A CRITICAL CULINARY GENEALOGY OF JAPANESE FOODWAYS

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Abstract. This article considers the relationship between food, power, and transnational racialization through an examination of Japanese foodways and food-related discourses. Drawing on scholarship in Asian American studies, critical food studies, and cultural studies, I argue that these foodways both reflect and contest ideological discourses of Japanese racial homogeneity, revealing Japanese culinary identity not as self-contained but at the interstices of global flows of colonial power relations. In doing so, I theorize an approach I call *critical culinary genealogy*, which reads together personal experience, local histories, and cultural discourses surrounding food to unsettle official or dominant narratives about race, nation, and identity.

I have a distinct memory of my grandfather's voice on the phone as I packed my belongings for an international flight to Japan.[1] He sounded both excited and concerned, reminding me to be safe, asking if I would have phone service, and telling me to double-check that I'd packed my passport. Eventually, though, he moved to more casual conversation: "So, what are you going to eat over there? Are you excited for the Japanese food? They have the real thing over there you know." I rattled off a list of dishes I was excited to eat, and, having traveled to Japan before, I reiterated how much better the "real thing" was "over there." We laughed together, my grandfather wished me a safe trip, and I promised to bring him back some tea and *senbei.* I remember feeling close both to my

grandfather and my Japanese background in that moment. Indeed, many of the ways that my American-born Japanese family has connected culturally to Japan has often been through food. Yet, ironically, our use of phrases like "over there" differentiated us from the very food we claimed as heritage.

My research and that of other scholars has taught me that, despite popular discourses to the contrary, diasporic Asian American foodways are not simply "whitewashed" or "less authentic" versions of those in Asian countries.[2] Rather, they develop and emerge from complex historical processes including migration, poverty, racism, colonialism, local traditions, and cross-cultural contact that transform diasporic foods and may change the compositions of the dishes but do not make them any less authentically Asian. Yet here I was, joking with my grandfather about how excited I was to eat the "real thing." Admittedly, I have grown weary of seeing more and more "Asian fusion" or "Asian-inspired" restaurants that serve overpriced dishes using vaguely "Asian" ingredients and catering to predominantly white clientele. Still, suggesting that "real" Japanese food resides solely within the Japanese nation-state implies diasporic Japanese food as its inauthentic counterpart, and remains attached to the idea that cultural authenticity begins and ends with national borders.

Asian American studies scholars emphasize foodways not only as sources of physiological nourishment, but also as pathways of meaning-making that contest and reflect larger power hierarchies. As Anita Mannur argues, foodways are critical sites of analysis for Asian American studies because "food, simply put, can tell us a lot about Asian American cultural, social and political economies."[3] Much important scholarship has focused on the question of authenticity in Asian American foodways and how public discourses often frame Asian Americans as less authentic or "watered down" versions of their Asian counterparts.[4] Nevertheless, diasporic Asian foodways are shaped not only by Asian cultural practices but also by local histories of immigration, racism, and displacement: for example, the creation of Cambodian American donut shops,[5] Chinese American dishes such as chop suey,[6] community gardening projects and farms by Burmese American refugees,[7] and Japanese American food practices influenced by World War II internment camp mess halls.[8] These scholars problematize the idea that "authentic" Asian cuisines refer to those created within the national borders of Asian countries, revealing authenticity as a social construction and tool of power. As Wenying Xu puts it, "as the most significant medium of the traffic between the inside and outside of our bodies, [food] organizes, signifies, and legitimates our sense of self in distinction from others who practice different foodways."[9] Drawing on this scholarship, I am similarly interested in how food becomes tethered to limited, nationalist boundaries. Yet I approach this topic from a related but slightly different angle: examining foodways in the "home-

land" of Japan, I consider how cultural and discursive practices frame Japanese foodways through racial homogeneity and culinary nationalism, even as those foods and their histories tell a different story that is diasporic, transnational, and multilayered. This article examines four cuisines, each in a different region—bluefin tuna at Tokyo's Tsukiji Market, *shōjin-ryōri* (Buddhist cuisine) in Kyoto, ramen in Yokohama, and *goya chanpurū* in Naha—to consider how each food is framed through nationalist discourses, while its development simultaneously exposes the porous and fabricated boundaries of national identity.

I have selected these specific cuisines because they are popularly associated with Japanese cuisine and/or their respective locale, and because all represent a different way Japanese foodways interact with transnational power dynamics. As the global epicenter of the bluefin tuna trade, and given the prominence of sushi and sashimi in (trans)national representations of Japanese cuisine, Tokyo's bluefin tuna exemplifies the interplay between culinary identity, nationalism, and global capitalism. Representative of popular imagery associating Kyoto with "Old Japan," *shōjin-ryōri* provides an ideal opportunity to consider the convergence between narratives of nostalgia and culinary nationalism. Yokohama's ramen is instructive not only because of ramen's popular transnational associations with Japanese cuisine but also because the noodle's origination in Chinese foodways provides a window into the way Japan differentiates its cuisine from China. Finally, coming from the site of Japan's continued colonial occupation and the largest concentration of US military bases in Japan, *goya chanpurū* in Naha, Okinawa illustrates Japanese foodways' entanglements with militarism and multilayered empire(s). My analysis is not intended as an exhaustive account of Japanese foodways, as there are many other rich culinary traditions across Japan. Instead, I consider these cuisines because each problematizes dominant narratives of culinary nationalism from different angles, providing insight into how foodways act as dynamic sites of meaning-making interlaced with transnational and local systems of colonial, gendered, and capitalist power.

Specifically, I argue that Japanese foodways both reflect and contest ideological discourses of race and nation, revealing Japanese culinary identity not as self-contained but at the interstices of global flows of power and layers of colonialism. I intervene in existing scholarship by offering what I call a *critical culinary genealogy*, which reads together personal experience, local histories, and cultural discourses surrounding food to unsettle official or dominant narratives about race, nation, and identity. In addition to critical examinations of food in Asian American studies, this approach is influenced by scholarship on autoethnography and genealogy. While I recognize that there is an established lineage of autoethnography emerging from anthropology, my approach is influenced more by critical antiracist scholarship that emphasizes personal experience as

a legitimate form of knowledge that can disrupt universalist power relations.[10] In doing so, I analyze each cuisine in relation to larger ideological, racial, and sociopolitical structures while recognizing my encounters with Japanese foodways are inevitably shaped by my background as an American-born Japanese person.

Regarding genealogy, I am interested in how reading foodways within and across layered histories of power might unsettle official or dominant narratives about Japanese identity. Michel Foucault writes that genealogies are a way of:

> playing local, discontinuous, disqualified, or nonlegitimized knowledge off against the unitary theoretical instance that claims to be able to filter them . . . genealogies are therefore not positivistic returns to a form of science that is more attentive or more accurate. . . . Compared to the attempt to inscribe knowledges in the power hierarchy typical of science, genealogy is, then, a sort of attempt to desubjugate historical knowledges, to set them free, or in other words to enable them to oppose and struggle against the coercion of a unitary, formal, and scientific theoretical discourse.[11]

Genealogy works not simply to incorporate minoritized or unofficial narratives into otherwise universal knowledges. Instead, it engages those narratives precisely as a means of unsettling official historical narratives and power hierarchies.[12] Dylan Rodríguez argues that genealogy "allows for rigorous analytical, narrative, and archival practices that are not restricted to traditional disciplinary knowledge forms and methodologies."[13] Bringing these insights to bear on Japanese foodways, my approach is intentionally designed to be capacious yet noncomprehensive, reading across and between multiple sources of food-related meaning-making, including museums, advertisements, governmental sources, my own personal experience, the dishes themselves, and the dishes' various local histories. Relatedly, Lisa Lowe draws on genealogy to "make legible the forcible encounters, removals, and entanglements" in the "uneven intimacies" between Western liberalism, anti-Black slavery, settler colonialism, and the East Indies and China trades during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[14] In her analysis of William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Lowe takes up objects discussed in the novel such as textiles or silk and follows them through the entangled histories of labor exploitation, racialization, and colonial extraction that produced them as a way to uncover and challenge implicit histories of empire.[15] Drawing on these approaches, my critical culinary genealogy of Japanese foodways examines each dish not as reducible to a single national origin, but as made possible through the intimacies of colonialism, capitalism, and transnational racialization.

In what follows, I first situate my analysis within the context of race and national culinary identity in Japan. I then turn to specific Japanese foodways in Tokyo, Kyoto, Yokohama, and Naha, homing in on a specific dish within each location. For each dish, I follow its uneven, messy, and variable relationships to power, which exist at the interplay between local histories, layers of colonialism, and transnational flows of racialization.

FOODWAYS, NATIONALISM, AND *NIHONJINRON*

A critical culinary genealogy of Japanese foodways requires attention to the nuances of racialization in Japan, which is influenced by (yet irreducible to) racialization in the West. Briefly, multiple communities are indigenous to various parts of the modern Japanese nation-state, including the Ainu, Ryukyuan, Izumo, Yamato, Kumaso, Emishi, Hayato, and many others. Yet through colonial expansion the Yamato would universalize their own lineage while suppressing other languages, cultures, and communities, eventually coming to stand in for the Japanese as a singular ethnic group and obscuring these histories.[16] As Yuko Kawai explains, modern notions of race in Japan have been described using the terms *jinshu*, *minzoku*, and *nihonjin.* Emerging in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a period that saw Japan's borders opened to the West and the height of the Japanese empire—these concepts enabled Japan to make sense of its national and racial identity. The word *jinshu* came into common use in the early nineteenth century as scientific racism, Darwinism, and eugenics in the West influenced Japanese intellectuals.[17] *Jinshu* largely emphasized the "common" fate or characteristics of Japanese people with other Asian people in reaction to the West.[18] In the 1890s, as the Japanese empire expanded its colonial pursuits, *minzoku* displaced *jinshu* as the more common term to describe Japanese people as an ethnic or racial group. Influenced by the German notion of *Volk*, *minzoku* characterized the Japanese as a unified and biologically tied entity.[19] The idea of *minzoku* was broken into two parts, the *naichi* (the "original" Japanese people and the inner territory of Imperial Japan) and the *gaichi* (Japan's colonies). This division enabled the Japanese empire to distinguish itself from other Asians while simultaneously justifying their colonization. After World War II, *minzoku*'s and *jinshu*'s associations with prewar nationalism caused them to fall out of favor as terms to describe the Japanese people. Since then, *nihonjin* has more commonly described Japanese people, while *minzoku* is used to refer to non-Japanese ethnic minorities such as Korean or Taiwanese people.[20] This history problematizes the idea of "Japanese" as a stable ethnic or racial category,

as well as how it has been shaped both by Japan's reaction to Western influence and by colonial expansion throughout the Pacific.

The more widespread usage of *nihonjin* in the postwar era reflects the corresponding popular literature and ideology known as *nihonjinron*. Sometimes also called *nihon bunkaron* and variously translated as "the essence of Japaneseness," "theories of Japaneseness," or "theories of Japanese culture," *nihonjinron* portrays the Japanese population as ethnically, culturally, and racially homogenous.[21] Though scholars trace prototypical *nihonjinron* literature to much earlier, this discourse similarly flourished during the Meiji era as Japan wrestled with defining itself in reaction to the West and its various colonial subjects. Broadly, *nihonjinron* encompasses a nonhomogeneous collection of ideas that assert the Japanese people have unique and inherent characteristics. These claims, in turn, present the Japanese population as homogenous, erasing and marginalizing ethnic minorities and migrant populations in Japan.[22] Claims to Japanese homogeneity and uniqueness often draw on racialized ideas about the Japanese people sharing a similar "blood," having similar facial or physiological features, having unique cognitive functions as the result of biology or linguistic structure, and/or the idea that Japan's geographic location and climate make the Japanese people unique.[23]

Nihonjinron became increasingly important for articulating Japanese identity in a postwar era, replacing terms like *minzoku* and *jinshu* while explaining Japan's wartime loss and eventual economic recovery. Proponents of *nihonjinron* often define Japaneseness in contrast to the West.[24] In fact, much of the *nihonjinron* literature draws from the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict, who was commissioned by the US Office of War Information at the end of the war to study Japan as the "most alien enemy the United States had ever fought," thus requiring cultural transparency to ensure it could be controlled.[25] Benedict argues that the Japanese differ from Western individualism through their hierarchical group structure, thus rationalizing Japan's wartime defeat through essential cultural and racial characteristics. Once translated into Japanese, Benedict's book became a best seller and a key text in *nihonjinron* literature, as authors like Nakane Chie and Doi Takeo drew on it in a positive way to explain Japan's later economic recovery as the result of an essential Japanese identity.[26] Though it may seem paradoxical that an American anthropologist authored a key text on *nihonjinron*, this exemplifies its emergence as a reactionary identity formation. Conceptions of Japanese racial homogeneity mimic whiteness insofar as they depoliticize race while promoting a notion of Japaneseness that erases its hierarchical relationship to power. However, they diverge from whiteness insofar as "the Japanese are not represented as 'just the human race' but as a cultural group that has 'unique' cultural products or as one that engages in 'unique' cultural behaviors

which were popularized through Nihonjinron."[27] Modern notions of Japanese racial, ethnic, and cultural identity are thus influenced by Western notions of race and difference, but they are not reducible to them.

Discourses of racial and national homogeneity reverberate in Japanese foodways. Much like *nihonjinron*, the concept of *washoku* ("Japanese food") is a relatively recent invention, emerging at the end of the nineteenth century as Japan sought to distinguish itself from the West. *Washoku* emerged concomitantly with its antonym, *yoshoku*, or "Western food," and was utilized to express Japanese foodways as reflecting the unique cultural character of the nation.[28] Yet Hiroko Takeda points to Japanese food as a hybrid cuisine, as many Japanese cuisines such as tempura and sukiyaki developed through Western influence.[29] Relatedly, Voltaire Cang contends that even with "the overall category *washoku*, there has never been any consensus in Japan on what exactly constitutes 'Japanese' food."[30] Despite this lack of consensus, public discourse over the last half century has exhibited considerable anxiety about the need for *washoku*'s preservation. Expanding Western influence on Japanese foodways in the postwar era sparked concern about the health risks of a Western diet, prompting the government to institute a national campaign to promote the "Japanese elements" in domestic food in the 2000s.[31] In 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) convened a committee to apply for *washoku* to be registered on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. MAFF's meeting minutes and government sources framed *washoku* as something to be authenticated and owned by the Japanese nation-state.[32] These sources further indicated that MAFF was responding in part to a domestic sense of culinary crisis. For example, traditional Japanese chefs expressed concern that fewer young chefs were entering the profession and instead were training in foreign cuisines.[33] Eventually, MAFF was successful in registering *washoku* with UNESCO, and remains active in efforts to promote *washoku* domestically and internationally through guidebooks, an online multilingual database of Japanese regional cuisines, certification programs that emphasize the "correct" way to prepare Japanese cuisine, and more.[34] Consequently, *washoku* exemplifies how foodways are shaped by larger narrative struggles over definition, authenticity, and culinary identity.

Nevertheless, *washoku* has not only evolved in reaction to the West but also to other Asian nations, especially China. Katarzyna Cwiertka argues that the Meiji era saw the development of a "Japanese-Western-Chinese tripod" that came to epitomize the structure of modern Japanese cuisine.[35] While *washoku* described Japanese cuisine and *yoshoku* symbolized Western cuisine, *shina-ryori*, or "Chinese cuisine," became a marker of Japan's imperial expansion across Asia.[36] Chinese food did not benefit from the positive associations attached to

Western cuisine - which was seen as a symbol of modernity and promoted by government officials – and early Chinese restaurants in Japan targeted Chinese migrants in places such as Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki.[37] The 1920s and 1930s saw a growing public interest in Chinese cuisine, which played an increasing role in cookbooks and military diets. Dishes such as ramen were popularized during this period, illustrating the throughlines between colonial violence and its continued influence in contemporary Japanese cuisine.[38] Moreover, as Timothy Tsu explains, popular discourses in Japan continued to frame Japanese foodways in contrast to China—for example, commenting on the fat, oil, or spice content of Chinese dishes in an attempt to contrast them with Japanese cuisine as supposedly more refined, healthy, and sophisticated.[39] Consequently, *washoku* is not simply a term to describe Japanese food but a dynamic and meaning-laden concept constructed through the interplay between food, narrative, and power. Foodways intermix with ideological discourses to support a nationalist Japanese culinary identity that defines itself against the West and other Asian populations. These dynamics contextualize the four specific cuisines considered in my analysis—bluefun tuna, ramen, *chanpurū*, and *shōjin-ryōri*—to which I turn toward next.

SASHIMI IN TOKYO'S KITCHEN: THE BLUEFIN TUNA TRADE AND TSUKIJI MARKET

Feeling jet-lagged, I arrived early in the morning to Tsukiji in Tokyo, but the market was anything but empty: shop owners opened their doors, cleaned their floors, and sold a variety of wares to shoppers passing by. The word "Tsukiji" translates to "reclaimed land" because the market's location was created through land reclamation in the Edo period. Sometimes called *Tokyo no daidokoro*, meaning "Tokyo's kitchen" or "Tokyo's pantry," Tsukiji contains both an inner and outer market; the inner market focuses on wholesale seafood and is geared mainly toward professionals, while the outer market sells a variety of fresh and preserved goods to tourists, visitors, and the general public. For the past several decades, Tsukiji was the site of the world's largest wholesale fish market. Famous for its tuna auctions, over sixty thousand traders would conduct business in Tsukiji in a single day.[40] Many would bid on bluefin tuna, some weighing up to twelve hundred pounds, with a record price of around three million dollars.[41] Dubbed "the fish market at the center of the world" and "mother of all fish markets," Tsukiji has long been the global epicenter of the bluefin tuna trade.[42] Over time various shops, restaurants, and other businesses cropped up around Tsukiji's inner market, eventually forming the outer market.

In 2018, the famous tuna auction was moved to Toyosu to accommodate infrastructure needs for the transnational hub.[43] The market at Toyosu now houses a new climate-controlled building twice the size of Tsukiji, where visitors are prohibited from entering the trading floor but can watch the auctions from a gallery upstairs.[44] The bluefin tuna trade in Tokyo thus provides occasion for critical reflection on culinary nationalism's entanglements with globalization: it is an important example of Japan's culinary presence transnationally and, as this section illustrates, the way global capitalism both fuels and disrupts the national boundaries of Japanese foodways.

Though the main tuna-trading location has moved to "New Tsukiji" in Toyosu, Tsukiji remains a mainstay of Tokyo's food cultures. As one shopkeeper shared with me, many of the shops in the outer market have been passed down through generations and, having established a culinary presence of their own, they remain at the fish auction's original location, attracting both local customers and domestic and international tourists. Much more than tuna is served at the market. Weaving through bustling roads, I encountered a shop that I learned was originally a *nori* (dried seaweed) shop, but eventually began to sell tea as well because both items benefit from lack of humidity, only for tea to become the shop's more popular product. I passed vendors selling household items, souvenirs, cooking knives, fresh fruit, skewers of fried fishcake, egg, or eel; shops with fresh and living seafood; and a bean shop. I stopped briefly to speak to the elderly shopkeeper selling various types of beans like *edamame* and *kuromame*, who explained to me that Japan has a "*mame no bunka*," or bean culture. Wandering through the market revealed a site entangled with multiple interconnected foodways. *No wonder they refer to this place as Tokyo's kitchen*, I thought to myself.

As the day wore on, the outer market increasingly filled with visitors. Japanese entangled with Spanish, English, and other languages, while cars delivering goods squeezed through crowds that parted like water around the moving vehicles. The inner market at Tsukiji, no longer home to the famous fish auction but still a vibrant seafood market, felt strikingly less populated and notably quieter compared to the outer market. By the time I reached the inner market it was past peak hours, but luckily I was still able to purchase some tuna sashimi for lunch. The inner market is geared more toward professionals: they do not allow any photographs, and people moved around me quietly shopping for fish, fruit, or a meal for their lunch break.

As an American-born Japanese, I grew up associating Japanese food primarily with sashimi and sushi, despite the numerous other Japanese dishes my father and grandparents cooked. Nearly 50,000 of the 118,000 Japanese restaurants abroad are sushi restaurants, which undoubtedly influenced my perception.

During the time in which *washoku* was certified by UNESCO, "internet surveys by Japanese food and drink companies revealed that the Japanese themselves considered sushi as the most representative *washoku* as well as the one Japanese food they were most proud of to the world."[45] Tuna is one of Japan's most iconic and widely consumed fish, and Tokyo is a key destination for not only tuna but sushi and sashimi more broadly. Yet tuna's prized associations in Japan are relatively new.[46] Even *toro* (fatty tuna), today one of the more expensive cuts of tuna, just a generation ago was sold for pennies and used as cat food.[47] Tuna's consumption in Japan did not become widespread until the beginning of the twentieth century, as motorized boats enabled tuna catchers to travel further out to sea. While World War II and the subsequent Allied occupation's fishing restrictions brought tuna consumption to a standstill, it skyrocketed after these restrictions were lifted in the 1950s.[48]

The bluefin tuna trade in Japan expanded further in the 1960s with more widespread commercial refrigeration technology. However, high demand and overfishing caused significant decline in the bluefin tuna population, and in the 1970s international environmental campaigns and coinciding two-hundred-mile fishing limits forced Japan to downsize much of their operations. Yet with postwar economic recovery, the demand for sushi, and tuna specifically, was only expanding, thus pushing Japan to increasingly rely on foreign suppliers.[49] In fact, the running joke among professionals at Tsukiji is that its biggest port is Narita—Tokyo's major international airport—because the majority of bluefin tuna sold at the market come from foreign waters. Nevertheless, Tsukiji remains important not only for chefs in Japan but also for high-end Japanese restaurants outside of the country. These restaurants often fly in ingredients from Tsukiji to mark their authenticity, as "the fact that the fish might have been caught in the Indian or Atlantic Ocean is less significant than its having touched base in Tokyo."[50] As a result, the story of bluefin tuna at Tsukiji is one of transnational power dynamics, including the convergence between Western colonial occupation, Japan's postwar economic recovery, and the demand for foreign suppliers of fish. Furthermore, that the majority of fish at Tsukiji come from foreign sources complicates narratives of culinary nationalism, revealing the associations between foodways and national identity to be constructed and dynamic rather than inherent.

While Tsukiji's three million dollar tuna sale in 2019 made international headlines, it is not a food reserved exclusively for the wealthy. Though the most prized of bluefin tuna auctioned at Tsukiji and served by high-end chefs are typically wild-caught, tuna and other fish are also consumed in *kaitenzushi* restaurants, which serve sushi using conveyer belts and can be found throughout Japan, including Tsukiji. This widespread consumption of sushi was made

possible not only by refrigeration and preservation techniques, but the use of tuna fattening farms, especially in the Mediterranean.[51] These farms produce lower quality but higher volumes of fish at one-sixth the price of wild-caught bluefin tuna. *Kaitenzushi* rose in popularity in the 1990s, coinciding with the use of fattening farms and Japan's economic recession.[52] As demand for sushi and other Japanese cuisines rose not only in Japan but throughout the globe, this helped to precipitate the aforementioned public anxiety about *washoku* and the "authenticity" of Japanese food. In fact, in 2006, MAFF attempted to implement a program colloquially dubbed the "sushi police," designed to authenticate Japanese restaurants abroad to ensure they implemented the "correct" sushi preparation and serving practices.[53] This program emerged amid a larger "Cool Japan" initiative that promoted Japanese culture internationally, from manga to food.[54] Concerns over the so-called "sushi police's" overtly nationalist associations ultimately led MAFF to revise the plan, instead focusing on educational and promotional policies.[55] MAFF remains active in its efforts to lay claim to the "authentic" and "correct" way of preparing and serving sushi, offering a number of certification programs and funding the World Sushi Cup held by the World Sushi Skills Institute in Tokyo. Consequently, it continues to "police" and claim sushi and sashimi as national property.[56] In this regard, tuna in Tokyo's kitchen illustrates the messy push and pull of global capitalism on culinary identity, including local economic conditions, the demand for commercial fattening farms and low-cost, high-volume fish, the disproportionate amounts of tuna consumed from foreign sources, and the struggle to narratively claim sushi as uniquely Japanese amid it all.

Yet perhaps nothing exemplifies these dynamics as much as the tuna themselves, which refuse to obey neat national boundaries. Bluefin tuna are a migratory species that regularly cross national boundaries and, as a result, create complex transnational regulatory issues. For instance, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna has strictly regulated fishing for tuna in the Atlantic and Mediterranean since the 1960s. Yet issues have emerged surrounding "undocumented fish," such that fish that aren't tagged with the appropriate regulatory papers can't be sold at Tsukiji.[57] As a result, the bluefin tuna at Tsukiji highlight the porous boundaries of culinary identity: despite nationalist discourses to the contrary, Japanese foodways are deeply shaped by transnational flows of power, capitalism, and globalization. These transnational flows of power precipitated the development of Tsukiji as a globally recognized symbol of Japanese culinary identity, while at the same time throwing that identity into crisis as evidenced by Japan's attempts to police culinary authenticity as sushi and sashimi's popularity spreads globally. The tuna themselves further highlight the constructed nature of national borders and with

it, a self-contained Japanese food identity. Consequently, the bluefin tuna at Tsukiji illustrate how a critical culinary genealogy problematizes narratives of a self-contained, national culinary identity while illustrating the linkages between foodways, nationalism, and globalization.

VEGETABLES IN THE OLD CAPITAL: *SHŌJIN-RYŌRI* IN KYOTO

Traveling to Kyoto I was most excited to experience Japan's famed *shōjin-ryōri*, or traditional Buddhist cuisine. It is unsurprising that Kyoto is famous for *shōjin-ryōri*: as the religious capital of the country and Japan's former capital, there are over sixteen hundred Buddhist temples in the prefecture. On one particularly hot and humid day, I headed to Isuzen, a restaurant located within Daitokuji-in, the head temple of the Daitokuji school of Zen Buddhism's Rinzai sect. Nestled in a large, walled-in temple complex with multiple subtemples, visitors enjoy the Buddhist cuisine in a small but spacious dining area covered in tatami mats. Specializing in *teppatsu shōjin-ryōri* (Buddhist cuisine cooked in iron bowls), the *shōjin-ryōri* was served over multiple courses in small, palm-sized bowls with various dishes, all vegan: spinach salad, flavored agar, fried tofu skin, soy meat, mushrooms, tempura plum, eggplant, custard-consistency soup with edamame and gingko seeds, sesame tofu, rice noodles inside hand rolls, and more. I was amazed by the range of possibilities and flavor in this vegan cuisine.

Influenced by Buddhism's emphasis on compassion for all sentient beings, *shōjin-ryōri* does not contain meat or animal products. While perhaps all food contains symbolic meaning, *shōjin-ryōri*'s felt particularly explicit: as they explained to me at the temple, *shōjin-ryōri* is premised on the idea that all parts of the plant, like the stem or the root, should be utilized because they all make up part of an interdependent whole. Additionally, *shōjin-ryōri* traditionally contains the five basic tastes – sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and umami – as well as the colors green, yellow, black, red, and white to mirror the elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space. Consequently, from the flavors to the presentation, *shōjin-ryōri* is explicitly meaning-laden with Japanese Buddhist symbolism.

Shōjin-ryōri exemplifies the culinary aspects of Kyoto's status as part of "Old Japan." As the welcome pamphlet at Isuzen explains, *shōjin-ryōri* represents "the heart of Zen and the tradition of Kyoto cuisine in modern times." Here, national and international discourses wrap Kyoto in the language of old-meets-new, tradition-with-a-modern-twist, a nostalgic narrative that helps drive both national and international tourism to the area in turn. If Japan is often rendered

in the Western imagination as being between two temporal extremes—a traditional ancient past and a neon-drenched techno-future—Kyoto is typically presented as the former, as a place to experience the traditions of Japan's past. These associations are not only the result of Western popular culture, but also the city's own international branding as part of the government's "Cool Japan" initiative.[58] This coincides with foreign media coverage of Kyoto, which often "begins by deploying the trope of the 'ancient imperial city' and then explaining its contemporaneity."[59] Because of its associations with Japan's ancient past, the nostalgic framing of Kyoto helps buttress images of Japan as an attractive tourist destination in the present through an old-meet-new narrative. As a result of these temporal associations, whereas the previous section focused on the relationship between globalization, capitalism, and culinary identity, this section argues that a critical culinary genealogy of *shōjin-ryōri* enables critical consideration of the interplay between nationalism, culinary identity, and nostalgia.

As the waitress pointed out various ingredients in the meticulously arranged dishes, she emphasized that all of the vegetables came from Kyoto. Indeed, Kyoto's branding is entangled with its cuisine: regional specialties like eggplant from the Kamigano neighborhood or Nishiyama's bamboo shoots emerge from generations of local tradition as well as efforts to brand and circulate these vegetables as expressions of Kyoto's traditional heritage.[60] In fact, recent years have seen the prominence of *kyo-yasai*, or "Kyoto vegetables," as prized, officially labeled ingredients in stores and in many high-end restaurants.[61] Though farmers have cultivated traditional vegetables for centuries, the official "Kyoto vegetables" branding is a more recent phenomenon. Fueled in part by Japan's postwar economic boom, the branding of "Kyoto vegetables" exemplifies larger culinary trends in Japan since the 1970s and 1980s that reflect a broader nostalgia for a more "authentic" rural lifestyle and locally specialized foodways.[62] This contrasts with the immediate postwar period, when many Japanese farmers turned to conventional vegetables for their high yields and disease-resistant qualities. The resulting decrease in traditional Japanese farms helped to fuel nostalgia in subsequent decades and momentum for protections for heirloom vegetables in Kyoto.[63] Advocacy groups such as the Society for the Fostering of Kyoto Cuisine argued for the importance of heirloom vegetables, claiming conventional vegetables were less nutritious and flavorful. Eventually, Kyoto vegetables were officially branded and recognized. Initial requirements for vegetables to be listed as heirloom "Kyoto vegetables" included the mandate they had been cultivated in Kyoto before 1868, the year the Meiji restoration began.[64]

This requirement that heirloom vegetables be traced to before the Meiji restoration is no accident as it coincides with Japan's increasingly reactive national identity in response to the West. Consequently, the requirements for

heirloom "Kyoto vegetables" are linked implicitly to a nostalgic desire for "ancient" or "premodern" Japan, at the same time that Kyoto cuisine and "Kyoto vegetables" labels are utilized to market dishes, vegetables, seed packets, cookbooks, and other products to national and international audiences.[65] The push to label heirloom vegetables as only those preceding the Meiji restoration reflects the massive increase of Western culinary influence in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though the label of "Kyoto vegetables" is promoted as a critical way to preserve traditional Kyoto farming, local farmers have clashed with this branding. Many farmers lament that while their goal was to bring traditional vegetables to locals at affordable prices, sellers are increasingly driven to sell vegetables with the Kyoto brand at high prices in locations such as Tokyo and Wakayama.[66] As a result, *shōjin-ryōri* is situated amid the branding of "Kyoto vegetables" and Kyoto's larger role in Japanese national culinary identity. This branding of "Kyoto vegetables" as exemplifying a nostalgic return to Japan's past illustrates the way food-related discourses deploy nostalgia to shore up national culinary identity that simultaneously feed the interests of global capital.

Responding to national anxieties about the potential negative impact of Western influence on Japanese diets, the government instituted the *shokuiku* (food education) campaign in the 2000s to promote the "Japanese element" of Japanese food. In certain school districts, this included the incorporation of education in *shōjin-ryōri.*[67] As Takeda Hiroko points out, this campaign and the discourses that coincided with it often linked the cultivation of "authentic" Japanese food practices not only with personal health and tradition, but also with the idea of producing healthy Japanese families and children as the future of the Japanese nation-state.[68] These ties illustrate the connections between *shōjin-ryōri* and Japanese national culinary identity. Nevertheless, the use of *shōjin-ryōri* to promote the "Japanese element" in national foodways also highlights the porous and constructed nature of national borders and culinary identity, as *shōjin-ryōri* is by nature a food practice made possible through the spread of Buddhism to Japan, a South Asian religion introduced to Japan by Chinese monks. In fact, Buddhism's foreign origins became a key driver for the eventual convergence of Buddhism and Japanese imperialism. During the Tokugawa period, Buddhism enjoyed widespread influence in Japan, yet under the Meiji restoration, Japanese officials promoted Shinto as the "Imperial way" of Japan and brought Buddhism under attack for its "foreign origins," thus fueling attempts to identify Buddhism with state power and imperial identity to legitimize the religion's place in Japan.[69] Buddhist intellectuals and military leaders drew on Zen ideas to argue in support of Japan's colonial violence.[70] Of course, this is not to suggest that Buddhism or *shōjin-ryōri* is inherently violent (or non-violent), but rather that it's status in Japanese food cultures became possible through larger colonial power relations.

Here, a critical culinary genealogy illustrates that foodways are never purely contained within national boundaries, but are intimately entangled with larger histories of power, colonialism, and (trans)national identity formation. Served within Buddhist temples, Kyoto's *shōjin-ryōri* points to the way national culinary identity and religious traditions are tied together through histories of power. Situating *shōjin-ryōri* contextually amid the branding of Kyoto vegetables suggests throughlines with Tokyo's tuna via the influence of global capitalism in the promotion of "authentic" Kyoto foodways. At the same time, *shōjin-ryōri* also exemplifies the ties between the (trans)national imagery of an ancient Japan and the production of a national culinary identity. In this regard, this section illustrates how a critical culinary genealogy might attend to the way discourses of nostalgia converge with culinary identity and national branding, in this case the depictions of Kyoto cuisine as a symbol of Japan's premodern past.

UMAMI EXCEPTIONALISM: THE YOKOHAMA RAMEN MUSEUM

The world's first ramen-themed museum is located in Yokohama, about a twenty-minute bullet-train ride from Tokyo. Arriving in the late afternoon, I purchased a ticket at the front kiosk and entered a large exhibit room with a series of panels describing ramen's historical development in Japan, a map in the shape of Japan featuring models of ramen, a remake of a 1910 ramen shop in Asakusa, and a gift shop in the corner. A few other visitors walked through the museum, leisurely moving past the panels, but it was not particularly busy. Beyond the exhibit, a hallway leads through an area where ramen cooking classes are held. Finally, visitors are brought to an even larger room containing a one-to-one ratio replica of a portion of 1958 downtown Tokyo, with a series of ramen shops lining the walls. Visitors lined up outside the shops, which were considerably more crowded than the museum exhibit, waiting to get a seat and enjoy a steaming-hot bowl of noodles. The replica is modeled after 1958 Tokyo, the year that instant ramen was invented and that marked a significant boom in ramen's popularity amid Japan's postwar rice shortage. Each shop featured ramen from a different area of Japan, and visitors moved between them to savor the different flavors and styles.

The initial exhibit, which frames the overarching experience, implicitly conveys nationalist ideas about ramen's culinary history. Visitors first encounter a series of panels that ask, in both English and Japanese: "Is Ramen a Japanese or Chinese dish?" Indeed, as this section suggests, the ramen museum illustrates

the way that Japanese culinary nationalism defines Japanese foodways not only in reaction to the West but also in contradistinction from other Asian nations such as China. For instance, the panel goes on to explain that, while Chinese noodle dishes are the "root" of ramen, after Japan's ports opened in 1859 ramen eventually emerged as a distinctly Japanese cuisine. Though the panel does not mention it, Japanese imperialism in the twentieth century was also an important driver of the incorporation of ramen from North China into Japanese cuisine,[71] a fact which highlights the interwoven threads between Japanese empire and its cuisine.

Chinese immigration in the 1870s and 1880s, as well as Japan's colonial expansion, contributed to the rise of Chinese noodle shops in Japan. These noodle shops were increasingly associated with being a good place to find a hearty, inexpensive meal, especially amid wartime and postwar food shortages.[72] While the dish was originally called *shina-soba*, the terms *chuka-soba* and eventually "ramen" caught on in the postwar era to avoid connotations with Japanese empire, with the latter term inspired by the name for the instant-noodle version of the dish.[73] As Cwiertka explains, in less than a century ramen transformed from a novelty to an everyday food, and "has also since been turned into a Japanese symbol."[74] As I argue, the museum frames ramen as a culinary symbol of Japan through colonial and racialized ideas about Japanese foodways as more modern, refined, and complex than those of China. As the panel describes it, "the father of ramen is Chinese noodles, and the mother is Japanese food culture." Here, nationalism and gendered logics help narrate ramen as a distinctly Japanese food, distinguishable from its Chinese influences. This intersection between gender and nationalism is not coincidental: through food's associations with familial duties, the exhibit inculcates culinary nationalism through the language of domesticity and homemaking. Another series of panels detailing ramen's historical development note evidence that Japanese feudal lords had tried "Chinese noodles" as early as the 1690s, they assert that these were not Japanese ramen. Yet the same section mentions that there is no "strict definition of ramen," thus illustrating the constructed and blurry line between Chinese noodles and Japanese ramen.

Nevertheless, the exhibit asserts that one can definitively ascertain the difference between Japanese ramen and Chinese noodles. The panel directly following the one asking whether ramen is Japanese or Chinese poses the question: "What is the difference between Ramen and Chinese noodle dishes?" It goes on to claim that the difference is the broth because ramen shops develop a special broth specifically for their noodles, whereas the broth for "Chinese noodle dishes uses the same soup stock that is used for many dishes." It then argues that ramen broth takes longer to create, and because the oil content and ingredients differ, this leads to a more "refined" and "complex" umami flavor.

Here, the vague reference to oil perhaps draws on larger narratives in Japanese popular culture that Chinese foodways generally contain more fat and oil and are thus inherently less healthy or sophisticated than Japanese cuisine.[75] Perhaps the most explicit claim of Japanese culinary superiority is the panel's assertion that Japanese ramen has a more "refined" umami flavor than Chinese noodles. The museum thus narrates Japanese uniqueness and superiority through thinly veiled nationalist claims about their food practices as more refined.

These discourses showcase an awkward fitting assertion that ramen reflects both the heterogeneity and homogeneity of Japan: that is, a unique, unifying ramen dish that can be distinguished from its Chinese influences, while simultaneously a dish that varies significantly regionally in terms of the style of noodles, type of broth, type of ingredients, temperature, and so forth, as evidenced by the map of regional ramen varieties. Another exhibit panel describes these regional differences and carefully breaks down different broth bases (e.g., salt, soy sauce, or miso). However, when describing ramen's overall differences from Chinese noodles, it reiterates vague descriptions of Japanese culture, "oil and ingredients," and a "refined" sense of umami. Thus, while the museum doesn't deny the Chinese origins of ramen, it goes through significant narrative effort to distinguish ramen as a uniquely Japanese dish that is "more refined" than its Chinese counterpart.

The museum's narrative of ramen as a dish born of Chinese noodles and Japanese food culture follows an implicitly linear structure. One panel describes Japanese ramen as "modernity added to Chinese noodles." As one moves clockwise throughout the museum, the panels narrate ramen's history in chronological order. Though the exhibit acknowledges the role of Chinese cuisine and its popularity in Japan before and during the early twentieth century, it largely confines the role of Chinese foodways to ramen's early history. Yet a key driver of ramen's popularity was postwar rice shortages. After the war, the Allied occupation prevented Japanese imports from many of its former colonies, while Japan saw an influx of returnees from abroad. This, combined with the impact of bad weather and war on domestic rice production, led to widespread malnutrition and starvation.[76] With government food-rationing efforts unable to adequately feed the population, black-market food vendors cropped up. Many people turned to *yatai*, or mobile food carts, for sustenance. Although in the initial postwar years the United States refused aid, it eventually pivoted to prioritize aid to rebuild Japan's postwar economy as part of a Cold War strategy of containment of the Soviet Union.[77] One of the major foods supplied by the United States was wheat flour, which helped facilitate a postwar boom in the consumption of ramen. During this period, ramen was mainly sold by Chinese and Korean communities as well as returnees from the colonies and decommissioned soldiers.

Yet the museum reiterates popular narratives that confine outside influence in ramen to its early history, erasing the importance of Chinese and Korean people in the popularization of ramen and "conveniently omitting the interconnected problems of decolonization and ethnic discrimination in postwar Japan."[78] Yet ramen's development and evolution is intimately tied to the overlapping forces of both Japanese and US empire. Nevertheless, the ramen museum both replicates this nationalism in its claims of Japanese ramen's uniqueness and, at the same time, disavows the influence of Japan's colonial history.

Moreover, the point about umami as a key distinguishing feature of Japanese ramen is echoed throughout the exhibit. For example, a series of panels discussing umami explain that it is one of the five basic tastes, along with sour, bitter, salty, and sweet. The phrase "Japanese discovered UMAMI" sits in bold letters on one panel, with text below explaining that Kikunae Ikeda of Tokyo Imperial University discovered (and named) the umami flavor in 1908. The panel briefly acknowledges that umami can be found in Chinese mushrooms. Indeed, "biochemically, there are three main substances that provide umami taste: monosodium glutamate (MSG), disodium 5′- guanylate (GMP), and disodium 5′- inosinate (IMP)," many of which are found in a variety of both Japanese and non-Japanese mushrooms, cheeses, and vegetables.[79] Nevertheless, according to the exhibit, one of the key distinguishing features of Japanese ramen is its unique umami flavor.

The exhibit's commentary on ramen and umami are significant given umami's historic associations with Japanese culinary nationalism. Discovered at the turn of the twentieth century, umami became one of the key ways that MAFF made its case for *washoku*'s UNESCO registration. This point is salient given the negative associations between MSG and Chinese food in the West,[80] and, by contrast, popular discourses that characterize Japanese food as refined and elevated. These associations are consistent with the exhibit's framing and are likely related to how Japan has branded its culinary identity. As Yoshimi Osawa highlights, cultural discourses about umami have long dovetailed with Japanese nationalism, including not only the popular notion that umami defines Japanese cuisine but the idea that Japanese people are biologically more capable of detecting the subtle nuances of umami than their non-Japanese counterparts.[81] These pseudoscientific ideas overlap with the *nihonjinron* literature—for example, those who argue that Japanese people are more sensitive to the changing seasons or other assertions of inherent national difference.[82] This notion that the Japanese are biologically predisposed to subtle flavors and nuances retrospectively interprets the happenstance discovery of umami by a Japanese professor as a reflection of ethnic or racial uniqueness, an insidious nationalist idea that is implicitly amplified by the ramen museum in Yokohama.

Although far from the only cuisine influenced by China and by Japanese empire, ramen provides a useful example of the role both the West and China play in formulating national discourses of Japanese culinary identity. As in the previous sections, here a critical culinary genealogy problematizes the idea that foodways have neatly bound national origin points and demonstrates how narrative struggles over food such as ramen can work to resecure a nationalistic culinary identity. At the same time, considering the ramen museum points specifically to the role that colonial discourses of "modernity" and "refinement" play in recasting culinary identity through nationalist, colonial temporalities.

"EVERYTHING BUT THE OINK": SPAM AND *GOYA CHANPURŪ* IN NAHA

Many people I spoke with on the Japanese mainland expressed curiosity when I told them I was traveling to Naha, Okinawa. Normally, they explained, Westerners came to Japan to visit Tokyo or Kyoto. Growing up in the United States, I became accustomed to popular media either portraying Japan through associations with a premodern past—exemplified by imagery of a traditional Kyoto, lined with shrines, temples, and elusive geisha—or a cyberpunk techno-future—exemplified by depictions of a neon-drenched, bustling Tokyo at night. So, perhaps it is to be expected that when Westerners travel to Japan they flock to these cities. Also at play here are the racialized narratives about Okinawa as both part of Japan and one of its colonial others. Japan formally annexed Okinawa in 1872 and the Yaeyama Islands in 1879. Following Japan's defeat in World War II, the US military occupied and controlled Okinawa for almost three decades, before the island was reverted to Japanese control. Okinawa has thus been under formal colonial control for over a century. US militarization remains ever present: Japan houses the largest US military command abroad, and the vast majority of US military bases in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa.[83]

Disputing claims that the US military is there to protect the island's inhabitants, decolonial resistance movements point to the military's role in environmental destruction, sexual violence, and colonial land control.[84] These colonial legacies in Naha are readily visible: one encounters bustling streets filled with Okinawan and mainland Japanese residents and tourists, migrant workers from Taiwan, American military personnel donning their uniforms, and Western tourists. I was immediately drawn to the perhaps familiar "Hawaiian" shirts being sold in stores and donned by both mainland Japanese and international tourists. As I would later learn, Okinawa is often colloquially referred to as the "Hawaii of

Japan." This phrasing reflects the duality of colonialism in the area insofar as it frames Okinawa as an otherized vacation destination for its Japanese settlers while positioning American imperial dominance in Hawaii as its referent point. This section's focus on Okinawa thus illustrates the way foodways become entangled with multiple overlapping processes of empire and militarization.

Naha's Makishi Market and Sakaemachi Market reflect these layers of transnational colonialism. Throughout the day these public markets in Naha sell produce, merchandise, souvenirs, cell phones, clothes, art, and a range of other goods, in addition to housing a number of restaurants and military-supply stores. The markets mirrored the power dynamics on the island: I met an elderly migrant Taiwanese couple who owned a clothing store, three young Okinawan men running a restaurant serving traditional Ryukyuan cuisine, and a middle-aged Japanese man working at an American-themed bar serving cold beer and large hamburgers. Come nightfall as these stores and restaurants close, a number of *izakayas* open, transforming the markets into vibrant nightlife centers.

One dish sold at the markets and throughout much of Okinawa is *goya chanpurū*. MAFF hosts a database of regional Japanese cuisines designed to "pass on Washoku culture, recognized as a UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage, to the next generation."[85] As the website explains, the regional diversity in cuisines is both "a challenge" in the preservation and promotion of *washoku* and "one of the characteristics of Washoku."[86] Searchable by region, season, and type of dish, the database lists *chanpurū* alongside other regional specialties such as *umeboshi* from Wakayama or *okonomiyaki* from Hiroshima. While the website connects each dish and the corresponding recipes to an "area story" about the prefecture they are from and its food culture, discussion of the power dynamics at play are notably absent. The area story for Okinawa, for example, notes the region's subtropical climate and contains a short discussion of some of the traditional foods associated with the Ryukyu Kingdom. However, beyond stating that Okinawa was an "independent country" as the Ryukyu Kingdom, the page does not discuss Japanese colonialism or its impact on indigenous foodways.[87]

This framing of *chanpurū*, and of *washoku* more broadly, demonstrates the ties between food-related discourses and nationalist identity formation. During the Meiji period, the government framed Ryukyuans as "backwards" and uncivilized and systematically mandated linguistic, cultural, and political assimilation to "modern Japanese" practices.[88] Though there is no singular "Okinawan" or "Ryukyuan" language or identity, colonial policies homogenized them while demanding their assimilation.[89] Colonial ideologies of race and ethnicity thus simultaneously attempt to assimilate Okinawans to a homogenous notion of Japaneseness while defining Japaneseness in negation of Okinawans as backwards and premodern.[90] MAFF's promotion of *chanpurū* and Japan's regional

foodways similarly invoke the "diversification of food" in places like Okinawa as a defining feature of *washoku* as a nationalist culinary identity, all the while erasing the colonial violence that produced the conditions of possibility for Okinawa to exist as a prefecture of Japan (and thus its foodways as part of *washoku*) in the first place. In doing so, MAFF's discourse on *chanpurū* and Okinawan foodways reflects larger tensions between Japan's colonial othering of Okinawans as well as its efforts to assimilate and homogenize them.

There are many variations of *chanpurū*, but the dish typically consists of a mixed bowl of stir-fried vegetables and tofu and/or meat served over rice. *Goya chanpurū* contains *goya*, a slightly bitter, oblong-shaped green gourd. *Goya* typically grows in tropical and subtropical locations and has been grown and eaten in Okinawa for centuries, thus highlighting the influence of indigenous foodways on Okinawan cuisine. Enjoying a bowl of *goya chanpurū* and curious about the dish, I asked a storeowner why the word *chanpurū* was written in katakana—the character system used for foreign words—on the menu. He explained to me that the name *chanpurū* does not originate from Japanese, but comes from an Okinawan phrase meaning "to mix." Thus, both the name and the ingredients in *goya chanpurū* reflect the overlapping histories of Japanese and US colonial occupation and indigenous foodways in Okinawa.

In addition to *goya*, a common ingredient in many *goya chanpurū* is SPAM. This processed canned pork and ham was first introduced to Okinawa during US occupation at the end of World War II, after the battle of Okinawa in which a quarter of the Okinawan population lost their lives. Indeed, SPAM is popular in many Asian and Pacific Islander cuisines, stemming from US military presence in places such as Hawaii, Guam, Okinawa, the Philippines, and Korea.[91] Preserved meats like SPAM have long been tied to Western capitalism and militarization. As European powers took long sea voyages to conquer foreign territories, this produced the need for food preservation techniques that could prevent scurvy.[92] In the 1790s and 1800s, the French revolutionized food sterilization practices through thermal sterilization and mass meat canning, practices similar to those utilized by SPAM plants today. Such food preservation was essential to European military endeavors—as Napoleon Bonaparte would put it, "an army marches on its stomach."[93] Launched by Hormel in 1937, SPAM became an important staple not only in US military personnel diets but also in those of its allies and occupants during the war. Today, SPAM appears in a number of Asian and Pacific Islander cuisines, including *musubi* in Hawaii, *budaejjigae* ("military base stew") in Korea, and *chanpurū* in Okinawa.[94] I've always had a love for SPAM, and my father told me his family often made "SPAM sushi" growing up. Indeed, the use of preserved meats in US internment camps led to Japanese American comfort foods like "SPAM sushi" and "weenie royale" (cut up hot dogs and eggs). In this

regard, SPAM's militarized foodways highlight diasporic intimacies between Asian and Pacific Islander communities abroad and those in the United States, whose experiences are irreducible but remain connected through transnational racialization and militarization.

Though SPAM is sold throughout the Japanese mainland, it is significantly more popular in Okinawa. The expression "*nakigoe igai wa subete tabetsukusu*" (the idea that Okinawan people eat "everything but the oink" or "every part of the pig except its sound") illustrates the popularity of pork dishes in Okinawa. Some claim that Okinawans took to SPAM more easily than those in the mainland because of the presence of pork in indigenous Ryukyuan cuisines.[95] Moreover, SPAM's uptake is entangled with gendered colonial logics. As Mire Koikari writes, "In the course of nineteenth- and twentieth-century imperial expansion, domesticity functioned as an 'engine of empire,' where the taming of the wild and unknown entailed establishing orderly homes in a frontier, inculcating proper domestic habits among the natives, and disseminating civilizing influences in gendered terms."[96] SPAM functioned as an extension of this imperial domesticity through its militarized presence and homey domestic branding from Hormel, thus highlighting the entanglements of gender and empire. Nevertheless, Koikari argues that SPAM hasn't purely retained its foreign identity but has been indigenized and made a core part of Okinawan foodways.[97]

Consequently, the presence of SPAM in *goya chanpurū* demonstrates the entangled histories of colonial and indigenous foodways and mimicks the larger interplay between Japanese and US colonialism and indigenous resurgence. For example, Megumi Chibana examines Okinawan farming practices that emphasize sustainable agriculture despite the drive for cash crops and military-driven land displacement. Chibana argues that although the farmers may not articulate rights-based demands or explicitly frame these practices as "resistance," they nevertheless constitute everyday acts of indigenous resurgence that push back against colonial empire and emphasize food sovereignty.[98] As a result, a critical culinary genealogy points to the way foodways act not only as physical nourishment but also as material and narrative mediums of power. Popular discourses about Japanese foodways and *washoku* frame *goya chanpurū* in nationalist and depoliticized terms, but the food itself acts as a narrative medium that reflects the entangled histories of indigenous foodways and colonial empire. Moreover, *goya chanpurū* lends a particular insight to the relationship between transnational US militarization, Japanese nationalism, and ongoing colonial empire, illustrating how foodways provide a means of examining and critiquing colonial meaning-making.

CONCLUSION

My conversation with my grandfather about Japanese foodways reflected a deeper yearning for cultural and racial belonging. My response, for many years, has been to cling to a sense of identity and cultural authenticity tied implicitly to what I thought the "real thing" was "over there" in Japan, even though many Japanese national traditions and social norms remain as foreign to me as any other country. Yet this assumption denies the reality that diasporic Asian American experiences *are* "authentically" Asian experiences, shaped by the power dynamics of race, empire, and migration. Perhaps it is reasonable to crave a sense of homeland when one is made to be a foreigner in their place of birth. But what I eventually came to learn, through this trip and others, is the "authenticity" I was seeking doesn't exist in Japan any more than it does in the United States. Indeed, relying on these assumptions of an essence or authentic core to what it means to be Japanese too often converges with a dangerous nationalism, one built on the erasure of Asian and Asian American foodways as born of interrelated and divergent flows of power, migration, violence, and survival.

As one of the most significant mediums to enter and exit the human body, food goes beyond nourishment to interrelate with larger systems of power, identity, and national belonging. In this essay, I've attempted to explore cuisines across Kyoto, Naha, Tokyo, and Yokohama with particular attention to how they are shaped by interrelated flows of capitalist, colonial, and gendered power dynamics. Kyoto's *shōjin-ryōri*, Tokyo's bluefin tuna, Yokohama's ramen, and Naha's *goya chanpurū* are all associated with their various locations and regional specialties, but are also swept up into larger nationalist discourses about Japanese cuisine, such as MAFF's promotion of *washoku.* Though my analysis here is by no means comprehensive, my hope is that following these cuisines through their messy entanglements with power pushes back against nationalist ideas of Japaneseness reflected in dominant framing of *washoku.* I contend that a critical culinary genealogy of Japanese foodways provides insight into culinary nationalism: Tokyo's tuna trade exemplifies the way Japanese foodways and culinary identity are shaped by processes of transnational capitalism; Kyoto's *shōjin-ryōri* illustrates the interplay between religion, culinary meaning-making, and nostalgia; Yokohama's ramen elucidates how Japan differentiates its culinary identity from China using colonial ideas about temporality and refinement; and Naha's *goya chanpurū* points to the ongoing presence of US militarism and Japanese colonialism in culinary nationalism. I offer the approach of critical culinary genealogy not as comprehensive nor to render Japanese foodways transparent in their entirety. Instead, I am interested in how a critical and genealogical ap-

proach to foodways might draw on them to unsettle official or taken-for-granted narratives such as *nihonjinron*.

I have chosen to focus on a few select dishes as each provides a distinct yet interrelated insight into the way culinary meaning-making entangles with frameworks of global capitalism, colonialism, nostalgia, and militarism. Nevertheless, it is worth adding that there is a growing number of *esunikku* ("ethnic") foods across Japan, from halal stands to Korean restaurants, that are not addressed by this essay. Future scholarship might consider how these cuisines emerge at the nexus points between Japanese empire, neoliberal globalization, and US militarism. Additionally, my analysis has remained primarily focused on public consumption and food-related meaning-making in a select number of major cities. Scholars might thus consider how a critical culinary genealogy might relate to home cooking, notions of the "private" sphere of Japanese foodways, and/or the relationship between rural foodways and global power relations. Finally, as I do not suggest critical culinary genealogy as something solely applicable to Japan, my hope is that this essay might open up new avenues for scholars in critical food studies, Asian American studies, or other fields to critically examine foodways in ways that push back against culinary nationalism(s) and colonial identity construction across diasporic Asian and Asian American communities.

NOTES

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3. Anita Mannur, "Asian American Food-Scapes," *Amerasia Journal* 32, no. 2 (2006): 4.

4. Ku, *Dubious Gastronomy*, 9.

5. Erin Curtis, "Cambodian Donut Shops and the Negotiation of Identity in Los Angeles," in *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader*, ed. Robert Ji-Sung Ku, Martin F. Manalansan, and Anita Mannur (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 13–29.

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7. Tamara Ho, "BurmAmerican Foodscapes: Refugee Re-Settlement and Resilience," *Amerasia Journal* 47, no. 1 (2021): 73–95.

8. Keidi Kim, "Incarceration, Cafeteria Style: The Politics of the Mess Hall in the Japanese American Incarceration," in *Eating Asian America*, 125–43.

9. Wenying Xu, *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 2. Relatedly, Jennifer Lin LeMesurier explores food as an affective and rhetorical medium for making sense of difference through "gut orientations," in *Inscrutable Eating: Asian Appetites and the Rhetorics of Racial Consumption* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2023).

10. Louis M. Maraj, *Black or Right: Anti/Racist Campus Rhetorics* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2020); Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, ed. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).

11. Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 9–10.

12. For example, Keisuke Yamada draws on Foucauldian genealogy to examine Japanese notions of *kokujin* (Blackness) to challenge official narratives that downplay slavery's role in Japan's early modern history and the notion that the Japanese have not historically held anti-Black ideas. Keisuke Yamada, "On the Genealogy of Kokujin: Critical Thinking about the Formation of Bankoku and Modern Japanese Perceptions of Blackness," *Japanese Studies* 39, no. 2 (2019): 213–37.

13. Dylan Rodríguez, *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logics of Genocide* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), 20. Nevertheless, Rodríguez importantly qualifies his use of genealogy with a critical rejoinder, troubling the "subject position of white academic raciality" implicit in Foucauldian genealogy. Rodríguez, "Disrupted Foucault: Los Angeles' Coalition Against Police Abuse (CAPA) and the Obsolescence of White Academic Raciality," In *Active Intolerance: Michel Foucault, the Prisons Information Group, and the Future of Abolition*, ed. Perry Zurn and Andrew Dilts (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), 145–68.

14. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 3.

15. Lowe, *Intimacies*, 73–100.

16. Haruki Eda, "Archipelagic Feeling: Counter-Mapping Indigeneity and Diaspora in the Trans-Pacific," in *Contemporary Archipelagic Thinking: Towards New Comparative Methodologies and Disciplinary Formations*, ed. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel and Michelle Stephens (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 337–60; Okamoto Masataka, "Does Diversity Matter to the National Unity of Japan? The Hidden Diversity of the Japanese People," *Canada Project in Kyushu Colloquia* 6 (2010): 31–42.

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18. Kawai, "Japanese as Both a 'Race' and a 'Non-Race.'"
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21. Keisuke Kimura, "Voices of In/Visible Minority: Homogenizing Discourse of Japaneseness in Hafu; The Mixed-Race Experience in Japan," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 50, no. 3 (2021): 254–72.
22. Yumi Maruyama-Cain, "The Chrysanthemum No Longer Blooms: The End of Nihonjinron and Theology of Japan," *Christ and the World* 21 (2011): 31–39; Kimura, "Voices of In/Visible Minority,"; Rotem Kowner and Harumi Befu, "Ethnic Nationalism in Postwar Japan: *Nihonjinron* and Its Racial Facets," in *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia*, 389–412.
23. Kowner and Befu, "Ethnic Nationalism in Postwar Japan." One persistent idea in *nihonjinron* literature is the idea of *kokutai* (or an unbroken line) that asserted a continuity of imperial reign, tracing the emperor to the ancient past and the celestial deity Amaterasu. This notion is ahistorical, as trade and migration routes suggest a much more complex series of connections across the Izumo, Yamato, Ryukyuan, and Korean people in the area. Nevertheless, *kokutai* supported the idea of a homogenous Yamato ethnicity that was continuous, insular, and unbroken, while justifying ongoing forms of Japanese colonialism. Eda, "Archipelagic Feeling."
24. Kowner and Befu, "Ethnic Nationalism in Postwar Japan."
25. Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (New York, Mariner Books, 2005 [1946]), 1.
26. Maruyama-Cain, "The Chrysanthemum."
27. Kawai, "Japanese as Both a 'Race' and a 'Non-Race,'" 387.
28. Iwona Kordzińska-Nawrocka, "Japanese Culinary Culture and Identity," *Analecta Nipponica* 9 (2019): 61–73; Hans Martin Krämer, "'Not Befitting Our Divine Country': Eating Meat in Japanese Discourses of Self and Other from the Seventeenth Century to the Present," *Food and Foodways* 16, no. 1 (2008): 33–62.
29. Hiroko Takeda, "Delicious Food in a Beautiful Country: Nationhood and Nationalism in Discourses on Food in Contemporary Japan," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 8, no. 1 (2008): 5–30.
30. Voltaire Cang, "Policing *washoku*: The Performance of Culinary Nationalism in Japan," *Food and Foodways* 27, no. 3 (2019): 232–52.
31. Takeda, "Delicious Food in a Beautiful Country."
32. Cang, "Policing *washoku*."
33. Ronald Ranta and Atsuko Ichijo, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2022).

34. Cang, "Policing *washoku*."
35. Of course, this was not the first influence China had on Japanese foodways, as Japan had for centuries borrowed food practices from China, including the prototypical ingredients for soy sauce and miso. Katarzyna Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power, and National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
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37. Timothy Yun Hui Tsu, "Fat, Spices, Culture and More: Chinese Food in Postwar Japanese Gastronomic Writings," *Asian Studies Review* 34, no. 1 (2010): 63–81.
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39. Tsu, "Fat, Spices, Culture and More."
40. Theodore C. Bestor, "Supply-Side Sushi: Commodity, Market, and the Global City," *American Anthropologist* 103, no. 1 (2001): 76–95.
41. Simon Denyer and Akiko Kashiwagi, "Bluefin Tuna Sells for Record $3.1 million at Tokyo Fish Market, but Scarcity Clouds Celebration," *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/01/05/bluefin-tuna-sells-record-million-tokyo-fish-market-scarcity-clouds-celebration/.
42. Steven Adolf, *Tuna Wars: Powers Around the Fish We Love to Conserve* (Gewerbestrasse: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2019); Theodore C. Bestor, *Tsukiji: The Fish Market at the Center of the World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
43. Adolf, *Tuna Wars*.
44. Adolf, *Tuna Wars*.
45. Cang, "Policing *washoku*," 245.
46. Bestor, "Supply-Side Sushi."
47. Bestor, "Supply-Side Sushi."
48. Adolf, *Tuna Wars*; Bestor, *Tsukiji*.
49. Bestor, "Supply-Side Sushi."
50. James Farrer and David Wank, "Reflecting on the Global Japanese Restaurant," in *The Global Japanese Restaurant: Mobilities, Imaginaries, and Politics*, eds James Farrer and David L. Wank (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2023), 338.
51. Adolf, *Tuna Wars*; Bestor, *Tsukiji*.
52. Adolf, *Tuna Wars*; Bestor, *Tsukiji*.
53. Ranta and Ichijo, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism*.
54. Ranta and Ichijo, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism*.
55. Cang, "Policing *washoku*."
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57. Bestor, "Supply-Side Sushi."

58. Greg de St. Maurice, "Savoring the Kyoto Brand," in *Devouring Japan: Global Perspectives on Japanese Culinary Identity*, ed. Nancy K. Stalker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 153–70.
59. St. Maurice, "Savoring the Kyoto Brand," 155.
60. St. Maurice, "Savoring the Kyoto Brand."
61. Eric C. Rath, "New Meanings for Old Vegetables in Kyoto," *Food, Culture & Society* 17, no. 2 (2014): 203–23.
62. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*; Rath, "New Meanings for Old Vegetables."
63. Rath, "New Meanings for Old Vegetables."
64. Rath, "New Meanings for Old Vegetables."
65. St. Maurice, "Savoring the Kyoto Brand."
66. Rath, "New Meanings for Old Vegetables."
67. Takeda, "Delicious Food in a Beautiful Country."
68. Takeda, "Delicious Food in a Beautiful Country."
69. Brian Victoria, *Zen at War*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006); Christopher Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009); Christopher Ives, "The Mobilization of Doctrine: Buddhist Contributions to Imperial Ideology in Modern Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies,* 26 nos. 1–2 (1999): 83–106.
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71. Theodore C. Bestor, "Cuisine and Identity in Contemporary Japan," in *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, ed. Victoria Bestor, Theodore Bestor, and Akiko Yamagata (London: Routledge, 2011), 273–85; Tsu, "Fat, Spices, Culture and More"; Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*.
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