bautista entitled ‘Anyaya sa Karalitaan’ (An Invitation to Poverty, 1997) first published in 1949 has configured the same anxiety towards the insufficiency of the self. However, this time the agitation stems not from the inability to purchase food but from the inability to eat according to a prescribed set of dishes deemed better. Here, a ‘better’ meal is equated to one that utilizes dishes and ingredients imported from outside the country. Situated in a rural setting and in the midst of a protracted engagement where the husband-to-be invites his fiancée for a ‘simple’ meal in his house as part of a protracted process of discussing wedding plans, the poem gives the would-be bride a glimpse of what she may be eating for the rest of her life:

Here, served in my humble dinner table:
A handful of rice accompanied by some viand;
Your drink isn’t expensive wine
Just palm wine from Bulacan.
(Bautista 1997, p. 45)

From here, a pattern emerges. Poverty is identified with local victuals that are intrinsic to the country, and imported products represent the ideals surrounding a good life that the man wishes to offer his fiancée. The poem simultaneously demarcates the exclusivity of the upper class who can afford foreign goods while constructing the inferiority of local produce around them:

Even the smallest piece of dried fish
Is sufficiently flavored by fish sauce from Malabon;

As for fruits? Don’t ask
For Spanish grapes and golden apples;
You can have half-ripened mangoes
That I toiled for and picked myself.
For dessert we have candied coconuts from Ilocos
That is sweeter than the fruits you crave…
(Bautista 1997, p. 45)

Ironically, despite being able to serve a complete meal gathered from different localities like Malabon, Bulacan and Ilocos, the persona’s attention reverts back to the opposition that privileges the commodities of a foreign culture. By unconsciously assessing the value of his own food through the semiotic tools that imparted favor to the superiority of foreign food, his deference magnifies a sense of wanting that is not really different from Gervacio’s persona in ‘Foodcourt’ who deemed himself ‘sentenced / to a lifetime / of gulps / and cravings’. Pushing the metaphor of courtly prosecution, Bautista’s persona’s lack of self-worth also condemned himself despite possessing more opportunities to participate in the production of his own food. In the middle of all this anxiety is a collective sensibility that has come to an awareness that human value is determined by their economic and social standing. While hunger signifies the disparagement of the self, hunger also comes into fore as an existing condition despite having access towards food production. By not being able to sustain participation in circulating foreign commodities, the persona becomes apologetic that he can only afford a complete meal that is sourced locally.

This class-laden view bears implications not only to the self-esteem of the lower classes but also to the entire gamut of socio-economic groups participating in the nationalist project. The desire to uphold and work within the stipulated order of the state is placed in a precarious position of constantly fending off anxiety towards the incompleteness and instability of the self, its relationship to society, and—in the case of ‘Anyaya sa Karalitaan’—the Philippines’ relationship to other countries. Serafin C. Guinigundo’s story ‘Nagmamadali ang Maynila’ (‘Manila in a Rush’, translated in E. San Juan as ‘Pulsebeat of the City’, 1974) exemplifies a different sense of lack through Maciong, the protagonist whose mad dash around Manila during the Japanese occupation animates the struggle between people whose
earnestness and diligence in earning their keep is matched only by an indifferent city that can crush any dream or aspiration without even flinching. It is within this struggle that Maciong and other people who flocked to Manila internalize the violence of commerce:

[They] were prudent, cautious: they used a lens to scrutinize diamond chips. They turned away from broken jewelry, the carbon type, the one with cracks; they would lose money if they unwisely closed a deal. For every person with a scrutinizing lens there were others shifting around, waiting to inspect, appraise and haggle for a ring, an earring, a bracelet. The people ignored the heat of the sun. Everyone refused to leave the mass haggling for real estate, houses, steel, nails, trucks, launches, horses, typewriter machines and other merchandise. They went to eat and, after eating, quickly returned. They came back to talk, haggle, and examine the goods. The days were spent in such wasteful business. People could only hope for a tomorrow that would perhaps be a lucky day.

"Balut… balut… baluut… baluuuuut!"

"Puto… puto… puto… puto…!"

... The man who shot off in desperate frenzy, speeding in a race against time, was Maciong. He numbered among those who bought without capital except his saliva and sold without anything on hand except a list. He counted among the agents of the street market whose profit on his list exceeded what his pockets received: for his pockets, indeed, were always filled with frustrated hopes and dreams (Guinigundo 1974, pp. 120-121).

The city dances to a beat marked by the calling of street vendors peddling balut (fertilized duck embryos) and puto (steamed rice cakes), which Maciong blocks off in order to focus on the job he needs to do. Despite the constant reminder from both the streets and by his wife Luisita to eat, hunger becomes an acceptable—even expected—alternative as Maciong’s responsibilities as a middleman to make a chain of buy-and-sell transactions work hinges on the way he can manipulate time and maneuver the city thus foregoing a meal every so often:
Maciong trodded on the polished face of asphalt road that had just been sprinkled with evening dew. The light vengefully flung by luxurious houses seemed like sharp arrows piercing the smooth face of the streets that Maciong followed.

“Baluuut… baluuut… baluuut… baluuut!”

“Putooo… putooo… putooo… putoo…!”

“Maciong, do eat now. Was your profit yesterday big?” Luisita asked. “You didn’t even give me any balato [tip]. I want some money to buy a pair of shoes.”

Maciong grinned. He knew that Luisita was kidding or scorning him.

“Maciong, stop that accursed buy-and-sell business. You’re thin, you can’t even earn enough to buy your own cigarettes. You’re always walking… straight on… walking… straight on… toward a thousand nothings. Where’s your ‘lion’s share’? You always eat my ‘chicken feed’. You’re always eating what I’ve earned from washing clothes… You’re like a fledgling waiting for worms from the mother bird’s beak” (Guinigundo 1974, p. 123).

Hunger reincarnates as the need to make something substantial out of the multitude of transactions from selling jewelry to real estate that, for Maciong’s wife, seems all in vain. But whatever the wife thinks is inconsequential and her words only aggravate Maciong’s aspirations to reclaim his manhood taken away by having to rely on her for their needs. It was only when he was able to successfully turnover a big haul of tires that he was able to finally ignore the city’s movement and enjoy some much-needed rest:

He felt the sudden bloating of his pockets which, in his quick strides, kept bumping against his thighs. He threaded his way through the thick crowds of vendors selling what they did not have, but he was oblivious to all the haggling and appointments—the direct path to enormous profit and to bright prosperity. Maciong felt that the streets of Manila belonged to him—all of Manila (Guinigundo 1974, pp. 125-126).

Maciong will never feel whole as the story dramatizes his achievement to be only illusory. Despite this success at the end of the day when he was able to claim a
semblance of power over the city (which continued to devour him as he rested), the
city’s ever-changing form nullified his hard work. The story concludes with a
picture of an unyielding city who will not heed any form of pause:

The hammering and pounding of steel from one end of Manila to the
other went on and seemed to abide with the rhythm of life. The
towering structures threatened to reach the zenith of the sky. The
alcohol vapors from the streets seethed and surged up, inducing
nausea. The karitelas [carts] were loaded. Streetcars were
overspilling. Everyone rushed, flew, hustled breathlessly along the
streets of Manila. All arms were moving, all minds, in fact the whole
living body of Manila (Guinigundo 1974, p. 126).

Manila becomes an all-imposing figure that demands for the recalibration of
identities under its shadow to create linkages allowing old forms of colonial control
to access new means of exploiting the literal and figurative roads where capital and
product pass through. Maciong’s subjugation is a reminder that the city and its
associated structures are not there for him. Instead, the city itself morphed into a
monster whose grotesque presence is concealed by its cosmopolitan allure that ate
him whole.

In the poem ‘Alasais ng Umaga sa May Hangganan ng Pasig at Marikina’,
Edgardo B. Maranan (1986) identifies the mouth of this urban monstrosity more
specifically to belong to that of a factory:

Six in the morning
With dew yet to descend
The monster opened its mouth
By the Pasig-Marikina border
To spit out the macerated bodies
Of night-shift employees crawling
Like a mass of ants in line
Half-awake, trudging along as they
Stretch bone and flesh
While fighting the swelling pain
Of an empty stomach
(Maranan 1986, p. 73)
Situated in two former industrial municipalities now labeled as cities under the National Capital Region, Pasig and Marikina become decisive sites demonstrating the horrors of the city. The seamless and round-the-clock work that does not respect the limits of night and day confirms the service and subservience the city demanded. The continuous production of the factory implicitly accentuates the disciplining authority of urban life, and how it takes advantage of low wages and high unemployment in extracting more out of its employees. Guinigundo’s Maciong and Maranan’s factory workers exemplify the displacement of the laborer underneath two important exchanges: first, the influx of capital and workers towards the city; and, second, the dispersal of its own products outwards. By positioning itself at the core of these interactions to link rural production with metropolitan and global consumption, the city also effectively instilled ambivalence towards the nature of work itself. On one hand, the necessity of work finds fulfillment in instilling an individual’s sense of purpose and role in society. Wages easily measure the nature of those contributions, and the desire to uphold or attain specific living standards become complicit to the installation of an individual within the structures of society. On the other hand, the lack of self-worth reflected in their work, and the corresponding hunger emanating from and despite it, effectively alienated individuals from society itself. Assuming the collective voice of the factory workers, Maranan lampoons this detachment in a prayer-like stanza condemning the ‘Monster’:

Thank you, Monster, thank you  
For this system  
There’s always porridge and plantains  
For the hungry baby  
Thank you, Monster, thank you  
For this system  
Of infrequent blessings
You shower to the bewildered laborer
May it trickle down to their spouse and children
May they catch some of it.
(Maranan 1986, p. 73)

What was initially a description for the factory turns into a name to designate how the lived experience of its workers distilled into hysteria over the state’s inability to deliver on its institutional and ideological promises. Their engagements with the city, the factory, employment (in the case of Cahilig’s ‘Halu-Halo’), technology (Pineda’s ‘The Fisherman’) and other denominations of state intervention express a desire that will never be fulfilled. While the ideas of justice, equity, opportunity, freedom and other similar abstractions may entail more debate as to their validity and actualization in Philippine affairs, the tangible experience of hunger presents a far more persuasive argument tainting the legitimacy of the state and its goals. This anxiety not only destabilizes the ability of individuals with regards to their value as workers but also imparts critical questions directed back to the potency of the nation itself whose proclivity for a prescriptively eurocentric nationalism paved the way for the fear of the Other. But unlike the colonial experience of the process of othering which stipulated its terms through the social and cultural difference between colonizer and colony as the root of nationalism (Bhambra 2007; Fanon 1986; Loomba 2005; Mohanty 2003), the Other revived in a neocolonial context confounds the Filipino’s self-image that, despite efforts to assimilate the rhetoric and syntax of the state, remains alienated from the state and from him/herself. The anxiety over how to approach the external systems that bind an individual to the collective goals of the state spreads into the problematic self-perception of the Filipino who not only developed suspicion towards the state, but also internalized the specter of ‘imperial skeletons encouraging silence and self-loathing’ (Pierce 2005, p. 43).

In the children’s story ‘Pan de Sal Saves the Day’, Norma Olizon-Chikiamco (1995) tackles the self-loathing of the Filipino through an allegorical tale of racial
envy. *Pan de sal*—literally salted bread made using a combination of flour, eggs, yeast, sugar and salt—becomes the personified symbol of the Filipino who finds tremendous insecurity from the physical generalizations of the Filipino body:

Of all the kids in school, Pan de Sal felt she was the unluckiest. She didn’t like the way she looked. Her skin was too dark, and she found her oblong shape weird. She also hated her rather flat nose. Besides, who ever heard of a girl named Pan de Sal anyway? (Olizon-Chikiamco 1995, p. 65)

The problem becomes apparent when Chikiamco grounds the insecurity on comparisons between racial and cultural impressions personified through other pastries and baked goods in her class:

How she envied her classmates. There was Croissant, with her golden brown skin, tall nose, and curves in all the right places. And there was Danish, who looked so fair and neat, with beauty marks here and there that reminded Pan de Sal of sweet raisins. Muffin’s skin was brown, too, but unlike Pan de Sal’s, it glowed and made Muffin look so attractive. Many people in school liked Muffin because she was so sweet.

Some people thought Doughnut had a rather odd shape. But it didn’t matter because he always impressed people with his rich wardrobe. Sometimes he came to school all in white, much like the frosting on a cake. At other times Doughnut wore chocolate-colored outfits or clothes the shade of strawberry milkshake.

Honey Bread was popular, too. Of course she got her name from her glossy complexion—which was exactly the same shade as honey. She often got into sticky situations, but since she was so cute, everybody forgave her. Her brother, Super Bread, was probably the fairest boy in class, so never mind that he was much too square. Besides, he always had the right answers to everything. No wonder they called him Super. Their cousin, Bread Stick, was very tall and slim. She came all the way from Italy, and she was sure that she was going to be a famous fashion model some day (Olizon-Chikiamco 1995, pp. 65-66).
While the author resolves this dilemma through a didactic outcome that imparts a sense of pride towards values that are made to appear inherent to the Filipino, the reality is far from echoing this resolution and continues to harbor deeply entrenched psychological and cultural forms of exclusion. Inhibited by physical and psychical hunger, the Filipino—or, perhaps more appropriately, the Filipina—takes on a body riddled with indeterminacy. It is engineered to satisfy the collective induction of a social order and yet the same order relegates the body after using it as a disruptive force best suppressed from the installation of its systems.

Filipino literature represents the suppression of the body in various ways. Iloko fictionist and poet Benjamin M. Pascual makes an indirect connection between old feudal relations and how that makes a formidable foundation for the induction of consumerism:

**Padigo (Share the Food)**

The young Insiong squats and watches wide-eyed  
The father dressing their fattened capon.  
The child strokes his brown-furred cat by his side;  
Both swallow the wish that mealtime be soon.  
His mother is set with pot and stove.  
Readies papaya, salt and vermicelli…  
A fragrant steam soon wings its way to prove,  
Though not yet noon, that hunger cramps his belly.

Before they eat, the boy is told to bring  
A rattan lidless basket with a bowl  
Of chicken slice for their neighbor Old Ulling.  
Like a Chinese dealer, praising the fowl,  
She grins: “Tell your mother I like this food!”  
She gulps the hot soup: “Yes, son, this is good!”  
(Pascual 1990)

Mapping the irony of starvation through a boy tasked by his mother to deliver a bowl of chicken soup to a neighbor, the suppression of appetite becomes a defining attribute that marks the child’s social standing. His estrangement is
elaborated by a craving for the food he brought to Old Ulling despite his family producing it. The title amplifies the irony further by forcing the reader to explore who is being entreated to share food. On one hand, it is Insiong’s hunger and seeming inability to work that leads one to think that he should be the recipient of the sharing. The economic transaction enslaving his family demands his compliance in recognizing the authority of the patron with the monetary capital. Conversely, the failure to recognize the devalued labor of his family implies that it is he who has been sharing his food all along, a matter which surfaces as a form of tension in the poem that Insiong has yet to resolve. The child is not only restrained through his appetite in order to make the delivery on time, he is also made to participate in the reproduction of both product and ideology in a social system where his chances of partaking of its rewards are very minimal.

In the succeeding poem, Lina Sagara Reyes elucidates how the suppression of the body is not just a matter inflicted on the personal level but also a structural one:

**Central**

She thought I was telling a joke
When I blurted out that in Villalimpia,
Village of swamps and brackish air,
When we say *central* we do not mean
The adjective, not even a busy place.

*Central* in Villalimpia country
Is something that moves.
It has four wheels that roll slowly
Like the clock’s hour-hand.
Almost, really.
It is a yellow truck that whistles
Twice as it crosses Cogtong Bridge.
When it comes, every morning
The air in Villalimpia is fleetingly sweet.

When I told her it was different
In Villalimpia of long ago, that
We do not leave the house to buy bread,
That our *pan de sal* and *bagumbayan*
Come to us right at our yard,
That I grew up to believe that
“Bakery” is the twin word for Central,
The moving truck of fresh bread
With a breadwoman with gold front teeth,
She would not take me seriously.

I was not telling a joke, Jovita
I was simply retelling
A childhood.
(Reyes 1990a)

The seemingly impenetrable façade of the English word ‘central’ becomes
the site for contention between the very structures of social control and the
incapacity of the public to assert their experience as a means of making the system
work and speak for them. Waxing nostalgia towards an order where the supplier of
food—the roving bread truck called ‘Central’—moves around to reach out to as
many customers as possible in a remote village in the countryside, the poem hints at
the unyielding and inflexible character of legitimate centers. Discord is apparent
even amongst stakeholders themselves. Within Reyes’s dichotomy of centrality,
food again confirms the meaninglessness of progressive platitudes that have yet to
make a mark in the periphery with hardly any access to the most basic of resources.
Not only is the task of distributing food confirmed to be a less significant public
concern as it is entrusted to private enterprise like Central Bakery, it also exposes
discord between the state and the systems it wishes to propagate.

The indeterminacy of the meaning of ‘central’ and of language itself becomes
emblematic of the indeterminacy of the state’s involvement in the day-to-day
concerns of its constituents. Tupas (2003, p. 20) describes English in the Philippines
as anguishing in ‘imperial amnesia’ with its planning compromised by the state’s
indifference towards local history and tradition, and its employment as one that
aggravates differences between the elite and the masses’. The repurposing of the
word ‘central’ provides an opportunity to confront imperial amnesia and how it is
carried over in the modernizing efforts of the state that and its installation of a monolithic central government. In the end, the childhood memory that allows ample reflection on the meaning of the word ‘central’ is relegated into another cautionary tale through Jovita—the invisible character that the persona names and addresses—who is quick to pass on consternation against the word’s radical usage. The hegemonic meaning is eventually reinstated, and the problem of food distribution exposed by the momentary clash between business and all the things ‘central’ is expected to stand for solidifies as a form of ignorance best likened to childhood innocence. By doing so, the doubtful Jovita reasserts that there should be no confusion, that the order which the word central represents in proximity to the periphery is as it should be and must never be disrupted.

EMBODYING HUNGER

In varied ways, the national cuisine, just like the project of nationalism itself, is exemplary of the hegemonic detachment from the concerns of the anxious and hysteric bodies from where its practices have come from. The collective anxiety over food and hunger elicits attention towards an increasing tendency to conceive the Filipino body as a pathogen that contaminates the clarity of state-induced reform. Although attempts to overlook its presence become a pervasive strategy in reinstating aspirations of collective order patterned after western and colonial-oriented visions of progress, there must be clemency in the contention that the state and its favored institutions have become parasitical in utilizing the same bodies for the labor needed to realize its goals.

Often tackled as an economic issue, I look at hunger as a corporeal discourse propagating anxiety, insecurity and hysteria alongside statewide efforts to discipline the populace and make them compliant to hegemonic authority. In this regard, the attempt to articulate a national cuisine must not only be seen as a means to consolidate cultural practice, it is also a means to revitalize social status and
conspicuous consumption (Bourdieu 1984). While such means of social stratification have been argued to be helpful in creating aspirational symbols that aid in organizing civil societies in democratic cultures (Trentman 2008), their installation in societies like that of the Philippines have not only led to serious economic inequality, they also pose consequences that have only been studied recently. Inequality led to widespread physical deprivation, and concerns that surfaced in the past decade quantify severe health risks associated with declining food security (Lopez et al. 2008) and ecological threats caused by accelerated land degradation and use of erosive grain crops grown at an accelerated pace (Coxhead 2000).

Meanwhile, literary production magnifies important affective considerations underscoring how the Filipino or Filipina body has been refashioned. Poverty and hunger in these texts are not necessarily depicted as problems in need of solutions but are instead presented as a regulatory ideal promoting state supremacy. The initiation of state power comes at the cost of relegating poorer citizens underneath systems represented by culinary obsessions of the more affluent Filipinos. The effeminization of Filipino/Filipina labor speaks of different forms of disabling—from limiting food options and caloric intake of those who are marginalized to pushing their identities further into the periphery to the point of self-erasure and self-loathing. The central characters in many of the literary works explored magnify such anxieties. They are subjects haunted by internalizing the discomfort over things that are beyond their control—that are experienced externally. And yet, the same externalities find ways of inflicting and manifesting torment back into their bodies and memories, breeding physical and psychic trauma that could not be reconciled with the manner in which collective goals are imagined and social systems are propagated.
CONCLUSION: OF IMELDIFIC FEASTS
AND AN INFINITY OF LAST SUPPERS

*Imeldific*. A solecism in itself, an *adj.* used more commonly as a *n.* A criminally extravagant creature. Paronymous with that figure of parody itself: often a poor imitation of a more outrageous, better-shod beast. A follower of the ways of the Imeldific. *adj.* Ridiculous, feeble-headed, megalomaniac. Always posturing for posterity. Also, amoral world-class shopper. Fetishist. –Gina Apostol, ‘Imeldific’

Equally revered and reviled as first lady, Imelda Marcos’s contributions to her husband Ferdinand’s twenty year reign was overwhelmingly contentious. Primitivo Mijares, the President’s former right-hand man who disappeared after testifying in U.S. Congress against Marcos’s abuse of power, described the president’s reign as a ‘conjugal dictatorship’ (Mijares 1976), citing Imelda’s contributions to both the public projects and fraudulent activities of her husband. Like her husband, dubbed by Hamilton-Paterson as ‘America’s Boy’ for courting favor from the U.S. White House and the C.I.A. (1998), Imelda was also a politician who projected the opposing ends of American femininity as she took on the role of the civic-minded party hostess to supplement her husband’s rhetoric of development. Tolentino describes her to have become iconic of ‘feminine excessive power’ (2003, p. 123), throwing banquets and parties that were scandalously grandiose and catered to the whim and satisfaction of celebrities, socialites and prominent figures both locally and internationally. As her husband mounted a
compelling performance that oversold the country’s economic, political and military machinery, Imelda herself was at the forefront of orchestrating a cultural and civic revival inclined towards projecting a cosmopolitan Philippines to an international audience. Her beautification of Manila alone is unrivaled by any Filipino politician or colonial administration that took command of the Philippines, packing the city with structures and activities to show the world that Manila—under the Marcoses—has finally arrived.

That message reverberates throughout the reclaimed area fronting Manila Bay, a wide expanse of recreational and cultural facilities monumentalizing both the First Lady’s achievements and atrocities (Drakakis-Smith 1987, pp. 47-49). Not only was Imelda chastised for displacing tens of thousands of squatters, stories of consternation over her determination to succeed at whatever cost go hand-in-hand with whatever good intentions accompany her projects. After winning the bid to host the Miss Universe Pageant in 1974, she ordered the construction of the Folk Arts Theater specifically for the event. The gigantic structure was built in a record 77 days, unprecedented for an edifice of that magnitude in the Philippines. More controversial was the Manila Film Center that was supposed to be the stage for the Manila International Film Festival scheduled on January 1982. The film festival was Imelda’s bid to turn Manila into ‘the Cannes of the Pacific’, and lure Hollywood and the rest of the world to make films in the Philippines. The structure she envisioned was to be a local version of the Parthenon, propped up and surrounded by massive columns that resembled the trunks of a coconut (she had to be persuaded to have them simplified). Before Imelda’s Parthenon could be completed however, a portion of the building collapsed in November of the previous year, burying an estimated 168 night-shift workers. While the First Lady went on-site to console grieving loved ones, the construction forged ahead without even pausing to exhume the casualties buried under the rubble just so Imelda’s festival could proceed as scheduled.
Imelda’s unabashed proclivity for the ‘imeldific’ and the extravagant encapsulated how old forms of control congealed into new aspirations symbolized by the amassing of contemporary forms of wealth and power. The balance between rich and poor has never been more fragile and more pronounced. As demonstrations and protests intensified throughout the country to condemn the Marcoses’ political clout, the power of the upper class was being transformed quietly in the background, stimulating demand for and reliance on commodities to actualize power. If in the past, land was the prime symbol of distinction, the three decades encasing the Marcos dictatorship saw the deepening of a divided democracy where the rich asserted a ‘formal democracy of a truncated type and the poor and marginalized [fought] for a more substantive democracy’ (Quimpo 2008, p. 10). Material distinctions signified the division between the elites from the masses. Despite their standardized production and distribution, commodities strangely gained an aura of uniqueness about them, and everyone with power or who wanted a share of it surrounded themselves with different products to assert both their difference and their belonging. In ‘The Happy Hoi Polloi’, writer Kerima Polotan Tuvera captures the spirit of accumulation in her partly enthused and partly sardonic essay about middle class travails in the 70s:

In Makati, ambulant stores park in front of factories and office buildings. They sell cigarettes and hard candy, soft drinks and buns, and then magically waft, at noon, the smell of cooking. You can have mami, sotanghon, pancit, for a few centavos, with a cup of rice and the inevitable patis or toyo. Everything’s informal; come in your undershirt, which the men do, streaked with oil and grease, their faces smudged from working beneath car engines. They talk calmly of an impending strike.

Of course, around the supermart area of Makati, you get the antiseptic restaurants, gleaming pressure cookers and steaming boilers—glamorized hash houses, really—rich upholstery, neon lights, a slice of hauteur and a peck of disdain, served along with your iced tea and tuna sandwich. One has often wondered how people can stand being herded down the aisle and along the railing, clutching tray and balancing silver, paying for lukewarm soup and wilted salad,
and that ultimate in the American way of life, a small glass of tomato juice.

The sale is regular staple for the city’s hoi polloi. The Maranaw shopping center in Makati is clearly for the haves; so are the Aguinaldo’s overadvertised bargains where blouses are marked down from P95 to a “cheap” P65; Rustan’s is where you don’t go if you don’t mind your own money. Good Earth has acquired class ambitions, with a new escalator; at Scoty’s and Berg’s on the Escolta, the mannequins one remembers from two decades ago carry the same dull look, and how long will Assanda’s ([of] Manila) display those impractical lace gloves? Carriedo in Quiapo is a junge of sidewalk vendors selling hosiery, handkerchiefs and herbs. The shoe stores blare out their bargains in rubbers, flats, heels, casuals, sneakers, boots, and you escape from the din into a refreshment parlor only to run into a waitress who tries to sell you next draw’s winning ticket (Tuvera 1975, p. 338).

Whether it is in the more upscale financial district of Makati, or the more hectic and densely populated streets of Quiapo were profits are made through big-volume sales with small profit increments, the shared penchant for commodities by different social classes is the long-term effect of the state’s nationwide implementation of neoliberal democratic governance. Spurred by their connections to a Reagan-led US administration and pressure from the World Bank, the Marcoses’ two-decade reign saw the beginnings of the country’s alignment to a burgeoning global economy and that transferred political and economic initiatives to private enterprise. Despite the ouster of Marcos in 1986, privatization sustained public services. Corazon Aquino, Marcos’s successor and most adverse rival, sequestered the assets of the former president’s cronies. Because the maintenance of these operations were at a loss to the government and contributed to the depletion of the country’s reserves, the government resold many of these assets eventually. Since then, services such as power, water, transport and health have been privatized (Thompson 1995, p. 174).

The propagation of neoliberal economic policy in the Philippines also speaks of the enduring power of landlordism and its influence in denying the country a clear program for land reform (Reid 2000, pp. 181-183). The allocation of a high
premium on land became an impediment to the shift to capital accumulation as it left many of the landless burdened not only by rent but also uncontrollable price distortions on major commodities. This added another layer of control to power structures that have been in place in the country for a long time. As a result, many post-Marcos administrations struggled with industrialization efforts while harboring the illusion of the country’s alleged expertise in the field of agriculture, enhancing the authority of the landowner even further.

Food, in many ways, remained indicative of the privileging of a select few who are successful either in navigating the terrains of old forms of land-based control or in supporting the institutionalization of new systems promising market efficiency and fair competition. Food participated in polarizing the social divide further. On one end, it created a population of peasants who, despite being immersed in agricultural production for many centuries now, are not totally self-sufficient and are trapped within systems that perpetuate the transformation of their labor into wages and commodities that do not really amount to much alimentary weight. The Spanish period saw the beginnings of manipulating prices and labor to the detriment of the poor. At its very core, traditional Spanish-derived structures constantly overvalued land while significantly devaluing food prices especially that of rice to extract more from the population. The cultural efficacy of religious indoctrination became impressive in conditioning this kind of subjugation as it not only gave the suffering of peasants some form of dignity, it even glorified it. Peasant life—including their food and the manner in which they procured it—became tainted with so much consternation and distress that rural life became stigmatized. The land, peasant work and other related symbols of rural life became so wretched that it was impossible to see any form of cultural value to the kind of food practices that proliferated in the country’s different regions throughout Spain’s reign. This effectively reconfigured and multiplied notions of class. The dialectic of empire and colony reproduces itself throughout the country’s numerous structures many of which hold sway over the political and institutional aspects of public life. Just as
Spain provincialized the Philippines, so did Manila provincialize the rest of the archipelago. People’s position in imagined and oftentimes erratic hierarchies reflect the process of uneven development: Spanish-born elites were given more privilege than Spaniards born in the Philippines, and the rest of the structure was organized according to their proximity to Spain and the imagined centers of social and political life.

The changes initiated during the American period were equally, if not more, damning. At the core of American colonial policy is a stringent ideal of developmentalism armed with a science that made the United States the unspoken standard the Philippines needed to emulate in order to gain independence. Such a stance only made rural life doubly alienated. The insistence on American science pathologized the countryside further, enforcing the adoption of a set of practices grounded in an altogether different culture and ecology. Domestication was a predominant motif of U.S. occupation, and the ideology spread far and wide through education and mass media that reiterated the value of the modern woman’s role in managing the family as a critical component in pushing Philippine society forward. If the domestic confines of the urban household pushed the nation forward, the rural household and its ‘non-modern’ practices held it back. That aversion reflects in the promulgation of American-style domesticity that made processed and vacuum-sealed food commodities—many of which started as U.S. surpluses—more desirable than fresh produce. With American domesticity in place, the Philippines seemed ready for frozen meals and microwave dinners.

Only the microwave dinners did not necessarily materialize as planned. Industrial food practice, coupled with an uncontrollable growth in population, scaled down the efficiency of American domesticity to canned meat and fish, softdrinks, and instant noodles. Foodies, celebrity chefs and celebrities posing as chefs blindly spread mantras of health, economy and good taste through different media forms, brandishing collective identity through food choices detached from the reality of the majority forced to make do with whatever can be bought at the
cheapest price or salvaged out of the discards of industry. Even students and faculty members of the state-funded University of the Philippines turn to fishball stands scattered throughout the campus that serve everything from different protein scraps (fishballs, squidballs, meatballs) to chicken innards (Avanza et al. 2000). Rice continues to be a perennial problem and the country never really produced enough to make it affordable, much less lend some accuracy to the cultural claim of the Philippines as a rice-eating country or towards state ambitions of making the country self-sufficient. In 2000, the country’s National Food Authority (NFA) distributed a little over 600 thousand metric tons of imported rice. That figure more than tripled by 2010 when more than 2.1 million tons of imported rice was dispensed (NFA 2010). The inefficiency of rice production compounded by the declining availability of imports from neighboring countries, natural calamities such as extreme flooding and droughts, increasing urbanization, the utilization of traditional rice lands for bio-fuels and shifting crop patterns made rice increasingly unobtainable. Inasmuch as the entire country likes to eat rice, it simply can’t afford it.

Rice, often attributed to be the centerpiece of the Filipino feast, is but one of the many contradictions that muddle the clarity of the Philippine’s national cuisine. Inasmuch as the idea of a collective identity emanates from a Philippine cuisine revolving around rice, its fragile entanglement with the banality of food production swayed by issues of political power and social inequality must be analyzed as part of one singular discourse comprising the Philippines’ culinary identity. The cacophony of voices struggling to define and/or disseminate the idea of Philippine cuisine does not really define cuisine per se, they only reinvigorate their claims to their social standing. In an age of accessible online publishing, digital technology and an over-abundance of information and knowledge, collective discourse on Philippine cuisine remains parochial at best. It continues to be deified as a set of public, performative and symbolic constructs detached from any form of reflexivity and agency over the unsightly cultural, social and economic implications of daily life. The discursive nature of print that simplified the experience of food carries over even in electronic
media. While television, blogs and new social media pose as tools democratizing consumption by offering space for expanding tastes and experiences, they are still without reference to the reality surrounding the contexts where they operate, thus offering younger audiences with an even more myopic vision of food. Nora Daza and Rosario Fabian were the harbingers of new corporatized capitalist food consumption appealing to specific forms of social life. They also represent the corporate manipulation of taste, adding more layers to the complex negotiations of power. Philippine cuisine, like the long list of ingredients it commodified, turned into a commodity itself, concealing the numerous tensions of the ordinary and the commonplace into a sustained but empty celebration of capital flows and exchanges.

Capitalizing on this celebratory image, the state time and again embarked on a ‘gastrodiplomatic’ project to instill a sense of national pride locally while alleviating the country’s dire image overseas. Self-proclaimed gastronomist Paul Rockower defines gastrodiplomacy as the use of ‘culinary delights to appeal to global appetites, and thus [help] raise a nation’s brand awareness and reputation’ (Rockower 2011). Since launching the ‘Global Thai’ program in 2002, Thailand has reportedly increased its number of restaurants from five thousand to more than eight thousand globally, and since then used food to solidify the presence of a country’s brand and presence to an international community (Ambrocio 2006). Many nations followed suit, and while food undoubtedly made strides in making representations of local cultures to a foreign audience, it also makes linkages that oversimplify cultural understanding. In the Philippines’ case, food provided an amiable source for branding the country and is utilized considerably not just for creating a positive image but also in revitalizing its waning tourist industry. The country’s Department of Tourism, assimilated the image of a fiesta, and used food to entice tourists to partake of a joyous celebration of conviviality where everyone is welcome and all forms of stratification are forgotten, at least temporarily. It is marked by an assortment of dishes utilizing the best ingredients available, and where excess becomes the norm. However, the branding of the nation through food also
calls attention towards the validity of the representations utilized especially in an undertaking that claims to represent the entire nation that is too complex to explore here but nonetheless connected to the class-related expressions of food nationalism discussed in this thesis. Who benefits from such an undertaking of projecting an image of a never-ending feast and celebration? And at what cost to the individuals it marginalized? It is strange, how the illusion of plenty could be sustained in a context where food is found wanting.

While many diverted attention to the multicultural attribute of Philippine cuisine influenced by foreign interactions, hardly anything has been said about the trajectory of control and influence that has been just as, if not more, substantial. In the minds of those who orchestrate the writing of Philippine food, the consolidation of different cultures into one political entity is without strain or tension. In the struggle to become a nation-state, a military that may or may not have a complete monopoly on violence but nonetheless spends a lot of energy trying to maintain an image of a coherent and sovereign state marks the Philippines’ emergence as a nation-state. Civil society, while democratic in some ways, followed this example and is caught in a struggle for control. Behind the celebrations and town fiestas, the superfluous displays of feasting in restaurants, and the blaring insistence on a collective identity, the culture of Philippine food remains to be a struggle for control where the elite classes compete for resources leaving the rest of the country poor and hungry. The spheres of influence contributing to the divisiveness of the national cuisine remain unchecked and foodwriters, chefs and foodies in different media continue to perform a specific kind of nationalism, one that suits the need of those running the state and are protective of their power. For instance, in an attempt to legitimize discourse over the subject matter of food, the owner of a Filipino food blog writes:

Born in Cebu, I grew up in Metro Manila and headed way east to university in Boston and graduate school in New York. For over a dozen years I worked as a corporate banker then as a management
consultant flitting from North America to Asia to Australia and occasionally even Europe and the Middle East. Now semi-retired and based back in Manila, I am most annoyed by people who lack logic and reason… but second on my list of irritants is the need to go to a dozen or so stores, markets, groceries, etc. all over Manila just to pull off a reasonably interesting dinner (Marketman 2004).

The idea that there is no ‘reasonably interesting dinner’ in the mundane and seemingly impoverished confines of what is Manila resonates with how food revives old and textured forms of control and derision discussed throughout this thesis. What can’t be found in the magnanimous stores and groceries of Manila that are already brimming with products? Why can’t an interesting dinner be made given what is available? What does being educated in American universities and working overseas have to do with cultivating taste?

Philippine food provides one of the most complex avenues to think about Philippine culture, and it has been the intention of this thesis to offer an alternative way of looking at the complexities of food without being swayed by the typical discussions that are content to see it as a seamless process. Challenging the illusion of an abundant food supply and of an inventive and imaginative culture, however, remains an incomplete project without subverting the existing structure of relations that places the peripheries at the center, and the center at the margins. James Scott’s *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (1990) provides an interesting template for rethinking the relationship between empire and colony. Examining different modes of domination, Scott argues that processes of subjugation allow space for the marginalized to probe colonial policy and challenge its dominance outside the arena of what he refers to as ‘public transcripts’, or the formal spheres structuring power relations. Instead, Scott examines the pervasiveness of ‘hidden transcripts’, informal structures that lie underneath public realms and whose varied contributions highlight the lower classes’ ability to speak about their condition, circumvent colonial authority, and assume agency in determining collective affairs. I abandoned that project temporarily in this thesis with the sole intention of focusing
on the center first. By establishing a character for the center, I hope to pave the way for other critical thinkers of Philippine food to examine specific local and cultural concerns against the backdrop of the national project.

Food is a material necessity, it is shared and therefore harbors social connections, and as voiced out in this thesis, it is also a divisive process that reconfigures nature and society in numerous ways. Such forms of power, however, are not isolated and can be seen to be collectively ingrained in varied ways. Rice tells one long and winding story filled with numerous conjectures and guesswork that intimate the tale of collective slavery and deception. There are other experiences and other food items with social and historic lives that are as exciting as they are contentious. The mundane experiences to which food and eating are experienced can offer insight to many other subjects in a wide variety of disciplines, and challenge the master narratives that frame realities and ways of thinking that we accept as normal or natural. The struggle to eat, the decisions we make as to what we eat, the many contexts that serve as a backdrop for innumerable meals and feasts, as well as the simple and seemingly harmless act of sharing food all hint at the different struggles imbibed in trying to locate the self within a vast network of negotiations that are just as delicate as the confrontations and strife that mark the exterior processes that weigh down on the Filipino’s everyday life.

Pigafetta, for instance, once wrote that a staggered feast that culminated with a roast pig celebrated the coming of Magellan. It was a sign of appeasement, a way for the locals to instigate any form of conflict while carefully gauging if the visitors were hostile or not. The roast pig, as well as the other victuals served to welcome the would-be invader—as it is customary still in many Filipino fiestas where roast pigs are often the highlight—imparted the desire for camaraderie and belonging which ironically ended in conquest. Almost half a millennium later, the roast pig in the Filipino experience, becomes a duplicitous symbol that again facilitates division instead of solidarity. When the Philippine military under former Philippine president Joseph Estrada captured the Moro Islamic Liberation Front’s
(MILF) Camp Abubakar in Maguindanao in 2000, the president gifted the government soldiers with a feast consisting of a horde of roast pigs and beer that was consumed in the Muslim camp. The move, of course, incensed not only Muslims but even other Filipinos of different religions who understood the defamatory connotations of bringing pork and alcohol to Muslim confines and its implications in the already sensitive divide between Muslims and Catholics in the Philippines. A few months later, in a luncheon commemorating the surrender of more than 800 MILF soldiers, Estrada declared ‘I love Mindanao, I also love the Muslims’ (quoted in Gallardo 2001) while, again, serving roast pig.

Philippine cuisine, even long before its first published cookbook in 1918, always utilized the public enterprise to trample on private domains. The Spanish administration saw the modification of the Filipino populace into a regimented labor force, many of whom were prohibited from indulging in activities and preoccupations contradicting the edicts of a colony-wide program that favored the accumulation of cash crops over personal desires and ambitions. The American colonial government capitalized on that degenerative attitude towards the self, bombarding the country with doctrines, images and other sensory paraphernalia that made the Filipino/Filipina appear as the biggest impediments to the realization of progress and sovereignty. A cursory survey of Philippine literature confirms that suspicion, and presents a multitude of subjectivities all struggling to reclaim a sense of self that dissipated in an attempt to appease those in power. That attitude endured, and while there are hardly any colonial authorities to blame, those affiliated with the state and its hegemony continues the process of suppression in far more damaging ways to the poor and hungry.


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